



# ACSJC BRIEFING

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*From the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council, the social justice and human rights agency of the Catholic Church in Australia - [www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au](http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au)*

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## FROM THE SECRETARIAT

Dear Friends,

The 2003 Social Justice Sunday Statement - 'A Generous Heart in the Love of Christ: Challenging Racism in Australia Today' - was launched on Wednesday 17th September. The ACSJC and its Secretariat are very grateful to Sir William Deane, Ms Linda Burney MLA and Mrs Elsie Heiss for their invaluable contributions to this event.

We are also grateful to all of you who have helped to raise awareness about Social Justice Sunday and the Bishops' Statement. The Statement and associated resources can be found on the ACSJC website at: <http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/CONTENT/publications/documentation/2003sjss.html>

The Bishops' Statement provides an important reflection on Australia's history of welcome and exclusion. It provides guidance to Catholics and all people of good will on how we can foster a more welcoming society. Those speaking at its launch reinforced the challenge of the 2003 Social Justice Sunday Statement.

## A HISTORY OF WELCOME AND EXCLUSION

The Statement traces the Australian story from the impact of British

settlement to the development of a multicultural nation. It acknowledges past injustices including the treatment of Indigenous peoples - the massacres, their dispossession and the separation of Aboriginal children from their distressed families - and the discrimination of the White Australia policy towards non-white immigrants which saw the forced deportation of Chinese and Pacific Islanders last century and the denial of the expression of cultural heritage under the policy of assimilation.

In recent years, Australia's treatment of asylum seekers in detention centres, the emphasis on border protection that has seen the emergence of policies such as the "Pacific Solution", and the racism experienced by Arab and Muslim Australians as well as Jewish communities have challenged the more welcoming face of Australia.

In focussing on particular challenges confronting Australia's multicultural identity, the Bishops address issues that are also faced by other countries. Concerns over national security and border protection in this age of the 'war on terror' have often diminished cultural and social harmony - and ethnic minorities have often been subject to racial intolerance and acts of racism.

## A MULTICULTURAL NATION

The Australian story is also one of welcome. While the Bishops identify the recurrence today of racial hostility and rejection in aspects of the nation's life, they recognise that Australia's proud history of welcome and of multiculturalism, more than ever, needs to be harnessed for a more inclusive society.

Australia is a multicultural nation. Over 20% of the population was born

overseas and our cultural diversity is reflected in the 200 or more languages spoken in Australia - around 50 of these are Indigenous languages. Many people have come to this nation from around the world. With the First peoples of this land we share our stories, traditions and languages. In their Statement, the Bishops' say that, "If multiculturalism implies that we should not only support immigrants as individuals but should also regard their culture as an enrichment, it simply states what ought to be obvious".

At the launch, Sir William Deane said, "My years as Governor General taught me many things. Perhaps the most important of them all was how critical our multiculturalism is to the well being of the nation. One sometimes hears suggestions that multiculturalism is divisive. I respectfully disagree. For me, multiculturalism means inclusiveness not division. It's enabled us to blend the many into a pretty harmonious whole without bringing to this new land old hatreds, old prejudices and old conflicts. It is our multiculturalism in that sense which inspires and sustains our modern Australia. It is not only a moral imperative. In the context of our history and our identity, it is also a pragmatic necessity."

### **THE CHALLENGE**

The central challenge of the Statement is found in the call to reflect on what kind of Australia will be a welcoming country and will nurture a welcoming attitude in our children - "Will it be an isolationist, suspicious and aggressive Australia, or a fair-minded nation characterised by its sense of justice and its generous heart?" In presenting this challenge, the Bishops acknowledge that the more welcoming a family, town, city or nation, the healthier is its spiritual state.

Bishop Christopher Saunders highlighted areas where there is a pressing need for welcome, reconciliation and healing: "Poor progress towards national reconciliation with Indigenous Australians, our treatment of asylum seekers and the racial hatred too often experienced in the large cities by Arab and Muslim Australians are particular

challenges we must all address for the health of the entire community."

### **THE PROPHETIC CALL TO WELCOME**

Based on the teaching and example of Christ, the Statement suggests ways we can ensure people of every race and background are welcomed in our local churches, schools, workplaces, communities, and nation.

Throughout his ministry, Jesus did not hesitate to break down the barriers and extended the hand of friendship and conversion to those who were excluded or despised. Jesus welcomes the stranger. When we welcome the stranger we welcome Christ. Through the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:29-37) the Statement calls us to defend and support those subjected to racism for they are our own sisters and brothers.

Bishop Saunders stressed the importance of this call. He said, "The call to be prophets in our time, in our land, is a vocation which weighs heavily on all believers... This document launched today is a call to us all - to be prophets in Modern Australia, to say and do what God wants said and done and thereby, to help build justice and peace, whereas racial tension and injustice threaten to tear us apart".

He added, "To find a new beginning for all of us that will allow us to live in harmony, enjoying a culture of peace, will require a generous heart - generous enough to tell history as it really was, generous enough to make history as it really ought to be, challenging prejudices while encouraging prophetic hopes."

### **THANK YOU**

The ACSJC is grateful to all who have worked to promote this Statement. Now that we have celebrated Social Justice Sunday together, our work in addressing racism and working for a more welcoming Australia continues. Your further promotion of the Bishops' Statement and associated resources would be appreciated.

- *John Ferguson (National Executive Officer)*

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## **LATEST PUBLICATIONS**

(orders Tel: 02 9956 5811 or email: admin@acsjc.org.au)

### **2003 SOCIAL JUSTICE SUNDAY STATEMENT & RESOURCES:**

Australian Catholic Bishops' Statement: A Generous Heart in the Love of Christ - Challenging Racism in Australia Today. Free electronic version of the 2003 Statement available from the websites of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (<http://www.catholic.org.au>) and ACSJC (<http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/CONTENT/publications/documentation/2003sjss.html>).

### **ECUMENICAL SOCIAL JUSTICE SUNDAY KIT: SUBVERTING RACISM:**

Ecumenical Kit produced by the Anglican Social Responsibilities Network, Uniting Justice Australia & ACSJC, now available (cost: \$5.50 {plus postage: 1 copy \$1.45; 2-3 copies \$2.45})

### **LEAFLET & PRAYER CARD: TEN STEPS TOWARDS CHALLENGING RACISM IN AUSTRALIA TODAY:**

Now available. Call (02) 9956 5811

### **SOCIAL JUSTICE SUNDAY STATEMENT LITURGY NOTES & TEACHERS' NOTES:**

(<http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/CONTENT/publications/documentation/2003sjss.html>)

### **BACKGROUND PAPER - AUSTRALIA & UNITED STATES FREE TRADE AGREEMENT:**

Available on the ACSJC website - [http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/Content/publications/positionpapers/2003\\_9\\_5australia\\_&\\_united\\_states\\_free\\_trade\\_agreement.html](http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/Content/publications/positionpapers/2003_9_5australia_&_united_states_free_trade_agreement.html)

### **OCCASIONAL PAPER: THE LORD HEARS THE CRY OF THE POOR - THE MAGNIFICAT REVISITED:**

Catholic Social Justice Series no.48 - Sr Marie Farrell rsm (cost \$5.50 plus postage)

### **BRIEFING PAPER: 40th ANNIVERSARY OF PACEM IN TERRIS:**

Available on the ACSJC

website

[http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/Content/issues/40th\\_anniversary\\_of\\_pacem\\_in\\_terris.html](http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/Content/issues/40th_anniversary_of_pacem_in_terris.html)

**OCCASIONAL PAPER: WAR ON IRAQ: IS IT JUST?** Catholic Social Justice Series no.47 - Fr Bruce Duncan (cost \$5.50 plus postage)

### **SUPPLEMENTARY PAPER TO CSJ Series no.47: THE STRUGGLE TO DEVELOP A JUST WAR TRADITION IN THE WEST**

Supplement by Fr Bruce Duncan available free as HTML or PDF download at [http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/Content/publications/documentation/the\\_struggle\\_to\\_develop\\_a\\_just\\_war\\_tradition\\_in\\_the\\_west.html](http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/Content/publications/documentation/the_struggle_to_develop_a_just_war_tradition_in_the_west.html) (PDF link at bottom of page)

*(Postage rates for Catholic Social Justice Series Papers: 1 copy \$1; 2-3 copies \$1.45; 4-5 copies \$2.45)*

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## **CURRENT ISSUES**

See

<http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/content/mediareleases.html>

### **MEDIA RELEASE - CATHOLIC BISHOPS SPEAK ON RACISM - 17**

September 2003: The 2003 Social Justice Sunday Statement - A Generous Heart in the Love of Christ: Challenging Racism in Australia Today - was launched by Sir William Deane in Sydney. Responding to the Statement's rejection of racism, Sir William said, "In its frank and honest acknowledgement of past injustices in our land, the Statement seems to me to provide convincing moral support for the mutual respect and acceptance which lie at the heart of our Australian multiculturalism". Bishop Christopher Saunders said, "The Statement suggests ways we can ensure people of every race and background are welcomed in our parishes, schools, local communities and in public life". [http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/Content/media\\_releases/2003\\_09\\_17\\_1064147153.html](http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/Content/media_releases/2003_09_17_1064147153.html)

**ADDRESS OF SIR WILLIAM DEANE**  
- 17 September 2003: The Address of Sir William Deane in launching the 2003 Social Justice Sunday Statement. (<http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au>)

**ADDRESS OF BISHOP CHRISTOPHER SAUNDERS** - 17 September 2003: The Address the Chairman of the ACSJC at the launch of the Justice Statement (<http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au>)

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## OCTOBER NOTICES

**OCTOBER 1: ADDRESS, "PREPARING FOR THE NEXT SURPRISE** - Australia's Defence choices in the age of uncertainty", by Mr Hugh White, Director of the Australian Strategic Policy Institute. National Press Club 12.00 - 2.00pm, Canberra (refer: <http://www.npc.org.au/speakers.htm>)

**OCTOBER 2: SYMPOSIUM, "MIGRATION, MENTAL HEALTH AND HUMAN RIGHTS"**. Convened by the Faculty of Law, University of Sydney, and the International Academy of Law & Mental Health. Cost \$100 - \$150. (For registration refer: <http://www.law.usyd.edu.au/cle/2003/MigrationHumanRights.pdf>)

**OCTOBER 5 - 10: NATIONAL ABORIGINAL & TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CATHOLIC COUNCIL** - 6th Annual Assembly. This event in South Australia will provide an opportunity for Indigenous Catholics from all over Australia to come together and discuss issues that relate to indigenous participation in the Catholic Church. (refer: <http://www.natsicc.org.au/assembly1.htm>)

**OCTOBER 6: EVENT, "REFUGEE HYPOTHETICAL WITH JULIE MCCROSSIN"**, 6.15 to 8.00 pm at Elizabeth Jolley Lecture Theatre, Curtin

University, Kent St, Bentley, Perth. Convened by Curtin University Centre for Human Rights and CASE for Refugees. Cost: \$25. (refer: <http://www.humanities.curtin.edu.au/doc/hre/RHflyer.doc>)

**OCTOBER 7: LUNCHTIME FORUM AT WESTMEAD CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL.** Forum to discuss the harm being done to children through long-term indefinite detention. Convened by ChilOut from 12.30 to 2.00 pm at the Lorimer Dods Lecture Theatre. (refer: <http://www.chilout.org/events/index.html>)

**OCTOBER 7 - 17: PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION, "ME NAM: RIVERS"** at NSW Parliament House. Exploring the corporate and political efforts to control our water resources, and a celebration of waterways and community activism to protect them in Australia and internationally. Public Launch on 14 October - Guest Speaker Peter Garret (refer: [http://www.aidwatch.org.au/index.php?current=1&display=aw00481&display\\_item=2](http://www.aidwatch.org.au/index.php?current=1&display=aw00481&display_item=2))

**OCTOBER 10: ECUMENICAL FORUM, "POVERTY IN AUSTRALIA - THE EFFECTS AND THE CHURCHES' Response"** at St Kieran's Parish Centre, 2 Kind St Manly Vale, Sydney from 7.30 pm. Sponsored by St Kieran's Social Justice Group. RSVP by October 3 on: (02) 9971 1973 or (02) 9905 1253.

**OCTOBER 12: EUCHARIST AND CONCERT, "HOPE AFTER BALI"**, 6 pm Mass followed by 7.15 pm Concert at St Patrick's Church, Asquith, Broken Bay diocese. Proceeds from the night going to Caritas Australia.

**OCTOBER 13 - 17: ANTI-POVERTY WEEK** is a national initiative aiming to increase understanding about the causes and consequences of poverty and to encourage research, discussion and action. The week culminates in the UN International Anti-Poverty day on Friday October 17. (for more information on events around Australia refer:

<http://www.antipovertyweek.org.au/events.html>

**OCTOBER 14: MEETING, "WHITHER THE WTO AFTER CANCUN?".** Report on the WTO Ministerial Conference at 5.30 pm, Room 814, NSW Parliament House, Sydney. (refer: [http://www.aftinet.org.au/bulletins/latest\\_bulletin.html](http://www.aftinet.org.au/bulletins/latest_bulletin.html))

**OCTOBER 14 - 15: CONFERENCE, "NATIONAL INDIGENOUS JUVENILE JUSTICE CONFERENCE"** at the Riviera Motel and Function Centre, North Terrace, Adelaide. (Cost and registration details: <http://www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au/download/indconf.pdf>)

**OCTOBER 15: SEMINAR, "A PROMISE WORTH KEEPING"** convened by the International Campaign to Ban Landmines at NSW Parliament House in the State Parliament Theatre - 9.00 am to 11.30 am. RSVP Edmund Rice Centre for Justice & Community Education (02) 9764 1330.

**OCTOBER 16 - 17: CONFERENCE, "NATIONAL INDIGENOUS CUSTODY CONFERENCE"** at the Riviera Motel and Function Centre, North Terrace, Adelaide. (Cost and registration details: <http://www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au/download/indconf.pdf>)

**OCTOBER 16: SEMINAR, "VOICES OF POVERTY IN AUSTRALIA".** Anti-Poverty Week Seminar 1.00 - 2.30pm Social Policy Research Centre, University of New South Wales, Sydney (refer: <http://www.sprc.unsw.edu.au/seminars/2003s2.htm>; <http://www.unsw.edu.au/anti-povertyweek/>)

**OCTOBER 17: DINNER & ADDRESS, "WHAT KIND OF SOCIETY ARE WE BECOMING?"** convened by Catalyst for Renewal, 7pm for 7.30pm, Villa Maria Parish Hall cnr Mary St and Gladesville Rd, Hunters Hill, Sydney. Cost \$40, RSVP October

10. (refer: <http://www.catalyst-for-renewal.com.au/prod03.htm>)

**OCTOBER 18: PUBLIC FORUM, "SEIV X - A CRIME AGAINST HUMANITY".** Held at Haydon-Allen Tank, Australian National University, Canberra. (refer: <http://www.chilout.org/events>)

**OCTOBER 20: PUBLIC FORUM, "HICKS AND HABIB".** Forum regarding Mamdouh Habib and David Hicks who are currently illegally detained at Guantanamo Bay by US Military. Information from lawyers and family members. Convened at Sydney Trades Hall, 4 Goulburn St, Sydney at 6.00 pm. (refer: [http://nswpeace.org/events/1062298492\\_9044.html](http://nswpeace.org/events/1062298492_9044.html))

**OCTOBER 20 - 26: OPEN WEEK, "STEP BEHIND THE CONVENT WALLS".** Open Week at Mary MacKillop Place, 10 am to 4 pm daily (open until 7.30 pm on 22 October) at 7 Mount Street, North Sydney. Call (02) 8912 4800 (refer: <http://www.sosj.org.au/news/index.html>)

**OCTOBER 21 - 22: CONFERENCE, "FUNDRAISING WIZARDRY - FUNDRAISING CONFERENCE"** hosted by the Fundraising Institute of Australia at the St John of God conference center, Subiaco, Perth. (refer: [http://www.coss.net.au/events/acoss/1063777788\\_19577\\_20030917.jsp](http://www.coss.net.au/events/acoss/1063777788_19577_20030917.jsp))

**OCTOBER 23/24: WORKSHOP - A JUST AUSTRALIA NATIONAL ORGANISATIONS WORKSHOP** to be held at YWCA, Sydney. (refer: <http://www.ajustaustralia.com/home.php>)

**OCTOBER 23 - 24: CONFERENCE, "STOP THE TRAFFIC 2".** Two-day conference on the trafficking of women for prostitution. To be convened at RMIT City Campus - Kaleide Theatre, 360 Swanston Street, Melbourne. Cost \$200 with concessions. (refer: <http://www.rmit.edu.au/tce/ssp/stopthetrffic>)

**OCTOBER 26: INTERFAITH CHORAL EXPERIENCE, "COME REJOICE"** organized by the Council of Christians and Jews in NSW. At 2.15 pm, Brennan Hall in St. John's College, University of Sydney. Admission free (donations appreciated).

**OCTOBER 27: RALLY, "CANBERRA USFTA RALLY"**. Lunchtime rally at 12.30pm at Parliament House Canberra - to voice concerns about current negotiations for an Australia - US Free Trade Agreement. (refer: [http://www.aftinet.org.au/bulletins/latest\\_bulletin.html](http://www.aftinet.org.au/bulletins/latest_bulletin.html))

**OCTOBER 29: ADDRESS, "INTERNATIONAL LAW: BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER THE WAR IN IRAQ"**. Prof. Hilary Charlesworth will examine the relevance of international law to the Iraq campaign and its aftermath. National Press Club 12.00 - 2.00pm, Canberra (refer: <http://www.npc.org.au/speakers.htm>)

**OCTOBER 29: PUBLIC FORUM, "FORUM FOR PEACE AND SOLIDARITY"**: Christian and Muslim speakers discuss the role of their faith in the 21st century". Convened by the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Sydney, Room 114, Mackie Building, Arundel Street, Glebe, 12.30 to 2.00 pm. Call (02) 9036 9286 (refer: <http://www.arts.usyd.edu.au/centres/cpacs/seminars.htm>)

**NOVEMBER 5: ADDRESS, BY FR FRANK BRENNAN SJ**, author of "Tampering with Asylum". National Press Club 12.00 - 2.00pm, Canberra (refer: <http://www.npc.org.au/speakers.htm>)

**NOVEMBER 10: NATIONAL FORUM, "THE WAR ON TERRORISM AND THE RULE OF LAW"**. To be convened at NSW Parliament House by the Faculty of Law UNSW and the Gilbert & Tobin Centre of Public Law. Standard rate: \$99. (refer: <http://www.gtcentre.unsw.edu.au/2003%20Terrorism%20Conference%20Brochure.pdf>)

*(email news of your forthcoming social justice event to: [admin@acsjc.org.au](mailto:admin@acsjc.org.au))*

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## **SEPTEMBER NEWS MONITOR**

**CATHOLIC 'FALSE PASSPORT' CLAIMS SPARK INQUIRY CALLS:** The Sydney-based Edmund Rice justice centre told Federal Police that it is ready to provide investigators with evidence that immigration officials urged asylum seekers to get false passports so they could be deported.

**ZIMBABWEAN CHURCH LEADERS HIT OUT AT GOVERNMENT :** Church leaders in Zimbabwe criticised the government's "irresponsible, inhuman, violent, partisan" methods of land redistribution, and accused it of fuelling a culture of violence.

**POPE URGES AUTHENTIC "CHURCH OF THE POOR":** As Australian Catholics prepared to celebrate Social Justice Sunday, Pope John Paul II said the Church should be a "Church of the poor" that gives preference to the neediest members of society.

**CATHOLIC HEALTH SUPPORTS LABOR AGED CARE SAVINGS PLAN:** Catholic Health Australia said that an ALP savings plan for low income people has potential to help with long term aged care costs.

**BROOME DIOCESE SUPPORTS WA GOVT'S SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY:** The Coordinator of the Broome Diocesan Office of Justice, Ecology & Peace warmly welcomed the release of the Western Australian State Government's Sustainability Strategy.

**ARCHBISHOPS PAY TRIBUTE TO 'HEROIC WITNESS' CARDINAL THUAN:** August marked the first anniversary of the death of Vatican official Cardinal Francis Xavier Nguyen Van Thuan, and the launch of his biography by Sydney Archbishop George Pell.

**DEANE SUPPORTS CHURCH'S RIGHT TO SPEAK ON POLITICS:**

Criticism of church leaders who speak out on politically controversial issues such as the treatment of indigenous people and asylum seekers was "misconceived", former Governor-General Sir William Deane said at the launch of the Bishops' Social Justice Statement.

**US BISHOPS URGE SENATE VOTE AGAINST NUCLEAR WEAPONS RESEARCH:**

Research on advanced nuclear weapons, such as the "robust nuclear earth penetrator", undermine nuclear non-proliferation efforts, according to chairman of the US Bishops' International Policy Committee Bishop John Ricard of Florida.

**STATEMENT CHALLENGES RACISM WITH 'GENEROUS HEART':**

The Australian Bishops' Statment for Social Justice Sunday was released, seeking to foster in Australians a 'generous heart' that can conquer racism.

**'WIDESPREAD FEAR' CAUSES VATICAN TO REPUBLISH "PACEM IN TERRIS":**

The Vatican decided to republish Pope John XXIII's 1963 encyclical 'Pacem in Terris' because of its acute relevance for world peace at the present time.

**FAILURE AT CANCUN A MAJOR BLOW FOR THE WORLD'S POOR :**

CAFOD, the Caritas member agency in England and Wales, expressed deep regret at the failure of the trade talks held in the past few days in the Mexican city of Cancun. Before the event, the US Bishops said poverty reduction must be its "key goal".

**COLUMBAN CONFIRMS AUSTRALIANS' KEY ROLE IN PHILIPPINES UNDER-AGE SEX TRADE:**

Irish Columban Fr Shay Cullen, who has lived in the Angeles are in the northern Philippines for 32 years, told The Age newspaper that the majority of bars in the city are run by Australians.

**POPE SAYS ECONOMIC POLICY ALWAYS NEEDS A MORAL BASIS:**

Pope John Paul II said that national economic policies that consider only the final balance sheet cannot create the peaceful climate necessary to promote the prosperity of an entire country.

**VATICAN WANTS BAN ON ALL NUCLEAR TESTS:**

The Holy See appealed to the international community to adopt the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, as a step towards "fostering a climate of trust, cooperation and respect between all states".

**BISHOP CALLS ON POLITICIANS TO ADDRESS RURAL UNEMPLOYMENT:**

Toowoomba's Bishop William Morris issued a statement exposing the problem of unemployment in regional Australia, which is significantly more serious than in the major cities.

**CHURCH OFFERS CARE OF DETAINEES:**

The Catholic Church would be happy to consider a partnership with the Federal Government for community care of detainee children, Adelaide Archbishop Philip Wilson said.

**VINNIES CHIEF SAYS POVERTY NOW AFFECTS WORKERS:**

St Vincent de Paul national president John Moore told a Senate inquiry that poverty has ensnared ordinary workers and no longer applies just to the homeless or unemployed.

**COMMISSION PLEA FOR RELEASE OF NAURU REFUGEE WOMEN AND CHILDREN:**

Brisbane's Catholic Justice and Peace Commission joined other Church and community groups in pleading for the release of 9 women and 14 children detained on Nauru for the past two years.

- courtesy Church Resources' CathNews, stories in detail at <http://www.cathnews.com/news/309>

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## **OCTOBER SOCIAL JUSTICE CALENDAR**

**OCTOBER 1 TUVALU INDEPENDENCE DAY:** Tuvalu is a cluster of nine islands in the South Pacific and is one of the world's smallest independent nations.

Coastal erosion and rising sea-levels seriously threaten the future of Tuvalu. As sea levels have risen, Tuvalu has experienced lowland flooding. Saltwater intrusion is adversely affecting its drinking water and food production. The islands of Tuvalu may be totally submerged within the next ten years. The people of Tuvalu have been forced to leave their homeland. In 2000, the Government of Tuvalu approached Australia to accept people from Tuvalu as "environmental refugees". The Australian Government refused the request. New Zealand has agreed to accept all 11,000 citizens of Tuvalu. Migration began in 2002.

**OCTOBER 16 RIGOBERTA MENCHU RECEIVES NOBEL PEACE PRIZE:** Guatemala, a Central American country, has a population of ten million people and a history of violent civil unrest. The Peace Accords, signed in Guatemala City in December 1996, ended a 36 year legacy of terror in which 200 000 Guatemalan people have been killed, a million made homeless and untold thousands 'disappeared.' Indigenous peoples suffered most from the violence and racism in Guatemala.

Rigoberta Menchu is a Mayan woman from the Quiche province in the highlands of Guatemala. In 1992 she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize as the first indigenous recipient. Rigoberta used the \$1.2 million cash prize to set up a foundation in her father's name to continue the fight for human rights of indigenous people in her country and worldwide.

The struggle for justice of the Guatemalan peoples continues. The violence has not yet ended and the people are attempting to bring those responsible for the genocide to justice and to work towards genuine reconciliation.

**OCTOBER 17 INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ERADICATION OF POVERTY:** Poverty exists in alarming and life-threatening extremes throughout the world. The greatest concentrations of poverty occur in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and Latin America. Inequality between the people who are wealthy and people who are poor becomes starker year after year.

The 2002 Human Development report of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) highlights the global reality.

- The richest 5% of the world's people have incomes 114 times those of the poorest 5%
- 20 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, with more than half the region's people, are poorer now than in 1990 - and 23 poorer than in 1975.
- Every day more than 30 000 children around the world die of preventable diseases.
- 113 million school-age children are not in school - 97% of them in developing countries.

On the positive side:

- The proportion of the world's people living in extreme poverty fell from 29% in 1990 to 23% in 1999
- East Asia and the Pacific achieved 5.7% annual growth in per-capita income in the 1990's; South Asia, 3.3%

The gap between rich and poor continues to widen in Australia. Research conducted by the National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling showed that the wealthiest 20% of Australians are 40 times richer than the poorest 20%. (September 2002).

**OCTOBER 19 SINKING OF SIEV X:**

On this day we remember the 350 people who died in the disaster of the Siev X, as well as their families and all people who are forced to take treacherous journeys in the pursuit of freedom and safety.

Website: <http://www.sievx.com>

**OCTOBER 24 DISARMAMENT WEEK:**

The annual observance of Disarmament Week begins on the anniversary of the founding of the United Nations in 1945. Nations are invited to highlight the danger of the arms race, propagate the need for its

cessation and increase public understanding of the urgent tasks of disarmament.

**OCTOBER 27 BOOBERA LAGOON:**

1848 Crown Lands Commissioner for the Gwydir District, Richard Blight, wrote to NSW Colonial Secretary recommending that a square mile be set aside at Boobera Lagoon for a native reserve. Boobera Lagoon has always held special significance for Aboriginal people in the Boggabilla/Goondiwindi district. Concern over water-skiing on Boobera Lagoon has brought about a cessation in 2002. A new waterpark for waterskiiers is now being constructed in the Goondiwindi district.

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**Australian Catholic Social Justice Council Leo XIII House, 19 MacKenzie Street, North Sydney NSW 2060. Tel: (02) 9956 5811, Fax: (02) 9954 0056, Email: admin@acsjc.org.au Website: <http://socialjustice.catholic.org.au> \*\* ACSJC Briefing is sent by email at the beginning of each month (except January). To subscribe or unsubscribe, go to the front page of the website Comments and contributions are also welcome.**