

Holy Wisdom

Social Justice

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EDITOR'S NOTE: It is necessary that we recognize the need for us to gather ideas that actually work to develop respect, understanding, cooperation and harmony between the nations that have different views, feelings, expectations and beliefs. We are faced by times that call for us to begin to listen to one another, respect one another and most of all be tolerable of a variety of views. Our goal is to reach decisions, in which all individuals have the opportunity to communicate effectively. We are faced with challenges to reconsider our beliefs and attitudes as we encounter one another!

April, 2009

Indian Churches not on same hymn for elections in Kerala

Bangalore, India (ENI). Churches in southern India's Kerala state, the country's strongest Christian region, are taking diverging positions on national parliamentary elections scheduled for April. The Roman Catholic Church, which accounts for about half of the six million Christians in Kerala, has issued guidelines for voters that indirectly tell them to vote against the Communist party, the biggest component in the coalition that governs the state.

Turkey's Christians welcome Obama's defense of religious rights Warsaw (ENI). Minority church leaders in Muslim majority Turkey have welcomed U.S. President Barack Obama's defense of religious rights during a visit to the country. "The reference to religious freedom was needed it's a clear message that the world Turkey is aligned with is

aware there are problems here which can't be ignored" said Zskai Tanyar, the executive board chairman of Turkey's Association of Protestant Churches.

"The real issues isn't with laws or the constitution. Which is quite clear about religious freedom, but with attitudes and mentalities," Tanyar told Ecumenical News International in a telephone interview. "The State is making no effort to dissuade people from thinking Christians are their enemies."

Indian Churches delighted at victory of "secular" coalition

Bangalore, India (ENI). Churches and Christian groups in India have hailed as a victory for secular governance and a non-sectarian society the convincing victory of the ruling coalition that did much better than pre-election polls had suggested. The United Progressive Alliance coalition government led by the secular Indian National Congress party won 262 of the 543 seats in India's parliament although the most optimistic poll forecasts had estimated only 215 seats for the ruling alliance.

Ecological destruction is "sacrilegious" says Orthodox Church leader

Geneva (ENI). Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomeos I, seen by many of the world's Orthodox Christians as their spiritual leader, has called the destruction of the environment a "sacrilegious and sinful" act. The ecological crisis and particularly the reality threat for every form of life in our world, Bartholomeos said in a statement issued to mark World Environment Day on June 5th.

New Delhi (ENI). When International talks about climate change open in Copenhagen in December, there should be three empty chairs at the conference table, a Church of Sweden expert on sustainable development has urged. Lutheran pastor the Rev. Henrik Grape wants three chairs left empty at all future talks on climate issues to symbolize non-participants - poor, future generations and creation itself.

Washington (ENI/RNS). Indian government officials have denied visas to commissioners of a U.S. religious freedom watchdog panel for the second time since 2000, Religion News Service reports. Members of the U.S. Commission on international Religious Freedom were forced to cancel their plans to assess religious freedom in India. Panelist, who were scheduled to leave on 12 June, have been trying to obtain Indian visas for the past seven years.

Geneva (ENI). A United Nations group that vets non-governmental organizations that apply for accreditation to observe the international body, has rejected an international Christian Group after it refused to divulge members' names in China, citing fears about religious freedom. UN Watch, a Geneva-based advocacy and monitoring group, condemned the U.N. decision to reject the Dynamic Christian World Mission Foundation application as an NGO observer due to its refusal to accede to China's demands that it disclose member addresses in the People's Republic

Pakistan Christians say they are getting threats of suicide bombs

New Delhi (ENI) Christians in Pakistan say they are being threatened with violence by extremist groups claiming to represent Islam and they hope that a government offensive against militants in the Muslim nation will succeed. Christian groups say extremists in a number of instances had given them a choice - embrace Islam or ready themselves for attacks by suicide bombers. Two masked young men riding motorbikes without registration numbers in the Pakistan city of Lahore on 10 June threatened to blow up the Rabita Manzil, a complex that houses several Roman Catholic groups, including the church's communications office.

In advance of G8 Pope urges global order based on moral values

Rome (ENI). Poorer nations should have an "effective voice in shared decision making" about the global economy, Pope Benedict XVI has said in his latest encyclical, released on the eve of a meeting in Italy of the leaders of the Group of Eight industrialized nations. "This seems necessary in order to arrive at a political, juridical and economic order, which can increase and give direction to international cooperation for the development of all peoples in solidarity," the pontiff said in his encyclical, "Caritas in Veritate" (Charity in Truth), published on 7 July.

Adviser to Iranian president praises inter-religious dialogue

Astana, Kazakhstan (ENI). An adviser to Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has hailed inter-religious dialogue as the way forward, while another official has said Jews living in Iran are prepared to stay in the country. Speaking to Ecumenical News International during the Third Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions in Astana, Kazakhstan, on 2 July, the adviser, Mahdi Mostafavi said, "We are involved in dialogue with different religions and traditions for two reasons." Mostafavi explained, "One goal is to get to know better the other religions and traditions, and to understand them better and remove any misunderstanding of them. The second goal is to find common points between our (religion) and theirs, and to enrich our knowledge about the other religions and traditions, especially when we are talking and dialoguing with the Abrahamic religions (Christianity, Islam, and Judaism)

Evangelical US pastor Warren asks Muslims for interfaith action

Washington DC (ENIRNS). Warren spent his Independence Day here in the United States capital addressing the largest Muslim organization in North America. While publicity ignited before the speech the actual event had some competing fanfare, Religion News Service reports. The speech kicked off 40 minutes late, and just in time for the Fourth of July fireworks on Washington's National Mall. Several conference attendees said they left halfway through in order to catch the patriotic display.

Unite to defend "Moral values" Russian Patriarch urges Orthodox

Moscow (ENI). Patriarch Kirill I of Russia has paid his first visit to Istanbul since his enthronement as leader of the largest Orthodox church in the world. In Turkey, he held talks with Patriarch Bartholomeos of Constantinople aimed at overcoming post-Soviet-era

tensions that have divided the two Orthodox churches. The Church of Constantinople, as the city of Istanbul was once called, is much smaller than the Russian church but many regard it as the historic seat of Eastern Orthodox Christianity.

Moscow (ENI). U.S President Barak Obama and Patriarch Kirill of the Russian Orthodox Church Have discussed the importance of religion and interfaith dialogue in U.S. - Russian relations during a brief meeting in the Kremlin. The two leaders met on 7 July, and a church official said the encounter had a friendly tone similar to Obama's meetings with other Russian leaders during his visit. During a seven minute meeting in the Kremlin, Patriarch told the U.S. president that relations between Russian and American Christians kept channels of communication open between the Soviet Union and the United States at the height of the Cold War.

India religious leaders unhappy with court homosexuality ruling

Bangalore, India (ENI). Leaders from different faiths in India have criticized a landmark court verdict that has decriminalized homosexuality. On 2 July, the Delhi High Court ruled that homosexual sex was not a crime among consenting adults, and declared that a section of the Indian Penal Code violated the fundamental freedom of equality before the law.

Bangalore, India (ENI). A church-supported human rights group in Pakistan has said the arrest of its director, who became embroiled in a complex case involving religious conversion, is rooted in bias against Christians. This is not the first time that the court has showed prejudice when it comes to Muslim versus Christian, said the Centre for Legal Aid Assistance and Settlement (CLAAS) in a statement following the 9 July arrest of its founder-director Joseph Francis.

Geneva (ENI). A United Nations group that vets non-governmental organizations that apply for accreditation to observe the international body, has rejected an international Christian group after it refused to divulge members names in China, citing fears about religious freedom. UN Watch, a Geneva-based advocacy Christian World Mission Foundation application as an NGO observer due to its refusal to accede to China's demands that it disclose member addresses in the People's Republic.

Bhubaneswar, India (ENI). Indian officials say that a troubled and remote area of the northeastern Orissa state that witnesses widespread sectarian violence aimed at Christians a year ago. Is now normal, with less than a thousand people left in relief camps. But those who fled the violence in Kandhamal in August 2008, say they have been told by those who drove them from their homes, that the price of return is conversion to Hinduism.

New Delhi (ENI). Church schools and other Christian institutions in Karachi have closed in protest at the killing of Christian in Pakistan's central Punjab region in a mob attack. Archbishop Lawrence John Saldanha, the head of the Roman Catholic Church in Pakistan, in a 3 August statement, called upon, "all Christian institutions in Punjab to close down and observe mourning for three days to condemn the burning of seven Christians

alive”. The Geneva-based World Council of Churches on 3 August appealed to Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari to ensure the security of Christians in the Punjab province, noting three attacks against Christian communities by militant Islamic group in the previous two months.

Canterbury, England (ENI). Members of the Iranian Christian Fellowship in Britain are invoking prayers for the release of two women converts from Islam to Christianity who some fear may face the death sentence in Iran if they refuse to recant their faith. “WE believe in the power of prayer and know that Iranian Christians in Britain are praying for the safe release of these two women. “Theresa Malinowska, press officer at the London-based rights organization Christian Solidarity Worldwide.

New Delhi (ENI). Carnage aimed at a tiny Christian minority in the remote Kandhamal area of India’s Orissa state raises questions about the claim of the world’s second most populous country to be a secular state. That is the contention of the author of the update of Kandhamal- a blot on Indian secularism” a book by Ecumenical News International India correspondent Anto Akkara. The book, presented at the Press Club of India on 19 August, highlights an area the author calls ‘The Ground zero of Anti-Christian violence in Orissa’, a state in northeast India.

The United Nations Have so Much to be Proud of:

62nd Annual DPI NGO Conference: Sept 9-11, Mexico City, MX

More than 200 global NGOs working in areas such as disarmament, human rights, education, climate change, sustainable peace and social justice are expected to attend. They will be joined by others working in the world of business, media, the arts, academia, health care and philanthropy. Together they will explore effective ways in which sustainable disarmament leads to sustainable peace and development.

“The arms race can kill, through the weapons themselves may never be used by their cost alone, armaments kill the poor by causing them to starve.”

Vatican statement to the United Nations, 1976

Announcement: DPI/NGO Briefing Highlights “Women in Peacekeeping: The Power to Empower” 28 May 2009; WMD - We Must Disarm” Campaign, natural disaster, or by assisting with initiatives such as a September gathering of Korean and US religious leaders, scholars and experts seeking an active role for religious leaders in promoting peace on Korean Peninsula.

By becoming a Sustainer, you help RFP-USA mentor emerging leaders by involving interns from such institutions as Columbia University, Yale University, and the University of Georgia in RFP-USA staff with the research for my report to the Convention on the rights of the Child Symposium, held recently at Georgetown University.

Projects like these are worth sustaining! However, the mission of RFP-USA cannot be accomplished without the partnership of the corporate and business community, NGO’s,

nonprofits, the academic community, scholars and individuals motivated to achieve peace and justice at home and abroad.

Your annual contribution will help us champion diversity, build community and mentor emerging leaders.

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Iraqi Christians Need Better Protection, UN Envoy Says After Deadly Bombings

The top United Nations envoy to Iraq today called for a redoubling of efforts to protect the country's Christians, as well as its other minority communities, following a series of orchestrated bombings over the weekend that hit several churches.

The weekend attacks in the capital, Baghdad, and the northern city of Mosul reportedly killed at least four people, and injured dozens more including children.

"This campaign is aimed at terrorizing vulnerable groups and preventing the peaceful coexistence of different religious groups in what is one of the world's cradles of religious and ethnic diversity," said Ad Melkert, the newly appointed Secretary-General's Special Representatives for Iraq.

Mr. Melkert, who also heads the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). Called on all parties, including the Government, to redouble their efforts to protect minorities in the country.

This will contribute to preserving Iraq's cultural, ethnic and religious diversity, he added.

An upsurge in attacks, threats and intimidation had forced more than 12, 000 Christians to flee Mosul-Iraq's second largest city - last October. Some of them returned after hearing that the security situation had improved.

For further information on the various programs contact:

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United Nations Affairs – Syrian Orthodox Church In America