

The e-bulletin for the North West, linked to the National Justice and Peace Network (NJPN), is produced jointly within the dioceses of Lancaster, Liverpool, Salford, Shrewsbury and Wrexham. Please send diary dates to anneoc980@hotmail.com

AS UK RUSHES TO EVACUATE UK NATIONALS FROM SUDAN, ARE THERE GOING TO BE 'SAFE ROUTES' FOR THOSE LEFT BEHIND?

Joseph Kelly April 28, 2023: Isn't it just the way it goes ... after months of controversy, bad publicity and backlash, you finally get your way and even defy the European Court of Human Rights, and then along comes a flash conflict that throws everything you've said right back into the spotlight.

No doubt Suella Braverman has had better weeks, and our Home Secretary has remained predictably reticent and bullish in the face of the Sudan conflict, which has thrown up a whole raft of uncomfortable questions about the UK's much-vaunted policy on refugees.

Whilst several hundred British nationals have been evacuated from the fighting in Sudan, most common among the questions being echoed around the media and parliament this week was whether or not 'safe routes' existed for people who are not British nationals wanting to flee the conflict. Braverman had no hesitation in telling parliament: "We have no plans to do that."

The current advice to refugees from Immigration Minister Robert Jenrick is that The United Nations is operating "in most, if not all, of the countries surrounding Sudan" and his 'best advice' is for "individuals to present to the UNHCR", the UN's refugee agency. That's not a view shared by the UNHCR, which has refuted Jenrick's statement unequivocally: "There is no mechanism through which refugees can approach UNHCR with the intention of seeking asylum in the UK."

Speaking to GB News yesterday, Braverman reiterated the 'UNHCR safe route' line, and emphasised that UK policy remains that anyone found crossing the English Channel via the 'small boats' route was very likely to find themselves shipped straight back to Rwanda – a desperately wasteful 'air miles' journey for the hapless refugees. She also said that UK's priority was to evacuate UK nationals but, with a very flaky 72-hour ceasefire agreed, and so far just a few hundred of several thousand UK nationals evacuated, help for Sudanese refugees is clearly a long way down the road.

All this seems a very long way from the optimism of February, when Pope Francis, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland visited Sudan to try and move the nation towards peace. Unfortunately, whilst the visit was high on hopes and prayers, it was also undertaken in the stark awareness that there was an urgent need for someone to try and kickstart the process of reconciliation in Sudan, which has been torn apart – not only by some 60 years of conflict and division – but by a dogged reluctance on the part of political and social leaders to engage with peacemaking, recognition of atrocities and recompense for bereavement and dislocation.

It is estimated that in the past five years alone there has been some 400,000 deaths in Sudan, millions have been displaced and hundreds of thousands have experienced dreadful famine. This week the UNHCR said it was expecting some 270,000 refugees to cross into Chad and South Sudan, though reports are suggesting the high cost of transport out, a lack of advice and communication from officials at all levels and reluctance to issue travel documents is making escape for many difficult, if not impossible.

"Currently, there are no facilities to receive those crossing the border. Those who have arrived are camped at a school, and there are a few who have occupied a judge's compound," James Wani, South Sudan country director at Christian Aid, told *The Guardian* on Wednesday.

Kathryn Mahoney, global spokesperson for UNHCR, said refugees in Chad also need urgent help. "Most of the new arrivals are women and children," she said. "They are out in the open, sleeping in makeshift shelters or under the trees. New arrivals need protection and assistance."

Back here in the UK there has been a worrying lack of coherence from government ministers, giving the impression that whilst the Home Secretary may be in no doubts about her antagonism towards the stranger on our doorstep, others simply have no idea what the government policy on immigration is, or indeed if there currently is one at all.

Just yesterday Foreign office minister Andrew Mitchell appeared on Sky News and, when asked what "safe and legal routes" existed for a Sudanese person to claim asylum in the UK, replied "Well, at the moment those safe and legal routes don't exist. But the prime minister in the changes that we are making as part of the [Illegal Migration Bill] has said that we will be seeking to set up safe and legal routes." This is in direct contradiction of what Suella Braverman has been saying since Monday.

In the Commons yesterday, foreign secretary James Cleverly even seemed to play light of the Sudan conflict, saying it was just one of many conflict areas in the world, and that the government's migration reforms would be "as we have promised, establishing safe and legal routes".

Sadly, a week of dialogue and political debate will sound remarkably familiar to those working in conflict areas, and especially to Catholic and other aid agencies who are invariably left to pick up the pieces when trouble breaks out and politicians just kick the can down the road.

Back in February, when Pope Francis met with people displaced by the decades of conflict in Juba, the capital of South Sudan, he understood that things were about to get far worse.

"I want to renew my forceful and heartfelt appeal to end all conflict and to resume the peace process in a serious way," he told the crowd of several thousand refugees gathered in the city's Freedom Hall.

"There is no room for delay," Francis said to applause, his words echoing his message to the country's leaders the day before in which he criticised the "stagnant" peace process. In typically blunt and direct speeches across his February Sudan visit he urged the people to build "good human relationships as a way of curbing the corruption of evil, the disease of division, the filth of fraudulent business dealings and the plague of injustice".

South Sudan has accumulated some of the largest oil reserves on sub-Saharan Africa, but in 2021 a UN report revealed that aid the country's leaders had diverted "staggering amounts of money and other wealth" from public coffers and resources, and countless covert connections between African leaders and western governments and businesses mean that people typically come pretty far down the list of priorities when it comes to conflict resolution. The UN has warned that Millions of Sudanese civilians are in urgent need of food, shelter, clean water and medical aid, and looting is already rampant across the country, including at warehouses where humanitarian aid and food supplies are stored.

Even before this latest conflict, aid agencies, including many leading Catholic charities, have been providing assistance for some 15 million desperate and displaced people, with little meaningful help coming from the governments of wealthier countries. Over the past 48 hours the UK government may have pledged its support for getting UK nationals out of Sudan, but the stability and future of the country and its 41.8 million citizens remains an obviously low priority.

Those with political and analytical expertise on African affairs have long been warning that darker, larger forces are at work across Africa, with China and Russia in particular said to be keen on encouraging destabilisation, conflict and the seizing of natural resources and territories.

Back in 2014, whilst visiting Italy's largest military cemetery to commemorate the centenary of the First World War, Pope Francis issued a warning that: "Even today, after the second failure of another world war, perhaps one can speak of a third war, one fought piecemeal, with crimes, massacres, destruction."

The notion of a third world war being fought by proxy bears a chilling resemblance to what is happening currently in Africa, which by all accounts is becoming both a military and commercial battlefield for hawkish developed nations, the UK amongst them.

Sadly, our present government seems either acutely unaware of or disinterested in the dangers of regional conflicts in Africa spilling out into wider warfare, but instead seems naively preoccupied with sealing the UK's borders – not against military incursions, but against innocent, desperate citizens fleeing conflicts in which we have invariably had heavily-compromised interests.

It has been said by Christian leaders since the days of Jesus himself that until we divest ourselves of the notion of warfare as a means of solving our problems, there will ever be suffering, loss and disruption in our fragile world, and we will be doomed to repeat endlessly the bloody mistakes of our past.

Tragically, Sudan seems destined to become yet another name on the list of such dismal human failures. <https://www.thecatholicnetwork.co.uk/as-uk-rushes-to-evacuate-uk-nationals-from-sudan-are-there-going-to-be-safe-routes-for-those-left-behind-asks-joseph-kelly/>

- **Joseph Kelly** is a Catholic writer and political theologian

- **See also Sudan conflict: An update from CAFOD on what is happening and how you can help:** <https://www.thecatholicnetwork.co.uk/sudan-conflict-an-update-from-cafod-on-what-is-happening-and-how-you-can-help/>

HOLY LAND: THEIR INDEPENDENCE IS OUR TRAGEDY

Christian Palestinian Susan Rantisi Barhoum writes: April 25,2023:

Today, Israel celebrates 75 years of independence, while we, as Palestinians, commemorate 75 years since the Nakba (Catastrophe). The Nakba is not just an event in history, or a sad moment in our past, it is ongoing, as we continue to live the reality of the Nakba today.

It is about the hundreds of villages destroyed in 1948, the many killed, and the hundreds of thousands of people who lost their homes, livelihoods, and possessions, becoming refugees yearning for the day when they will return, my family among them. It is also about the Nakba that we suffer daily, as the occupation, discrimination, dispossession, restriction of freedom, the separation of families, the imprisonment of young and old, the continuous confiscation of land, harassment, humiliation, and injustice continue, and intensify. Despite efforts to force us to forget and the Israeli hope that the old will die and the young will forget, we will not forget.

Every Palestinian family has a story to tell about what happened; how can you expect them to forget and bury their childhood memories? Today, I think of my grandfather, George, and my father, Audeh, whose family we can trace to the fourth century in Lydda and is now scattered around the world. Despite the horrible situation they found themselves in after being forced out of their home along with thousands of others, losing everything they owned and everything familiar, they were able to teach us not to hate, but to remain steadfast and persevere despite the difficulties. I also think of my mother-in-law, Nelly, and her family. She married around the time of the Nakba and stayed with her husband while her family fled to Lebanon. They were never able to meet all together ever again.

It has been 75 years, and the Palestinians continue to be ignored, their struggle for freedom dismissed, overlooked, and condemned. How much longer can we suffer while the world remains silent?

However, I continue to live in hope and know that one day, the key to our home in Lydda that my grandfather carried till the day he died, and the keys that countless others carried and continue to carry will be used again, and the right of the Palestinians to return will be achieved.

Today, we remember all those who marched in fear of being killed, all those who lost their homes and villages, all those who became refugees, all those who died, and all who continue to suffer. We raise our voices on their behalf, raise our voices against the ongoing injustice that Palestinians face. So, to them and to the loving memory of my grandfather, father, and mother-in-law, and to all who have lost their land, homes, and lives during the Nakba and to this day. We will continue to remain steadfast and live in the hope that the truth will come to light and justice will one day prevail, and the right of the Palestinians to return will be achieved.

Their Independence is Our Nakba! استقلالهم نكبتنا

PALESTINE – ISRAEL

Ann Farr, Chair of Pax Christi England and Wales (PCEW), was a member of the Pax Christi International delegation to the Holy Land. 13 members from 6 countries took part in a visit that enabled them to reconnect with Pax Christi partners, see, first-hand, the facts on the ground, meet with religious leaders, activists, NGO, and UN representatives, and most importantly, to hear from those whose daily lives are affected by the Israeli occupation. Their Witness Testimony can be read below....

A TESTIMONY OF WITNESS *“Blessed are the eyes that see what you see.”* Luke 10:23

What We Saw, What We Heard, What We are Compelled to Do

During the first two weeks of February, a delegation of thirteen members of the international Catholic peace movement, Pax Christi, travelled to the Holy Land. We came from six countries with a united purpose to reconnect with Pax Christi partners, see, first-hand, the facts on the ground, meet with religious leaders, activists, and those providing direct service and to speak with those affected by the occupation. Most importantly, we wanted to reaffirm our steadfast commitment and solidarity with our Palestinian sisters and brothers in their legitimate demand for freedom, justice, and equality.

What we witnessed was nothing short of heart-breaking. Families living in daily fear that their homes could be demolished, at a moment's notice, for lack of a building permit which is rarely approved by the Israeli authorities. Farmers who must choose between tending their animals and crops or being violently attacked by settlers. Human rights activists and other civil society spokespeople threatened for speaking truth to power and advocating for children, women, prisoners, or anyone whose rights are being violated. Bedouin communities who struggle to retain their way of life as they face sweeping eviction orders. We listened to stories of grief, dispossession, land confiscation, and imprisonment. We heard voices filled with fear, anger, defiance, and hopelessness. Everywhere, individuals expressed

their frustrations with the ineffectiveness of the Palestine Authority and their grave concern for increased violence and repression in the future as the new Israeli ultranationalist government took control.

What we witnessed was nothing short of amazing. Caring teachers who transform rooms and playgrounds into places of safety and joy. Children who, like all children, delight in sharing what they are learning. Women who refuse to be overtaken by their situation and instead find ways to plant gardens, learn new skills and create income producing cooperatives. Organisations that offer a safe space for people to share their stories of loss and pain as well as hopes and dreams, thereby supporting one another and strengthening each other's resolve. We walked with international volunteers who accompany those under threat, using their presence as a deterrent from attacks by soldiers and settlers. We listened to journalists and NGO workers who are determined to tell the world of the daily indignities inflicted on an occupied people.

We came to fully appreciate the phrase, "to exist is to resist". How the mere act of going-on with one's everyday activities is a powerful form of nonviolent resistance. Our witness of SUMUD, a word that has come to define Palestinian refusal to give up and their steadfast determination to hold on to what is rightfully theirs, was humbling and inspiring.

What we witnessed was nothing short of an unfolding, deliberate plan to disenfranchise one group of people for the benefit of another. We saw the ever-expanding illegal Jewish settlements and the network of separate highways, bridges, and tunnels which support them. A modern infrastructure designed solely for the use and benefit of Israeli citizens. We stood at the foot of the monstrous thirty foot-high, Israeli Wall which strategically weaves deep into the West Bank severing Palestinian families and communities from their land and each other. We watched as the checkpoints, barriers, and a permit system for Palestinians, administered solely by Israel, create unimaginable hardships that hinder Palestinians' access to every aspect of their daily life – work, school, healthcare, and the freedom to worship.

Sadly, the situation in the Holy Land is not a new development, and the international community, including those who play leadership roles in it, are well aware of the reality facing the people of Palestine, which we have witnessed painfully. We ask: when will the international community act to bring freedom, justice, and dignity to the Palestinian people, in line with relevant UN Resolutions, and international law, and especially in light of the recent reports issued by human rights organisations?

What we witnessed is a cruel, unjust military occupation that has been allowed to exist for over 55 years. What we witnessed is the brutality of an oppressor, a discriminatory system that controls every aspect of Palestinian life, and begs to ask the question, is this not apartheid. What we heard loud and clear, from every Palestinian and Israeli peace activist we met, was a call for justice and equality and an immediate intervention by the international community to ensure that Israel adheres to all norms of international law. It was a cry for Palestinians to be seen and treated with dignity as human beings.

We have returned to our individual countries with stark memories firmly held in our hearts and minds. Our individual witness must now turn into collective action. We are committed to:

- educate others about the realities of the occupation;
- demand an end to the impunity provided by the international community, which has enabled Israel to flagrantly violate international laws, the Geneva Convention, The Rome Statute, and UN resolutions;
- actively engage with policymakers and religious leaders, sharing what we have seen and heard;
- call for accountability for the murder of journalist Shireen Abu Akleh as the first anniversary of her death approaches (May 11);
- promote the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI);
- encourage others to go and see – not just the dead stones of history but also the living stones – to talk with and listen to the voices of the Palestinian people. It is our hope that others will hear their stories, enjoy their hospitality, and then share what they have learned with others.

This year, Palestinians will commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Nakba - their catastrophe - when over 750,000 Palestinians were forced by fear or violence to flee their ancestral homes and the systematic destruction of 400 plus Palestinian villages was carried out. We are committed to honouring this sombre occasion and ensuring it receives the attention it rightly deserves. **We are compelled to continue to bear witness and to remain steadfast in our solidarity.**

<https://paxchristi.net/2023/03/15/pax-christi-international-publishes-a-testimony-of-witness/>

- **Fact sheet on demolitions in East Jerusalem:** <https://www.oikoumene.org/news/fact-sheet-on-demolitions-in-east-jerusalem-a-source-for-credible-information>
- **EAPPI:** <https://www.oikoumene.org/news/ecumenical-accompaniers-help-people-feel-safer-in-palestine-and-israel>

ANNIVERSARY: SHIREEN ABU AKLEH

Ann Farr adds: During the visit we met with the family of Shireen Abu Akleh, the Palestinian Journalist who was killed by an Israeli military sniper a year ago on May 11. The family have continually asked for Justice for Shireen and none has been forthcoming. Her anniversary is very close to the 75th anniversary of the Nakba – the Palestinian Catastrophe. We ask you to –

- tell her story <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2022/12/7/they-silenced-her-the-fight-for-justice-for-shireen-abu-akleh>
- send messages of solidarity and prayer to Shireen's family via her family member in our Pax Christi Partners in Bethlehem aei@p-ol.com
- include prayers and hold silent vigils for justice and an end to the occupation;
- contact your Elected Representatives to ask that the killing of Shireen by a member of the Israeli military, as has been well documented, is publicly acknowledged by your Government and that the perpetrator is charged;
- on Saturday, May 13, 12-4pm, join Pax Christi at the NAKBA 75 – National Protest: Free Palestine – End Apartheid <https://www.palestinecampaign.org/events/nakba-75-national-protest/>

A letter from Shireen's brother, Anton Abu Akleh in response to a message from the Pax Christi International Pilgrimage Group:

Dear all,

I hope this finds all of you well. Apologies for the late response and very much appreciate your support, solidarity and concerns.

The family's main concern is to ensure justice for Shireen, one year has passed and we are still working tirelessly to achieve justice for her, although we managed to have an FBI open and investigation, thanks to the support received from US senators. Unfortunately, no support was extended from the EU at all other than expressing condolences; the EU is a major player in the region and mainly with Israel thus it's important to keep this issue of Shireen going on until justice is served.

Israel has enjoyed impunity which is encouraging to maintain this policy of targeting journalists to silence the voices who are covering the suffering of the Palestinian people under the Israeli occupation. We believe it's time for the EU to take a stand and ensure a full and credible investigation is set in place for every crime committed, this can only be achieved by strong and effective voices raised with politicians and stakeholders.

A simple request to politician, special those who are pro-Israel that it is important at this time to hold this occupation responsible for any acts, mainly targeting journalists like Shireen, accountable; noting that the family was not ever contacted by the Israeli government at all, in fact they were constantly trying to cover up their acts but releasing fake videos and misleading narratives about the killing.

The solidarity we receive from friends and concerned people like you is very important for us and we depend on this support to ensure such killing is prevented in the future, speaking out keeping Shireen legacy is very important and hopefully it will bring a positive outcome.

Kind regards.

Anton Abuakleh

DAOUD NASSER UK SPEAKING TOUR

Daoud Nasser from the **Tent of Nations** <https://tentofnations.com/> is visiting the UK in May with two main speaking events in London and Liverpool.

LIVERPOOL: Thursday 25 May 6pm-8pm (Light refreshments from 6- 6.30pm). Quaker Meeting House, 22 School Lane, Liverpool, L1 3BT

The North-West Sabeel-Kairos regional group are delighted to invite you to meet and hear from Daoud at the Quaker meeting house in Liverpool. Daoud will present information and stories about the Tent of Nations, following which there will be chance to ask questions and discuss the situation for Daoud and so many other Palestinians struggling to stay on their land in Palestine. Zaytoun goods will also be on sale. This event is free, and registration is not required. Please contact Lynn McAllister on lynnmc@uwclub.net if you need any more information.

Book here for LONDON event Sunday 28 May 2pm, Bloomsbury Baptist Church, 235 Shaftesbury Avenue, London WC2H 8EP: <https://app.donorfy.com/form/M1Z13YVCZ8/we-refuse>

More info: info@sabeel-kairos.org.uk

HOLY LAND: EYEWITNESS REPORT FROM AIDA REFUGEE CAMP

Fleur Brennan April 23, 2023

During their parish pilgrimage to the Holy Land last week, Fleur Brennan and her husband Colin from Holy Apostles, Pimlico, central London, visited Aida refugee camp, just outside Bethlehem. They brought some children's clothes, coloured pencils and art materials for the refugees.

Fleur Brennan writes: The torrential rain and thunder driving our sodden band of pilgrims back from Jerusalem to Bethlehem on Wednesday afternoon gave us a welcome opportunity to visit the Aida refugee camp there, tracing the footsteps of Pope Francis in 2014, where we were welcomed at the Aida Youth Centre. As the rain let up, trying to keep our feet dry, we picked our way round the remaining puddles through the entrance, under the iconic arch surmounted by a huge replica key, representing the individual keys to their homes all the families took during the expulsion from their houses in 1948, when they were promised they would shortly return. Now it is the grandparents who guard their families' keys, clinging to hope that one day at least their grandchildren will be able to return.

First established in 1950, the camp in the northern part of Bethlehem, is crammed into an area of 0.07 square kilometres, surrounded on two sides by the separation wall. Initially, the refugees, both Muslim and Christian, lived in 94 green fabric tents but in 1956, UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees) replaced the tents with single-storey cinder block housing units, still standing today as foundations for new floors built above by each new generation of families. Overcrowding is chronic, with 5,500 men, women and children jam-packed into the narrow streets, with their fragile infrastructure of limited water supplies, unstable electricity and unreliable sewage system.

As afternoon turned to evening, it would have been easy to feel intimidated, but in fact we were heading for a heart-warming welcome at Aida Youth Centre, where the Executive Director, Anas Abu Srour, was eager to show how their work inspires hope and resilience in the beleaguered children and young people of the camp. Proud and resourceful, they are incredibly plucky and creative, producing handiwork, crafts, pictures, story-telling and cartoon creations.

Anas is working tirelessly to resist non-violently the systematic intimidation meted out by Israeli forces. Of all the refugee camps in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, Aida is the most blighted by Israeli violence and military incursions. The United Nations report an increasing number of injuries as a result of excessive force by the Israeli military. Counsellors in the two UNRWA schools in and near Aida work continuously to mitigate the stress and trauma the children experience, and UNRWA partner organisations, like the Aida Youth Centre put on activities providing recreation and mental and emotional support to the youngsters. They are struggling against massive odds. Just days before our visit, the residents had been subjected to another of the regular onslaughts of their streets being sprayed with skunk water, otherwise known as liquid sewage or sh*t spray.

Israeli forces regularly use tear gas here as part of their campaign of intimidation. The Human Rights Centre of the University of California at Berkeley reported in 2016 that Israel's security forces carried out "widespread, frequent and indiscriminate" use of tear gas against Palestinian refugees in Aida refugee camp. The report surveyed 236 residents of Aida, all exposed to tear gas in strengths which can kill or maim, 84 percent of whom were exposed while in their houses. Recently, a soldier admitted that they used the camp for training exercises in tactics of repression.

Each morning, men wake at 2am to join other West Bank workers employed in cheap labour by Israel, who have to queue for many hours to pass through the checkpoints of the separation wall, and don't arrive home until 5pm. "It is humiliating," said Anas. "Every day, workers have to endure this tortuous wait to get through the separation wall, and labour at menial jobs on construction sites or cleaning, just to feed their families."

One of the Centre's workers, Saed Zboan, showed us an inspiring but poignant set of drawings by the kids in the centre. "This is absolutely their own creation, because they wanted to tell this story as a cartoon," Saed told us. "Here we are next door to an Israeli military training centre, which often uses the camp to target us and train the soldiers in aggressive tactics in their campaign of ethnic cleansing to get rid of us."

One day, children were playing near the gate of the training centre, which was open. As they were riding their bikes around, the soldiers drove through, so the children were scared and started running away and the military took their bicycles and drove off." Ignoring the danger, the children ran back to the gate which was now closed, and started rattling and banging on it.

"This was insane," said Saed. "They knew they could be beaten and killed". The commanding officer came out and demanded what they thought they were up to, and when the kids said "Your soldiers have stolen our bikes," the officer said: "Our soldiers don't steal." The children all shouted for him to go and look for the bikes to prove they were

telling the truth. They did a stand-in, as opposed to a sit-in, and refused to go away until the commander went to search for their bikes. Shortly, he appeared with the stolen bikes and returned them. This was a rare example of non-violent resistance having an immediate and tangible result. The cartoon was the idea of one of the boys who got his bike back in this courageous way and is a lasting record of their success.

Having spent the afternoon listening to these bitter-sweet stories, we gave gifts of clothes and art materials to the Centre, before making our way out of the camp, stopping to photograph one four storey home, with geraniums on the balconies, possibly housing four generations, with a smart new car outside, and down the road a burnt-out car and graffiti over a map of the world, declaring "WE MUST RAPIDLY BEGIN TO SHIFT FROM A THINGS ORIENTED SOCIETY TO A PERSON ORIENTED SOCIETY" signed MLK.

As we headed for the famous arch and key, we met a couple on their way to break their fast in their iftar, who greeted us with "Salaam Aleikum", to which we gave the traditional reply, "Aleikum Salaam", after a truly inspiring, enriching and heart-rending visit.

Footnote: The total number of Palestinian children killed by Israeli forces in the West Bank so far in 2023 is 17, compared with eight in the equivalent period of 2022. During the first quarter of 2023, the number of Palestinians killed by Israeli forces (84) was almost four times higher than during the same period in 2022 (22), according to the United Nations Protection of Civilians Report. (OCHA)

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/47005>

LINKS: OCHA opt: www.ochaopt.org/ Aida Youth Center: www.aidacenter.org/

UNRW Aida Camp: www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/west-bank/aida-camp

- More than 100 Israeli and international civil society organisations have asked the United Nations to reject a controversial definition of antisemitism (IHRA) because it is being "misused" to protect Israel from legitimate criticism.

<https://www.theguardian.com/news/2023/apr/24/un-ihra-antisemitism-definition-israel-criticism>

CONFERENCE: HUMAN RIGHTS IN PALESTINE - RESPONSIBILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

April 24, 2023: The Balfour Project's annual conference on Wednesday, 17th May 2023, is entitled Human Rights in Palestine: Responsibility and Accountability, and is particularly timely.

This year marks significant 75-year anniversaries for both Palestinians and Israelis; anniversaries set against a background of an increasingly turbulent political situation, escalating violence and continuing denial of Palestinian human rights.

The right to national self-determination is crucial, and we continue to call for UK recognition of Palestine now, but as important to the lives of Palestinians under occupation is the way in which their human rights continue to be eroded by the actions of the occupying power; actions purporting to be security driven, but increasingly appearing to be designed to weaken Palestinian society, culture and cohesion and to isolate them from international contacts and support. Respect for Palestinians' human rights must not be postponed until their national rights are recognised. Our focus is on highlighting international law and advocating equality now, setting to one side the form of a future political agreement (if any).

The conference will be opened by Baroness Warsi. Our keynote speaker, Francesca Albanese, UN Special Rapporteur on the Occupied Palestinian Territories will set out the legal framework under International Law for the responsibilities of Israel as the Occupying Power and those of the International Community including Britain, to uphold Palestinian rights. The focus would then shift to a number of voices (including Palestinians) telling the truth about the dire situation today in the OPT and discussing what the UK and our international partners should do to advance equal rights and the rule of law. Finally, a panel of Parliamentarians will respond to the issues raised in the context of likely current and future political situation in the UK.

The conference brings together a range of distinguished speakers, including those with direct experience of day-to-day reality in Palestine. The aim is to analyse the current situation on the ground including the legal framework of the Occupation, Britain's role both historically and now, and what actions we and the international community can and should take, individually and collectively, to advance equality between Palestinians and Israelis and to ensure responsibility is identified and accountability required for continuing abuses of fundamental human rights.

The conference will be "hybrid" - face to face at Church House, Westminster, and online. Online tickets will enable you to watch the conference live, or catch up on the recordings for two weeks after the event. **Buy in-person or online tickets here:**

<https://billetto.co.uk/e/human-rights-in-palestine-responsibility-and-accountability-tickets-795130>

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/47014>

NEW REPORT BY JESUIT REFUGEE SERVICE UK SHEDS LIGHT ON NAPIER BARRACKS

March 29, 2023

The Jesuit Refugee Service UK (JRS UK)'s report: ***Napier Barracks: the inhumane reality*** shines a light onto the experiences of people placed in the asylum camp at the disused Napier Barracks in Kent.

JRS UK ran an outreach service to Napier for two years from October 2020. What they saw on the ground was deeply troubling: the site was bleak and rundown, the setting was securitised, the accommodation overcrowded. This all took a serious toll on the mental health of those put there:

"Throughout my life, I have acquired different identities, and each has carried their own unique adjectives. Once I was a smart student who was passionate about literature and history, spent years painting landscapes and portraits, then a hardworking social worker who wanted to aid those who were in need and empower those who were left behind. And one day I was just an "illegal immigrant", an "invader", "swarm" or whatever they call people like me from newspapers to the halls of the Houses of Parliament.

Truthfully, I had not cared about this kind of language until I became a subject of it. Then I realised these are not just words. They build a completely new identity, which then justify how you will be treated, seen and talked about. The language that dehumanises people makes it seem acceptable to place them in inhumane conditions and cut off from society. Acting as if they are criminals by putting them in a disused army camp, surrounded by barbed wire fences and keeping them under their constant watch." - Erfan (a refugee friend being supported by JRS UK)

<https://www.jesuit.org.uk/news/new-report-by-jesuit-refugee-service-uk-sheds-light-on-napier-barracks>

The report draws from the accounts of 17 forcibly displaced people supported by JRS UK held in Napier Barracks between July and November 2022.

Find out more and download the report here: <https://www.jrsuk.net/napier-report/>

WOC CELEBRATES EXPANDED VOTING AT VATICAN SYNOD

Press release For Immediate Release: April 26, 2023

Today, in a historic move, the Vatican's synod office expanded participation in the Synod of Bishops, granting non-ordained lay persons—including women—the right to vote as full members of the body. In an April 26 press conference, Cardinal Mario Grech, secretary-general of the Synod, and Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich, relator general of the 2023 and 2024 Synod of Bishops, expressed that this change allows for the participation of 70 non-bishop voting members at the upcoming Vatican synod in October 2023.

The Women's Ordination Conference celebrates this development in the church's history toward greater co-responsibility and equity between women and men at the synod. This is a significant crack in the stained glass ceiling, and the result of sustained advocacy, activism and the witness of the collaborative "Votes for Catholic Women" campaign, of which the Women's Ordination Conference played a founding role.

In 2018, WOC led the call for voting rights for women at synods by demonstrating peacefully outside of St. Peter's Square only to be manhandled and harassed by Vatican police. For years Vatican representatives and bishops resisted, moving the goalpost with every synod as to why women were not allowed to vote. The unspoken reason was always sexism.

In the near future, we hope that the synod continues to develop into a fully representative body of the people of God. This is an important step on the path toward gender parity, and we will continue our persistent efforts to work for lasting structural changes in the church. As we have said repeatedly during the synodal process: There is no turning back.

Contact: Kate McElwee, Executive Director kmcelwee@womensordination.org

<https://www.womensordination.org/2023/04/woc-celebrates-expanded-voting-at-vatican-synod/>

Founded in 1975, the Women's Ordination Conference (WOC) is the oldest and largest organization working to ordain women as priests, deacons, and bishops into an inclusive and accountable Roman Catholic Church. A feminist voice for women in the Roman Catholic Church, WOC is a grassroots-driven movement that promotes activism, dialogue, and prayerful witness to call for women's full equality in the Church. <https://www.womensordination.org/about-us/>

OPINION: PROCESS, PROTOCOL & THE PROBLEM WITH THE CIVIL SERVICE

Jon Kuhrt April 24, 2023

Dominic Raab's resignation as Secretary of State for Justice and Deputy Prime Minister has led to intense discussion about the relationship between Ministers and the Civil Service. This follows similar controversies around the conduct of Priti Patel when she was Home Secretary.

In January this year, I completed a 4-year secondment into the Civil Service. I was one of a team of Advisers who joined the Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) team in the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). It was a fascinating experience during a time of social crisis and political turbulence.

In 4 years I worked under 4 different Prime Ministers and 6 different Homelessness Ministers. During the pandemic, being part of the team coordinating the national effort to end rough sleeping, known as Everyone In, proved to be one of the most demanding but memorable experiences of my life.

After 25 years working for charities, I relished the opportunity to directly influence the government's approach. I worked alongside many great colleagues but as a secondee, I never considered myself a 'proper' Civil Servant. And the wider working culture of the Civil Service was a source of continual fascination, and frustration, to me.

In my first few days I joined an induction day with about 100 others where we heard presentations about Civil Service values and ethics. A Senior Civil Servant gave a talk and referred to the recent resignation of Home Secretary Amber Rudd relating to the Windrush immigration scandal. In the Q&A after the talk, I put up my hand and asked: 'There must have been lots of senior people involved in these policies. How many Civil Servants were sacked or disciplined due to Windrush?'

The response in the room to my question felt like I had blasphemed against Civil Service culture. The previously erudite speaker spluttered out a response saying: 'Well...er...I don't think any Civil Servants were dismissed...but er...I know some were certainly moved into other roles.'

This encounter illustrated the key demarcation and tension between politicians and civil servants.

As politicians, Government Ministers live or die on public perceptions of their work. They operate in a world where their personal profiles are central. They win public plaudits but also ultimately carry the can when there is major failure. They have virtually no job security and can be sacked or forced to resign almost instantly. Therefore, it is no surprise that their political advisers manage their communications incredibly tightly. And all public announcements from across government are centrally coordinated into 'grid slots' by Number 10 Downing Street. In politics, how things look is fundamental.

In direct contrast, Civil Servants work in the background and actively avoid a high profile. Instead, their work is strictly guided by process and protocol. Success is marked by delivering their work in a timely, calm and well-ordered way. The Civil Service has developed into a system of immense bureaucracy, all built ostensibly to deliver on the elected Government's commitments. But its scale and culture provide a unique insulation from the realities that affect most businesses and employers, and a rare form of job security.

It was probably the most polite working culture I have ever experienced, far more genteel than any of the charities I have worked for. Problems or performance issues were rarely tackled head on and in 4 years I hardly heard any heated debates or arguments. Where problems did exist, you would find that colleagues left abruptly or were shuffled into different roles.

The key weakness of this demarcation is that neither side is focused enough on practical impact. Neither are institutionally designed to care enough about the actual difference that is being made on the ground. Time and again announcements for the start of initiatives were delayed due to 'waiting a grid-slot from No10' due to the central coordination of communications. This led to farcical situations where weeks would elapse between Ministers agreeing funding and it being allowed to be communicated. This put huge pressure on those delivering the frontline work. The desire to manage publicity compromised operational effectiveness.

Wherever you work, good communications and strong process are important aspects of any initiative. But in successful businesses and charities both are subordinated to operational effectiveness. If your operation does not work, businesses go bust and charities run out of money. But this does not happen in government. It shows how both publicity and process are good servants, but bad masters.

The dichotomy between politician's desire for profile and publicity and the Civil Servant's focus on process and protocol is the core axis of the brilliant 1980s BBC comedy *Yes, Minister*. In one memorable scene, the Minister Jim Hacker is arguing with his senior civil servant Sir Humphrey Appleby about British weapons falling into the hands of foreign terrorist groups. The Minister wants 'to do something' and Sir Humphrey is urging him to do nothing. It leads to a discussion about good and evil and what the point of government is. Like all the best comedy, it is a scene of genuine depth and weight:

Jim Hacker: 'Humphrey: have you ever known a Civil Servant to resign on a matter of principle?'

Sir Humphrey: 'I should think not! What an appalling suggestion.'

Jim Hacker: 'For the first time I fully understand that you are purely committed to means and not to ends.'

Sir Humphrey: 'As far as I am concerned Minister, and all my colleagues, there is no difference between means and ends.'

Jim Hacker: 'If you believe that Humphrey, you will go to hell.'

And like all good satire, it exaggerates reality to expose truth.

In my 4 years working for the government, almost everyone I worked with wanted to make a real difference but I was also continually struck by the intransigence of the system which mitigates against genuine change. I think this is a key factor in fuelling the frustrations which are played out in public disputes between Ministers and their senior Civil Servants.

It is easy to analyse and criticise, but what should be done to manage this tension better? Well, the good news is that a model exists and it's the one I experienced through being seconded into the Civil Service.

All Government departments should take the example from the Rough Sleeping Initiative and develop mixed teams of experts who work alongside the civil servants. Those with frontline experience of managing the work 'in the real world' are needed to focus and target resources in the right way. For example, the Civil Servants working on improving building safety should draft in experts from construction companies who understand the issues and what needs to be done. Rather than be *politicised*, the Civil Service should be *operationalised*.

Sure, a mixed team such as this creates clashes of culture – but these are the tensions which are necessary. This is how change happens in the real world. In my experience the civil servants appreciated having colleagues who knew the business from the sharp end. The bubble in which the Civil Service operates needs to burst.

The involvement of those with senior experience of managing change would bring a vital emphasis on the most important aspect: the practical impact of policies and initiatives. And this is the focus needed to manage the dysfunctional tension and intransigence between political profile and bureaucratic process. Wisdom is proved right by her actions. Good policies lead to positive change. The 'means' must be focused around the 'ends' they produce.

The practical impact should be the guiding principle around which everything is managed. This is the way to rebuild trust and confidence in both politicians and the Civil Service.

<https://gracetruth.blog/2023/04/24/process-protocol-the-problem-with-the-civil-service/>

• **Jon Kuhrt** has worked with people affected by homelessness and poverty for 30 years. He is a former government adviser on how faith groups address rough sleeping and is now CEO of Hope into Action.

TWO NEW VACANCIES AT CHURCH ACTION ON POVERTY

Your Local Pantry Development Workers

We are looking for two people to work with our 'Your Local Pantry' programme to support Pantry development and support existing Pantries. You will work with potential new organisations to find appropriate Pantry partners; provide Pantry partners with support, advice and training to set up operationally successful Pantries within the 'Your Local Pantry' network and support existing Pantries to be sustainable, value-centred, member-led and positively impact members' lives.

We are advertising for two roles with a focus on different geographical areas. The Development worker (North) will focus on northern England (North East, North West and Yorkshire), Scotland, Northern Ireland and North Wales. The Development worker (South) will focus on southern England (London, South East and South West) and South Wales.

Closing date: Tuesday 2 May at 10:00am Interviews: Thursday 9 May and Friday 12 May. Find out more and apply:

<https://www.church-poverty.org.uk/ylpdevelopmentworker/>

CLIMATE CAMPAIGNERS ATTEND OPEN-AIR MASS OUTSIDE PARLIAMENT

Jo Siedlecka April 23, 2023

A beautiful open-air Mass was celebrated on Saturday afternoon - a few steps from Westminster Abbey and the Houses of Parliament. Organised by the *Laudato Si* Movement, the celebrant was Fr Joe Ryan, parish priest at St John Vianney's parish in West Green and former chair of Westminster Diocese Justice and Peace. Although there was continuous noise of passing demonstrators drumming and whistling, the congregation - led by a cantor - easily rose above it, beginning with '*I the Lord of Sea and Sky*', and the Taize chant '*Oh Lord hear My Prayer*'. During the Offertory they sang the Franciscan hymn '*All Creatures of Our God and King*'.

In his opening remarks Fr Joe said it was a privilege to be allowed to celebrate Mass in such a location. He said: "When *Laudato Si* came out I began underlining particular sentences - then I realised it was so important I had to underline it all!"

In his homily Fr Joe said: "One of the prayers I'm going to say soon about the offering of the bread and wine is: '*Blessed are you Lord God of all creation.*' And that's why we are here this afternoon. Giving praise to God and hoping and praying that our planet will survive - and the devastation that we are demonstrating against will not prevail.

"One of the people that inspired me many years ago was in the documentary by Al Gore, in which he depicted a child meeting with the grandparents in the year 2050 and asking: "Grandad you knew that all of this was happening. What did you do about it?" That to me has been the inspiration to try to do something, by way of cajoling, encouraging those who are in authority, those who are financial directors that it's not all about money it's about saving the planet. It's about caring for one another. And especially our future generations. And praise the Lord that we have a Pope who can inspire us. This letter - *Laudato Si* - has not just been written to us - it's been written to every single individual on the planet. It's a powerful document and praise the Lord for those who are trying to make it known...

Sometimes I'm ready to give up but we have to hang in there. I'm sure nobody would feel like that here. You're so full of faith and determined. And we'll keep that determination going.."

Prayers of the Faithful read by a *Laudato Si* volunteer were:

"We give thanks for this gathering and everyone who has come to London for it. We pray that all may draw hope and dare to dream of a better future.

We pray for all those in any kind of leadership. May they hear and respond to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.

We pray for peace especially in those countries riven by climate change causing conflict. May the international community be alerted to act to provide real help.

We pray for the police here giving thanks for their service in keeping people safe while preserving their right to make their voice heard.

We pray for the young fearful of their future. May they see hope dawn and real change begin to happen.

We pray for the sick especially those affected by air pollution, heat waves, drought and malnutrition and lack of clean water. May we work towards a just transition and fairer distribution of resources.

We pray for all environment campaigners who have lost their lives may they rest in peace and may their sacrifice not be in vain.

We give thanks for this beautiful planet and all the resourceful people that live on it. Give us a spirit of love for all the beauty you have created and of collaboration in caring for it."

At the end of Mass Fr Joe explained that he is retiring soon - after 52 years' service. He said: "It's nice to go out on high note - in front of the Houses of Parliament. The seat of government! Praise the Lord and thank you all very much." Fr Joe thanked the organisers and musicians and encouraged all those present to "keep up the good work saving our planet. "

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/47011>

LINKS

The Big One: <https://extinctionrebellion.uk/the-big-one/>

Christian Climate Action: <https://christianclimateaction.org/>

IONA RESOURCES

Iona Creation Liturgy: Digital download: A liturgy from Iona Abbey addressing God's call for humanity to care for Creation. The church has not always paid due attention to this requirement, but with the threat and experience of climate change, we can no longer, in prayer or action, be neutral. Taken from the Iona Abbey Worship Book. Includes an appendix of extra resources. 10 pages. £2.50 <https://www.ionabooks.com/product/iona-abbey-creation-liturgy-pdf-download/>

Nature, Life and Being: Digital download: **Joy Mead** This meditative look at climate change, the sacredness of all life and human responsibility inspires us to be attentive, caring and empathetic with all beings with whom we share the sacred space of the earth. 4 pages. £1.85 <https://www.ionabooks.com/product/nature-life-and-being-pdf-download/>

A Heart for Creation Chris Polhill Prayers, worship resources and reflections to help individuals and groups effect a change in mindset in relation to the environment, so that we learn to live gently and more in harmony with God's creation. £14.99 <https://www.ionabooks.com/product/a-heart-for-creation/>

Downloadable e-book version £10 <https://www.ionabooks.com/product/a-heart-for-creation-downloadable-book/>

Caring for Creation Together Emma Major This series of 40 full-colour visionary paintings, poems and reflections highlighting issues of climate justice and asking 'How can we bring about positive change together?' was first shown at COP26 by Tearfund. It can be used in a reading or action group, in church worship or for personal contemplation. £9.99

<https://www.ionabooks.com/product/caring-for-creation-together/>

Downloadable e-book version £6.99 <https://www.ionabooks.com/product/caring-for-creation-together/>

Heather Kiernan writes: Yesterday was **Earth Day** (20 April, 2023). What better way to celebrate it than by sharing some of my favourite poems about the environment in the coming week.

'Remember' by Joy Harjo is a beautiful poem that asks the reader to remember how connected they are to humanity and the earth. In her classically beautiful language, Harjo asks us to "Remember" everything from the wind to one's father, mother, and one's place in the universe. She moves on to discuss how interconnected all people are to one another and the other lives around them. Animals and plants all have their families and histories. They should be respected and listened to and asks us to be thankful for this wonderful life given as a gift by nature.

REMEMBER ~Joy Harjo

Remember the sky that you were born under,
know each of the star's stories.

Remember the moon, know who she is.

Remember the sun's birth at dawn, that is the
strongest point of time. Remember sundown
and the giving away to night.

Remember your birth, how your mother struggled
to give you form and breath. You are evidence of
her life, and her mother's, and hers.

Remember your father. He is your life, also.

Remember the earth whose skin you are:
red earth, black earth, yellow earth, white earth
brown earth, we are earth.

Remember the plants, trees, animal life who all have their
tribes, their families, their histories, too. Talk to them,
listen to them. They are alive poems.

Remember the wind. Remember her voice. She knows the
origin of this universe.

Remember you are all people and all people
are you.

Remember you are this universe and this
universe is you.

Remember all is in motion, is growing, is you.

Remember language comes from this.

Remember the dance language is, that life is.

Remember.

• **Joy Harjo** is an internationally renowned performer and writer of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. She served three terms as the 23rd Poet Laureate of the United States from 2019-2022 & is winner of Yale's 2023 Bollingen Prize for American Poetry.

HIROSHIMA G7 YOUTH SUMMIT April 25, 2023 - April 27, 2023 Hiroshima University

From 19 to 21 May, the coming G7 will take place in Hiroshima, in Japan. The Japanese Prime Minister, Kishida Fumio is from Hiroshima. He has stated: "The G7 firmly rejects any unilateral attempt to change the status quo by force or the threat or use of nuclear weapons."

Ahead of the G7 Summit in Hiroshima in May 2023, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) is organizing a G7 youth summit in Hiroshima from 25 to 27 April. Young people and students from all over the world, including the G7 countries, will meet with survivors, visit the Hiroshima Peace Museum, and connect with others to advance efforts for a world without nuclear weapons. The 53 participants will spend three days discussing and formulating recommendations for a world free of nuclear weapons. These recommendations will then be delivered to the leaders of their respective countries by the time of the G7 Summit. English will be the working language of the summit.

The summit is hosted and co-organised by The Center for Peace, Hiroshima University https://heiwa.hiroshima-u.ac.jp/05_English.htm **For the livestream from the public event, please click here:**
https://www.icanw.org/public_session_g7_hiroshima_youth_summit
https://www.icanw.org/g7_youth_summit https://www.icanw.org/g7_youth_summit

IPAN NATIONAL COMMITTEE STATEMENT ON ANZAC DAY 2023

Posted on 25 April 2023: Independent and Peaceful Australia Network ANZAC Day statement

On this ANZAC Day we remember all Australians who were killed in war, those who were incarcerated and abused as prisoners of war and those who sustained physical and psychological injuries as a result of war. We remember the many millions of civilian victims of war who have been killed, injured, raped and tortured. We remember the tens of millions of people internally displaced and forced to flee their countries of origin and seek asylum elsewhere. We remember the trillions of dollars of vital infrastructure destroyed by war. We also remember that war is not an accident. Wars are driven by powerful vested interests.

ANZAC was born during WWI.

UK Prime Minister Asquith and his government committed the UK to war with Germany. Australian governments under Prime Ministers Andrew Fisher and Billy Hughes were both committed to supporting the UK. Australians began killing Germans and being killed by them in New Guinea in September 1914. Of the 340,000 Australians who fought in WWI, 60,000 were killed and more than 100,000 others sustained permanent physical and/or psychological injuries as a result of Fisher and Hughes committing Australia to a war that served Britain's, not Australia's, interests.

Since WWII, the USA has dragged Australia into several disastrous wars.

The US under Presidents John Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford embroiled Australia in their foray into Vietnam from 1962 to 1973. Australian Prime Minister Robert Menzies eagerly committed Australia to this war and introduced conscription. Prime Ministers Harold Holt and John McEwan happily kept Australia involved. Australia's withdrawal from Vietnam began under John Gorton and was completed during Gough Whitlam's Prime Ministership.

More recently, US President George W Bush eagerly supported by Australian Prime Minister John Howard embroiled Australia in the wars in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria.

And now, Australia is again on the brink of being embroiled by the US in a war, this time against China. AUKUS and nuclear submarines will drag the Australian people into another disastrous war.

We must ask ourselves whose interests are served by these wars? Are the interests of the Australian people served by them? We know that many big corporations boom during war. Companies that manufacture planes, tanks, ships, weapons and ammunition benefit. Companies that mine iron ore and make steel benefit. Oil producers benefit. But how do these wars benefit Australian families and workers – people like you and me? Are we not being sacrificed?

If Australia was attacked militarily, we should defend ourselves.

But if not, why should we send our young men and women to a war because the USA demands that we do, when there is no clear benefit to people of Australia?

Lest we forget. Lest we forget the death, destruction, misery and displacement of war. We say, never again.

IPAN National Co-Ordinating Committee - 25 April, 2023.
<https://ipan.org.au/ipan-national-committee-statement-on-anzac-day-2023/>

MICHAEL WINTER RIP

April 23, 2023 **Martin Pendergast writes:**

Michael Winter has died. It is with great sadness that I received news this morning from Alison, Michael's wife, that Michael died last night, Saturday, 22 April 2023, aged 93. He had been in hospital for six weeks, and then got Covid on the ward. Michael Winter was ordained as a secular priest in 1955, following a conventional Catholic education and seminary training. The next 20 years consisted of a mixture of parish work, seminary teaching, and further studies in the universities of London, Cambridge and Fribourg. In 1968 he was summarily dismissed from a teaching post at the Beda College in Rome on account of this opposition to the birth control encyclical '*Humanae Vitae*'.

In 1975 he became chaplain to London University, and then Dean of St Edmund's College, Cambridge. In 1986 he resigned from the clergy, and worked from then on with Pax Christi, and in university teaching.

He was married to Alison, a solicitor, they had two sons, and lived in north London. He was a prolific author including '*Mission or Maintenance*' (1973), *Mission Resumed*, which suggested structural changes the Roman Catholic Church needs to make to become a missionary body in England, written as a successor to his book, *Mission or Maintenance*, for the National Pastoral Congress in 1980, *The Atonement (Problems in Theology)* (1994), providing an explanation of the Atonement which avoids metaphor and myth and the pitfalls of the theory of placating an angry God, and offers an intellectual solution which is compatible with the scriptures and tradition, as well as being acceptable to the reasonable expectations of the modern world, '*Misguided Morality*' (2002/2022), *Catholicism Retrieved* (2011), and *Recovering Catholicism - an overview review of the Catholic Church* (2014), and *Atonement by the Resurrection*, with a Forward by Cardinal Vincent Nichols (2017).

He was a former Chairperson of the Movement for a Married Clergy. Until physical frailty prevented him, he regularly attended St Joseph's Catholic Church, Bunhill Row, which he saw as embodying much of what a Church in the 21st Century could be. May he rest in peace and rise in glory.

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/47010>

- Michael's funeral will be next Thursday 4 May, 11am in the chapel of St Edmund's College, Cambridge (where Michael was Dean). MMaC will be represented but if you can and wish to attend, Alison, Michael's widow, would welcome that.
- Michael's latest book was *Is Catholicism Reformable?*

Anne O'Connor writes: I got to know Michael in 2009 through a story of mine, *The Prince* (an allegory about Jesus' entry into Jerusalem on a humble donkey) that was published in *Renew*, the newsletter of Catholics for a Changing Church. Michael had contacted me to say he enjoyed the piece and had also noticed a letter I'd written in the same volume in support of married priests. We corresponded several times over the ensuing months and arranged to meet at the screening of a new film on the subject of celibacy, *Conspiracy of Silence*, that was to be followed by a Q&A with a panel to debate the issue. Michael asked me to help hand out flyers for MMaC before the start of the event. We wondered how we would recognise each other and he suggested I send a current photo of myself. He said he was reluctant to forward his passport photo as it made him "look like an elderly drugs baron!" Instead, we decided I would spot him by the stack of leaflets in his hand. Of course, he was perfectly lovely and looked fine!

Here's the report I wrote about the film and the debate:

Conspiracy of Silence

"In the past if a priest broke his vow of celibacy by abusing a child all attempts were made to cover it up and he was allowed to stay. However, if he marries – even now – he has to leave the priesthood. The twisted logic of such decisions leaves many Catholics thinking what sort of church do we belong to?"

So ran the publicity blurb for a debate on celibacy within the Catholic Church which took place at the Odeon Cinema, Leicester Square, London on 14/9/2010 following a screening of the film ***Conspiracy of Silence***, written and directed by John Deery.

See a synopsis of the film here: www.conspiracyofsilence.co.uk

Starring a fine cast including Hugh Bonneville, Sean McGinley and Brenda Fricker, the film is by turns moving; harrowing; gripping and poignant, with a dramatic, if rather predictable, twist at the end. The film pulls no punches as it weaves together different stories, linked by the character of a dedicated investigative journalist, to build a picture of a Church that is out of date and lacking in compassion. One of the lead characters is based on the true story of an HIV positive Catholic priest who came back from many years on the Missions to be told 'there is no job for you here.'

Some thoughts after attending the debate which was on the motion '*Celibacy should no longer be a compulsory requirement for the Roman Catholic priesthood.*'

The debate was opened by Baroness Helena Kennedy in favour of the motion. In a stirring, articulate and well-researched address she pinpointed lust for power as the driving force behind issues that plague our society: the abuse of power in the Church with its male-centric culture, which continues to marginalise women and gays, as well as the hunger for power that incites men to rape women and sexually abuse children. In her experience as a human rights lawyer she said that there was not necessarily a link between enforced celibacy and the sexual abuse of children. She said that abuse can be found in the family, in social services, in education as well as in the Church: it is the Church's cover-up and mis-handling of this scandal within its own ranks that is the disgrace.

(Michael Winter, author and member of the Movement for Married Clergy, who was at the debate, does not share Helena Kennedy's view with regard Catholic Clergy abuse. He told me that, comparing like with like, the picture is bad for the Catholic Church: the clergy of the C of E and the non-Conformists have a much less tainted record. In Michael's opinion the only significant variable in this category of offenders is the obligatory celibacy.)

By contrast to Helena Kennedy, Bishop Malcolm McMahon, leading the speakers against the motion, seemed bogged down in Church history. His validation for compulsory celibacy seemed to be that it was 'tradition.' When challenged by a woman questioner about St Augustine's view of women and sex (sexual relations between a husband and wife being viewed as a mortal sin if purely for pleasure and only (!) as a venial sin if for procreation) he failed to give a direct answer. When a man in the audience pointed to the gospel reference to Peter's mother-in-law as evidence that he was married, the Bishop's reply was that we don't know for sure: Peter might have been a widower by that time.

Another speaker from the floor asked would the panel not regard Rowan Williams as a holy man – yet he is also a married man. Whilst married former Anglican clergy are permitted by the Catholic Church to be both priest and husband those against the motion argued that if all priests were allowed to be married they would not be flexible and would not be able to move around at short notice: this is nonsense. Many men have to work away from home: although less preferable than a 9-5 job they and their wives still manage to maintain a normal family life.

Frank Skinner, the stand-up comedian and broadcaster, expressed his wish for priests to be holier and a little closer to God than the 'ordinary man in the pew.' This notion presents an idealised view, putting the priest on a pedestal. Of course, the danger of being on a pedestal is that falling off is easy, and the damage caused by that fall may be impossible to repair. By contrast the two women speakers, Helena Kennedy and Professor Tina Beattie, viewed priests as human beings whose normal desires for love and marriage were being denied.

Fr John McGowan speaking on behalf of introducing married clergy was called to account by the Chairman, broadcaster Ernie Rea. Fr John appeared to lack passion for the cause, taking instead the pragmatic view that more priests, albeit married men (somehow, they seemed decidedly second-rate), would help ease the workload for already over-burdened priests with more than one parish to run. As Frank Skinner commented, it was a shame the 'against' team could not get a more outspoken priest for their panel. The telling response was: 'there are plenty, but no one was willing to sit on this platform.'

John Deery is to be applauded for his brave film and for bringing these matters into the open for public debate. Many present felt that if the Church continued to ignore this crucial issue it would drive people away, especially the young. For me, perhaps an even greater concern is that those who remain will be the evangelical wing to the far right who seem to espouse alarmingly rigid and uncompromising views, such as Jack Valero of Opus Dei who was booed from the floor for his hard-line comments on celibacy and chastity. As Fr Stephen Wang indicated, far from a decline in vocations seminaries are now fuller than in the previous five years, but is this due to a more conservative, fundamentalist type of young man coming forward? Or might the seminary be a place of refuge for those who have a repressed and immature sexuality as Helena Kennedy feared. Surely, we need well-balanced men entering the priesthood who can relate to the real world as they carry out their ministry. Indeed, as John Deery said, unless the Church moves into the real world of the 21st century the threat of polarisation is more than likely.

A Church that treats women as second-class citizens and puts homosexuals on a par with the lepers of Jesus' day conveys a message that is repugnant and unpalatable to many. The inevitable response is to either walk away, as many have done, or to simply ignore those aspects of Church teaching that are abhorrent and get on with doing the best one can to live a Christian life. This state of affairs cannot last. The Church will be left as a remnant: but a remnant of what? – narrow-mindedness; bigotry; a refusal to move with the times; exclusivity; male dominance; misogyny; homophobia? If Jesus were here on earth now would he really be bothered about whether or not we have a celibate clergy? Would his priority not be to break down unjust structures, especially those that restrict and oppress the poor and the marginalised: gays; outcasts; women?

DAY OF PRAYER FOR SURVIVORS OF ABUSE: TUESDAY 9 MAY

The Day of Prayer for the Victims and Survivors of Abuse is an important initiative that was proposed by the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors. The Holy Father welcomed the proposal and asked that each Bishops' Conference choose an appropriate date to mark the day.

Originally observed during the season of Lent, the Bishops, listening to the voices of victims and survivors, moved the date on which the Day is marked in England and Wales to the Tuesday of the Fifth Week of Easter. **Read more here:** <https://www.cbcew.org.uk/day-of-prayer-for-survivors-of-abuse/>

Resources for the day including intercessions, homily notes, prayers and activities: <https://www.cbcew.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2023/02/DPSA-Resources.pdf>

The 'Let's be Honest Group', a group set up to support survivor-centred initiatives such as this, provides resources and prayers for the day. **The Isaiah Journey** (formerly 'Let's Be Honest') is a working group of the Bishops' Conference that has grown out of the need for a pastoral-spiritual response to the suffering of victims and survivors of abuse in the Church. **Read more here:** <https://www.cbcew.org.uk/the-isaiah-journey/>

Listening with Love

The group has already released a resource called 'Listening with Love' – inviting people to reflect on the impact of abuse on individuals and the Church. **Read more here:** <https://www.cbcew.org.uk/listening-with-love/>

I will make a way in the wilderness

A focus for this year is an ongoing project which seeks to support parishes, communities and individuals which have been affected by the abuse of victims in particular where there is an allegation against a member of the clergy. This project is beginning on the margins with those who might have known or worked with the perpetrator and offering resources for their reflection and support. However, as with all work by the Isaiah Journey the experience of the survivor is central.

Resources include:

Serenity Prayer – Personal Reflection <https://www.cbcew.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2023/02/Serenity-Prayer.pdf>

Exploring Landscapes <https://www.cbcew.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2023/02/Exploring-Landscapes.pdf>

Intercessions <https://www.cbcew.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2023/02/Intercessions.pdf>

Labyrinth <https://www.cbcew.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2023/02/Labyrinth.pdf>

Additional Resources:

Let's Journey Together — A week of online Guided Prayer for all who have been affected by clerical abuse in the Catholic Church <https://www.cbcew.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2023/02/%E2%80%98Lets-Journey-Together-11-17-May-2023.pdf>

Join us in this safe space for FREE, one to one confidential sessions of Guided Prayer with your fully trained personal Prayer Guide. **Find out more and book your place:** journeytogetherij@gmail.com

Northampton Healing Garden <https://www.cbcew.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2023/02/Healing-Garden.pdf>

NJPN ANNUAL CONFERENCE TO FOCUS ON SUSTAINABILITY

Ellen Teague 2/02/2023: The National Justice and Peace Network (NJPN) has announced that its annual conference will take the theme: '*Sustainability? Survival or Shutdown?*'

Scheduled for 21-23 July in Derbyshire it will address issues crucial to the common good and the well-being of all creation, with a particular focus on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Echoing the words of Pope Francis in *Laudato Si'* that all issues are interconnected, as well as environment and especially the impact of climate change, we must consider the need for just and peaceful conflict resolution, economic justice, and stability.

The Diocese of Westminster Justice and Peace Commission, CAFOD, Christians Aware and the Columban team for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation are on the organising group. Children and young people are welcome and have their own parallel programmes. **Read more here:** <https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/46660>

A key issue identified at Conference 2022 was the need for truth and integrity in political and social engagement, good governance in all seats of power, local, national, and global.

Book NOW for NJPN Conference 21-23 July 2023

Download a writable PDF booking form on www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/conference/

DIARY

MAY

13 April to 9 May: GDAMS 2023 - <https://demilitarize.org.uk/gdams-2023-dates/>

9 Chester World Development Forum AGM, 7pm at The Unity Centre, Chester. Steve Hughes, the Chair of Chester Sustainability Forum, will give us an overview of the initiatives, campaigns and events currently happening or being developed by members of CSF.

9 Day of Prayer for the Victims and Survivors of Abuse <https://www.cbcew.org.uk/day-of-prayer-for-survivors-of-abuse/>

11 Anniversary of the death of Shireen Abu Akleh

13 NJPN AGM & Networking Day, London (tbc) www.justice-and-peace.org.uk 0207 901 4864

13 NAKBA 75 National Demonstration, London organised by the Palestine Solidarity Campaign
<https://www.palestinecampaign.org/events/nakba-75-national-protest/>

15-21 Christian Aid Week www.christianaid.org.uk 0207 620 4444

15 Conscientious Objectors' Day www.paxchristi.org.uk 0208 203 4884 www.ppu.org.uk 020 7424 9444

21–28 Laudato Si' Week www.laudatosimovement.org

25 Talk by Daoud Nasser from the **Tent of Nations** 6pm-8pm (Light refreshments from 6- 6.30pm). Quaker Meeting House, 22 School Lane, Liverpool, L1 3BT. Organised by North-West Sabeel-Kairos group info@sabeel-kairos.org.uk

JUNE

5 World Environment Day www.worldenvironmentday.global

18 Day for Life www.dayforlife.org

26 International Day in Support of Victims of Torture www.acatuk.org.uk 01395 577 669 and
<https://www.un.org/en/observances/torture-victims-day/>

● Many items taken from the daily e-bulletin Independent Catholic News www.indcatholicnews.com an invaluable free resources for up-to-date J&P news, events and in-depth articles.

● **Sign up** for regular news and information from NJPN including a **new fortnightly e-bulletin with a comprehensive round-up of current events, campaigns, e-petitions and resources** (plus copies of this newsletter & back issues for NJPN North West) at www.justice-and-peace.org.uk or contact ebulletin@justice-and-peace.org or admin@justice-and-peace.org.uk 020 7901 4864

● **Read the SPRING issue of MOUTHPEACE** the quarterly online newsletter for Shrewsbury, Liverpool and Lancaster dioceses <https://jpshrewsbury.files.wordpress.com/2023/02/mouthpeace-spring-2023.pdf>

The views expressed in this bulletin are not necessarily those of NJPN