



News Brief ▪ December 16, 2014 ▪ Enhancing the study and practice of Catholic peacebuilding

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PEACEBUILDING NEWS FROM THE GLOBAL CHURCH

Bishops worldwide call for greater EU regulation of conflict minerals ▪ Bishops from Brazil, Colombia, the DRC, the Philippines, European countries, and elsewhere signed a statement calling on the European Union to implement "ambitious and binding

rules” governing corporate diligence on conflict resources. In March 2014, the European Commission had proposed a regulation “intended to put an end to the use of revenues from mining to finance armed conflict.” [Get the full statement here](#) (languages: Eng, Esp, Fr, De). The EU proposal is available [here](#). See also: [this opinion piece](#) from a former mining executive (EU Observer).

Pope Francis urges world toward nuclear disarmament ▪ Pope Francis’s Message was read at the Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons (Vienna, December 8-9). He said, “Now, more than ever, technological, social and political interdependence urgently calls for an ethic of solidarity (cf John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 38), which encourages people to work together for a more secure world, and a future that is increasingly rooted in moral values and responsibility on a global scale. The humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons are predictable and planetary.” The conference is the third in a series of conferences on the topic. [Read the full message](#). See also: [America magazine article](#).

Colombia: Peace talks resume ▪ Peace talks were suspended after FARC rebels captured General Rubén Darío Alzate Mora in Quibdó (Chocó) on November 16. The President of the Episcopal Conference of Colombia condemned the kidnapping, called for the release of the general, and urged that the Havana peace talks continue. The general and two others captured with him were released on November 30, and the general resigned his military position. The talks were to resume on December 10.

Adriaan Alsema of *Colombia Reports* summarized the state of the talks: “The FARC and government delegates have so far signed off on partial agreements on rural reform, political participation of the FARC and the rebels’ abandonment of drug trafficking. If the warring parties agree on the current point on the agenda, victims, the logistics of the end of conflict will be negotiated which — if successful — would end 50 years of violence between rebels and state that according to the government has cost more than 900,000 lives.” Read more on [CPN’s Colombia News page](#).

Colombia: App helps Church pray for peace and reconciliation ▪ The Colombian Bishops have added a Christmas novena prayer, focused on peace and reconciliation in Colombia, to their app. The faithful can download the app, “Yo Oro por la Paz” (I pray for peace), for free from [Google Play](#), [Windows Phone](#), or the [Apple Store](#). The USCCB also supported this project. [See #YoOroporlaPaz on Twitter](#). From the app page: “*La Iglesia católica en Colombia, comprometida en la búsqueda de la paz, invita a los bautizados a acoger las palabras de Nuestro Señor Jesucristo en la cruz, como voz de aliento, de fe y esperanza... para crear ambientes de reconciliación y de paz.*”

Philippines: Church prepares for Pope’s visit ▪ The theme of Pope Francis’ visit, “Mercy & Compassion,” has guided the country’s preparation for his January 15-19 visit. After visiting Sri Lanka (January 13-15), the Pope will travel to Manila and Palo, where he will meet with national leaders, families, youth, and survivors of calamities and celebrate Mass at Rizal Park. The [official website](#) for the papal visit features a countdown, itinerary, social media connections, and information on the Church in the Philippines.

Philippines: Mindanao's Silsilah movement promotes dialogue ▪ After thirty years of working to promote Muslim-Christian dialogue, the “Silsilah” movement celebrated its first National Assembly on November 6-9. Based in Zamboanga City, Mindanao, the movement is committed to life-in-dialogue, providing what Archbishop Antonio Ledesma, SJ, calls “spiritual foundations [that] are much needed for local communities to forge a just and lasting peace in Mindanao – particularly as we all work out the details of a ‘reconciled diversity’ in the proposed Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro” (Silsilah Bulletin, 2014, p. 6). The movement's “Chain of Harmony” prayer, as approved by the Bishops-Ulama Conference, is recommended as a common prayer that Muslims and Christians can recite. [Visit the Silsilah website.](#)

Philippines: Pax Christi org. supports BBL ▪ On October 29, a Pax Christi-affiliated organization released a statement of support for the draft Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL). [Read the statement here.](#) For more information, visit CPN's [Philippines News page.](#)

South Sudan: Christian leaders collaborate on 28-day training of peace workers ▪ The Committee for National Healing, Peace, and Reconciliation (CNHPR), led in large part by Christian clergy, hosted training in Yei, South Sudan, throughout the month of October. The training fulfills part of the CNHPR plan for building peace: “One of the first priorities for CNHPR was to train a core group of representatives from every state, equipping them with skills to train a further 40 to 50 people [approximately 550 total peace workers] in their states, thus reaching to the very heart of the country, to the farthest villages, to the grassroots.” PACT South Sudan, Norwegian Church Aid, Catholic Relief Services, and Mission Aviation Fellowship have supported this initiative. [See the trainers' one-page Charter here.](#) See the Anglican Diocese of Wau's [in-depth newsletter on the training.](#)

South Sudan: Churches to hold national prayers for peace ▪ December 15 marks one year since the outbreak of civil war in the country. Bakhita Radio reports that churches across the country were expected to conduct prayers for peace on Saturday, December 13. Bishop Michael Taban told the press that prayers are needed, as the Church realizes that the last three Advent seasons have been marked with violence. He explained that the national prayer is to seek God's mercy, to restore peace and reconciliation in the country, to encourage the church to be salt and light through prayers and fasting in the country and the world, [and] to pray for peaceful celebration of Christmas and the New Year 2015.

Great Lakes: Rwandan and Congolese dioceses initiate joint activities for reconciliation ▪ The Diocesan Commissions for Justice and Peace of Bukavu (DRC) and Cyangugu (Rwanda) have launched some initiatives for reconciliation between the two countries.... Fr. Xavier Bugeme, SJ, pastor of St. Pierre Claver de Nguba in Bukavu, explained, “The Church's role is not to take up arms, nor to be involved in politics, but to restore peace through the arms of the Gospel, which is reconciliation, love and forgiveness.” For this reason, Agenzia Fides reports, the dioceses “have

agreed to intensify joint activities between the parishes, pastors and church groups.” Meetings among the faithful, priests, choir members, and others are planned in order “to drop the masks of division and develop the bonds of brotherhood.” (reported by Agenzia Fides, 2 October 2014)

Great Lakes: DRC Bishops on Constitutional amendment; Outbreaks of violence ▪ In the DRC, massacres have broken out in the [Beni region](#) (North Kivu, eastern DRC), apparently carried out by ADF rebels from Uganda. Over 250 people have been killed and 88,500 displaced. Meanwhile, political uncertainty surrounds a proposal by current president Joseph Kabila to amend Article 220 of the Constitution in order to run again in the 2016 election. Kabila has been in office since January 2001, after the assassination of his father, President Laurent-Désiré Kabila. Agenzia Fides reports that this proposal has drawn protest from the opposition, civil society, and the local church, as well the U.S. and Germany. The release of [the bishops’ statement opposing constitutional reform](#) (on September 14, 2014) provoked violence against some clergy and religious, which the Church has in turn denounced. Read more on CPN’s [Central Africa and Uganda News page](#).

Great Lakes: Bishops of Burundi call for fair, peaceful elections ▪ The Bishops of Burundi have issued a statement calling for fair and peaceful general elections to be held in 2015. Agenzia Fides reports that the “Bishops rejoice at the fact that the democratic system has entered the national consciousness.... On the other hand, the Bishops’ Conference expresses concern about some disturbing signs. In particular, the Bishops note that ‘dialogue and plans that had allowed elaboration of the “road map” do not appear to be a reality, a fact that leads some to consider the ongoing electoral process monopolized by a single trend.’ ‘We are entering the election period in a climate of fragile security’ states the document, denouncing ‘acts of banditry and murder that trouble the population; language that incites violence; young people affiliated to political parties that seem determined to resort to violence’ (Agenzia Fides, 10 December 2014).

United States: Bishop Pates urges U.S. to support Church’s peace efforts in South Sudan and DRC ▪ The USCCB reports that “Bishop Richard E. Pates of Des Moines, Iowa, relayed [to Amb. Donald Booth] a message of hope from the Catholic Bishops Conference of South Sudan.... ‘I urge you to continue your work with IGAD to intensify your combined pressure on the South Sudan government and opposition leaders to halt the fighting.... We also urge you to engage and assist faith leaders in envisioning a new future for the country and mobilizing their people to realize that new vision. We are grateful for your collaboration in these efforts with Catholic Relief Services, one of the Church’s trusted partners, and hope will you continue this partnership” (USCCB, October 23, 2014). [Get the full letter](#).

Bishop Pates also wrote to Amb. Russ Feingold, sharing “a letter from the bishops of the DRC, in which they called the possible removal of a term limit on their country’s president ‘a step backward on the road to building our democracy [that] would seriously undermine the harmonious future of the nation.’ Bishop Pates noted that constitutions have been changed in other nations ‘as a means to monopolize political

power and a nation's natural wealth.' He added, 'This political maneuver excludes political opposition and destroys the peaceful democratic process'" (USCCB, October 17, 2014). [Get the full letters from Bishop Pates and the DRC Bishops.](#)

United States: Bishop Cantu Responds to Senate Report on CIA Torture ▪ Bishop Cantu, Chairman of the USCCB Committee on International Justice and Peace, said, "The Catholic Church firmly believes that torture is an 'intrinsic evil' that cannot be justified under any circumstance. The acts of torture described in the Senate Intelligence Committee's report violated the God-given human dignity inherent in all people and were unequivocally wrong. Congress and the President should act to strengthen the legal prohibitions against torture and to ensure that this never happens again." [Read other leaders' statements](#) and the National Religious Campaign Against Torture press release. Read news articles by the [CNA](#) and [NCR](#) and see the [Senate report](#). See also: the USCCB's [blog post on the Senate report](#) and [study guide on the morality of torture](#) (2008).

United States: Theologians on Racial Justice ▪ Over 420 Catholic theologians from the United States have signed a statement on racial justice, which opens with an Advent reminder that the angelic message of "peace, goodwill among people" (Luke 2:14)... refers to a shalom that is not merely the absence of conflict, but rather a just and lasting peace. The statement continues, "But this Advent, hope for a just peace must face the flagrant failures of a nation still bound by sin, our bondage to and complicity in racial injustice." [Read the full statement and see the signatures here.](#)

RESOURCES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Herbert Scoville, Jr., Peace Fellowships (Recent Graduates) ▪ The Herbert Scoville Jr. Peace Fellowship, established in 1987, is a highly-competitive national fellowship program that provides recent college and grad school graduates with the opportunity to gain a Washington perspective on key issues of peace and security. Twice yearly, the fellowship's Board of Directors selects a group of outstanding individuals to spend six to nine months in Washington. Supported by a salary, the fellows serve as full-time junior staff members at the participating organization of their choice. [Visit website.](#)

Davis Fellowships (Language Study) ▪ Kathryn Davis Fellowships cover 100% of tuition, room, and board for one summer of summer language study from beginner to graduate levels in any of the eleven languages offered at the Middlebury College Language Schools: Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Hebrew, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Spanish, and Russian. The Davis Fellowships are merit-based and intended for exceptionally qualified individuals with demonstrated interest in one or more of the following areas: international, global, or area studies; international politics and economics; peace and security studies; and/or conflict resolution. Individuals in other fields, including working professionals, are encouraged to apply if their field of expertise requires them to study one of the critical languages listed above. [Visit website.](#)

Academic Position: Program Officer ▪ The Joan B. Kroc School of Peace Studies at the University of San Diego seeks a Program Officer (PO) for the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice (IPJ). The PO is a professional member of the staff who is knowledgeable in the fields of conflict resolution and/or human rights and has work experience in conflict or post-conflict settings where s/he worked with civil society, security sector and/or government leaders in strategic peacebuilding. The PO will initiate and/or assist with the design and management of new and ongoing strategic peacebuilding programs, draft and edit publications and grants, and contribute to the long and short-term planning of the Institute. The PO will support the educational, research and outreach activities of the IPJ and the Kroc School of Peace Studies and open and integrate the work of the IPJ for faculty and student understanding through reports, research, and monitoring and evaluation of field projects. The PO serves as a liaison to external and internal constituencies, presenting papers and talks on behalf of the Institute. Works under and receives general guidance and direction from the Director. May supervise program assistants, graduate, undergraduate, and high school student interns, work-study students and volunteers. [Visit website.](#)

Please send information on Catholic peacebuilding to cpn@nd.edu. To unsubscribe to this listserv, respond to this email with "UNSUBSCRIBE" in the subject heading. If you have received this email as a forward, you may subscribe to the listserv by emailing cpn@nd.edu.

Contact us: 100 Hesburgh Center ▪ Notre Dame, IN 46556 ▪ USA
[574.631.6970](tel:574.631.6970) ▪ cpn.nd.edu

The Catholic Peacebuilding Network (CPN) is a voluntary network of practitioners, academics, clergy and laity from around the world which seeks to enhance the study and practice of Catholic peacebuilding, especially at the local level. The CPN aims to deepen bonds of solidarity among Catholic peacebuilders, share and analyze "best practices," expand the peacebuilding capacity of the Church in areas of conflict, and encourage the further development of a theology of a just peace. While it is a Catholic network, the CPN believes that authentic and effective Catholic peacebuilding involves dialogue and collaboration with those of other religious traditions and all those committed to building a more just and peaceful world.

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Gerard Powers, Coordinator
Kristin Haas, Research Associate
Catholic Peacebuilding Network
Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies
University of Notre Dame
100 Hesburgh Center
Notre Dame, IN 46556
kroc.nd.edu ▪ cpn.nd.edu