

News Brief January 19, 2017

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Developments in Catholic Peacebuilding

South Sudan: The Church responds to national dialogue initiative

Just before Christmas, President Salva Kiir initiated a [national dialogue process](#) in South Sudan. Catholic leaders have addressed the politicization of the dialogue that has already started to occur. They have insisted on a commitment to radical non-violence to accompany the dialogue, and Archbishop Loro Lokudu of Juba has urged that forgiveness and reconciliation be made central themes of the dialogue. Read more about the Church’s demand for nonviolence [here](#) (free registration required), and see more about Archbishop Lokudu’s comments [here](#).

South Sudan: Bishop Tombe seeks permission to mediate with rebels

The Bishop of Yei, Erkolano Lodu Tombe, who is also Chairperson of the Yei Church Leaders’ Ecumenical Team, has sought permission to enter jungle areas and dialogue with rebel fighters to try to help mediate peace. The concern from Church leadership is that they not be seen as representing the

interests of any one party, which could present danger for passing through checkpoints along the way to meet with the rebels. Read more [here](#).

El Salvador: Marking the anniversary of the 1992 peace agreement

At a press conference on January 15, Bishop Gregorio Rosa Chavez remembered the peace agreement of 1992, stating, “The spirit of peace must be retrieved tomorrow, because we signed the peace, but we do not live in peace, and even less reconciled.” A lack of political agreements and continued social violence has hampered peace in the country, and Bishop Chavez announced that the Church was willing to mediate dialogue between gangs and government authorities if favorable conditions for genuine dialogue can be established. Read more on Bishop Chavez’s comments [here](#) and [here](#).

The Democratic Republic of Congo: *The Washington Post* highlights the crucial role of the Congolese bishops in the effort for peace

[“Can the Catholic Church save democracy in Congo?”](#) This is the question examined by Karen Attiah in a January 6 opinion piece in *The Washington Post*. Attiah affirms the indispensability of the Church in Congo for advancing the fragile peace agreement, despite, she observes, a frequent lack of recognition from many outside the country. Attiah writes, “While a good portion of Western commentary has made only passing reference to the mediating role of the Catholic bishops, their role has been crucial — and it underlines the importance of Christian institutions in Congo’s post-independence politics. In fact, history shows that Congo’s Catholic clergy very well might be the force to prevent Africa’s second-largest nation — and the surrounding Great Lakes region — from falling into the abyss.”

Colombia: Peace talks with the ELN set for February 8

Peace talks between the Colombian government and the guerilla organization the ELN, the country’s second largest rebel group, have been stalled since March of 2016. However, with the ELN agreeing to release former MP Odín Sanchez, who has been held hostage since April of 2016, the sides have been able to set a date to finally begin talks. Archbishop Darío de Jesús Monsalve Mejía, who is on the Catholic Church Commission following the dialogue, will continue to accompany the process. See the latest news update [here](#). And click [here](#) to read more on Archbishop Monsalve Mejía’s involvement.

Nigeria: A challenge to the “culture of brutality”

Archbishop Ignatius Kaigama of Jos, President of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria, has called upon the Nigerian government to do more to stem violence against religious minorities, mostly Christians and Shi’ite Muslims, in Southern Kaduna. The appeal follows an outbreak of mass violence in the area, with an estimated 808 people killed and \$17.5 million worth of damage to property and food products. Archbishop Kaigama denounced the brutality as a symptom of an increasing “culture of impunity, chaos, anarchy, and doom” to which the government is not adequately responding. See the full statement [here](#).

Resources

Conciliation Resources emphasizes the role of Church leaders in building peace in the Central African Republic

In a policy brief published in December 2016, Conciliation Resources lays out strategies for reconciliation in the aftermath of conflict in the Central African Republic. The brief points to the involvement of religious leaders to challenge “the religious narrative of conflict” as a main priority, noting that “Throughout CAR, religious leaders of various faiths often possess the social capital, institutional resources and legitimacy in

their communities to access no-go areas, engage armed actors and successfully intervene to end violence and resolve conflict.” Find the full document [here](#).

Announcements

Letter for U.S. Catholic leaders to President-Elect Trump on abolition of nuclear weapons

The Washington Working Group of Pax Christi International has written a letter to President-Elect Trump urging him to support the abolition of nuclear weapons. To read the full document and to add your name to the letter, click [here](#).

The University of San Diego launches new master’s program and new peace studies publication

The University of San Diego has launched a [Master of Arts in Social Innovation](#) (MASI) at the Joan B. Kroc School of Peace Studies. This full- or part-time program includes a capstone project that gives students the option to work on a real-world project and receive seed funding through USD’s [Social Innovation Challenge](#). The application deadline is March 15, 2017.

Also, San Diego’s Joan B. Kroc School of Peace Studies presents the first issue of its [Kroc Peace Magazine](#) intended to share the different ways in which the school's commitment to the world manifests in the type of research, pedagogy and practice they follow. The articles written by the school’s faculty and staff reveal what they have been doing and discovering this past year, even when the work might have started years ago. The stories convey the broad spectrum of areas in which the Kroc School is leading change.

Symposium on the Role of Religion and Faith-Based Organizations in International Affairs

On January 23, the United Nations will host the Third Annual Symposium on the Role of Religion and Faith-Based Organizations in International Affairs. The event is organized by the General Board of Church and Society of The United Methodist Church, the General Council of Seventh-Day Adventists, and the World Council of Churches, and is co-sponsored by the United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force for Engagement with Faith-based Organizations, and the Committee of Religious NGOs at the United Nations. Msgr. Hector Fabio Henao, of Caritas Colombia and Director of Social Pastoral for the Episcopal Conference of Colombia, and also a Steering Committee member of CPN, will participate and discuss the current status of peace in Colombia. Click [here](#) to see a concept note on the event.

Marie Dennis of Pax Christi International honored

CPN offers congratulations to Marie Dennis, Co-President of Pax Christi International and CPN Steering Committee member, on being named Person of the Year for 2016 by the *National Catholic Reporter*. Dennis has been a tireless advocate for peace for decades, and her award is well-deserved. CPN is blessed to count her as a friend and partner. Click [here](#) for the full announcement.

Catholic University of South Sudan invites scholars for curriculum development assistance

The Institute of Applied Research and Community Outreach (IARCO) at the Catholic University of South Sudan is planning to implement workshops for faculty and staff to teach skills and tools related to Social Justice and Nonviolence, Reconciliation and Healing, and Conflict Analysis and Resolution in order to aid support faculty and students living in the deteriorating and unstable socio-political climate of South Sudan. IARCO is seeking input and support from scholars to help with planning the curriculum for these workshops. The initial planning workshop will be held February 2-4, but this is just the beginning of an

ongoing process. Remote participation is welcome. Click [here](#) to read the full announcement and to see contact information if you would like to lend your expertise.

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. Connect with us on Twitter [@Catholic_Peace](#) and on [Facebook](#).

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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