

Holy Wisdom

Peace: Showing that Others Matter!

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Publication of the Syrian Orthodox Church in America on United Nations Affairs. In fulfilling the UN Mission of SOCA, both Orthodoxy and Ecumenism are involved. SOCA is an NGO associated with the United Nations Department of Public Information. This publication is disseminated to the entire membership of the Church throughout the world on a quarterly basis. Please bring this information to the attention of your parishioners and all those under your care. The Earth is holy and a manifestation of God. Pray for peace and the UN.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: It is necessary through the collaboration of NGOs to raise awareness among communities as we promote peace. If you will, the need for community consciousness is a way we can connect parties and others. It is important at this time that all parties begin to realize that they are a part of a larger picture, that they are in it together and they have common concerns. If there is a conflict all parties have contributed to the conflict and they have the power to come together to develop a non-violent intervention to result into a resolution. It is time for us as people to acknowledge that there is something more that exceed our own individual positions and needs. The United Nations,

religious institutions and NGO can be an avenue to promote community consciousness to encourage global consciousness, clear and realistic decisions as they promote non-violent solutions to conflicts!

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Our Work at the United Nations

United Nations Academic Impact - Newsletter (April 2014 Issue)

Dear UNAI Friends,

Please see attached the April 2014 issue of the United Nations Academic Impact Newsletter. You may also access this and all previous issues of the newsletter at <http://outreach.un.org/unai/resources/newsletters/>

Sincerely,

The United Nations Academic Impact Team

Save the Date - 65th Annual UN DPI/NGO Conference

Dear NGO colleagues!

We are happy to inform you that the 65 th Annual UN DPI/NGO Conference will be held **Wednesday, 27 August, to Friday, 29 August, 2014**, at United Nations Headquarters, New York, NY, United States of America.

The title of the conference is “2015 and Beyond: Our Action Agenda”.

The 65 th UN DPI/NGO Conference chair is Jeffery Huffines, UN Representative of Civicus: World Alliance for Citizen Participation. Currently, we serve as co-chairs of the Conference Planning Committee.

Please save the date in your calendars.

We will be briefing you regularly on updates.

Best Regards,
Conference Planning Committee

Jeffrey A. Brez,
Co-Chair
Chief, NGO Relations, Advocacy & Special Events

Jeffery Huffines
Co-Chair
Civicus: World Alliance for Citizen Participation

28 May RNGO Luncheon

Dear RNGO Members and Friends,

Greetings.

On behalf of your RNGO Bureau, it is a pleasure to announce our annual RNGO Luncheon that will take place on 28 May 2014 from 1:00-3:00 pm on the second floor of the United Nations Church Center (44th and 1st Ave.). The theme of the RNGO luncheon is ***“Spirituality for Sustainable Development.”***

Following very successful precedent, the luncheon is being organized to facilitate informal sharing. There will not be keynote addresses. Instead, the program is designed to facilitate personal reflections, the strengthening of important relationships and the spirit of partnership.

This luncheon is an important way for RNGOs to meet one another and to meet people from the Missions and UN Agencies. Every organization that has paid its 2014 dues of \$25 is entitled to a free seat at the Luncheon. RNGO member organizations can request additional tickets at a cost of \$15 each. Kindly contact Venerable Rev. Doyeon Park (info@wonbuddhist.org) to reserve your tickets.

As we will incur costs preparing for our Luncheon, allow me to warmly encourage your organization to send in your 2014 dues as soon as possible. You can send your check and attached membership form to our treasurer: Rev. Doyeon Park, [Won Buddhism UN & Interfaith Office](#), 431 East 57th St. New York, NY 10022

This is a collaborative project, and I am delighted to announce that two of our colleagues, **Ms. Monica Willard** (mbwillard@aol.com) and **Sister Caroljean Willie** (cjwilliengo@gmail.com), have agreed to serve as the Co-chairs of our event preparation. Kindly email to either of them any recommendations you may have for ambassadors or members of the United Nations who you think should be invited. Please include their contact information. It is important to make these recommendations before **14 April**. A formal letter of invitation will be sent to the representatives of states and colleagues in the UN. Once letters have been transmitted, you will be informed should you want to use your personal connections to helpfully follow up.

In addition to the lunch, you are invited to our next meeting on Monday, April 28 at 1:15 pm -2:45 pm focusing on "Sustainable Development from the Youth Perspective." Baha'I International, 866 UN Plaza, Suite 120.

Looking forward to our continued collaboration, I remain

Sincerely yours,



Dr. William F. Vendley
President, RNGO
Secretary General, *Religions for Peace*

20th Anniversary of the Rwandan Genocide

16 April 2014

Today marks the 20th anniversary of one of the worst periods in modern history. The Rwandan Genocide claimed the lives of over one million Rwandans, more specifically the Tutsi ethnic group. In only 100 days, the empowered Hutus cut the nation's population by about 20 percent. Much of the world watched these atrocities, but did not act. This allowed for the near eradication of the Tutsis. UN peacekeeping troops were not reinforced, and could do little in the halting of the mass killings of

civilians. With support from other militaries, the UN was able to pass a resolution in early June of 1994, finally putting an end to the genocide.

Speakers at the remembrance were former UN Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson of Sweden and former president of the Security Council Collin Keating of New Zealand, both in power at the time of the atrocities in Rwanda. Eliasson called the genocide “one of the darkest chapters in human history” and hopes the world can learn from its mistakes. Similar events are occurring in Syria, South Sudan, and the Central African Republic, which is unacceptable. Outside governments and organizations have the means to put an end to this type of violence. It seems the world deems genocide as unacceptable, but we do not learn from our past, and large scale ethnic violence is still a part of our world today.

One reason for this could be communication issues. In Rwanda, the lack of communication of the severity of the atrocities led other countries to turn a blind eye. Keating was initially told there was a small Civil War going on in Rwanda. This was obviously not the case, as hundreds of thousands of civilians lost their lives, with the rest of the world not batting an eyelash.

Keating apologized for not taking quicker action in Rwanda. With the atrocities occurring today, it may already be too late as countless innocent people have lost their lives in “civil wars” or “domestic disputes.” Hopefully, the United Nations will act on its new declaration to halt genocide and it will become a problem of the past.

-Zachary Yesko, United Nations Youth Representative

Celebrating Sport for Development and Peace

April 28th 2014

Last Monday, the UN secretary-general hosted a meeting to discuss and highlight the role of sport in development and peace. This meeting also inaugurated the International Day of Sport for development and peace, which was on April 6 this year.

As an athlete, I think that meeting was really interesting and important, I really connected with the Guest speakers. All the speakers emphasized how sport is a universal language, develops good values, bring people together. It brings people from different ethnicity, culture, and religion together. Sport creates religion, economic, and ethnic relations that help the development and peace in the world.

Mr. Meb Keflezighi, a former Eritrean refugee and Olympic Silver Medalist for USA, and winner of the 2014 Boston Marathon shared with us how sport impacted his life. I thought his story was really motivational, he went from playing soccer with a sock stuffed with paper, to being an Olympic Medalist. His dream started in High school when he moved to America. His physical education teacher told him that he will be a future Olympian, even though he didn't know what it meant, he thought that it was probably a good thing and followed his dream to be a great runner. He said that through his career, sport was like school, it taught him discipline, hard work, teamwork, respect, and that there is no short cut in life. Also, he said that as a refugee, the most important thing that sport brought to him was hope. He now has a foundation based on education and physical activity to offer to the children what he thinks is important for their development. He concluded by saying that you don't need to be an Olympian for sport to benefit your life. I thought Mr.Meb Keflezighi was really inspiring.

To conclude, sport is definitely important for development and peace in the world. Children need a right balance between education and physical activity, sport teach people a lot of important values, in addition to promoting health. Athletes compete in their sport, but also contribute to the UN global mission of development and peace. At the end of the meeting the Secretary General signed a framework with the Olympic committee for the continuation of working together for a better world.

-Stephanie Blais, United Nations Youth Representative

International Day of Families

15 May 2014

Earlier today, the United Nations celebrated the most basic unit of any society, the family. 2014 marks the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family. The family is not only a group of people with common bloodlines, but a group of individuals that provide moral, emotional, and economic support. As Amina J. Mohammed, Special Adviser to the United Nations Secretary-General said, "Families are at the core of human development. Among the natural and fundamental bases of society, families are central to the world's quest for dignity, peace and justice." Leaving emotion out of the picture, families promote gender equality and can help reduce poverty.

Love is something one cannot put a price on. Whether one lives in a gated community or a slum, love is something all search for and wish to find. Families can be created, creating more love, a feeling which the world can never have too much of.

In 65 different countries, policies have been put in place to empower families. This was done by providing affordable, quality housing, and providing economic opportunities. Other nations need to adopt these policies. Empowering families leads to closer-knit ties among and between families. Families push morals and values onto younger members. The expansion of families will eventually lead to the formation of a global family, a major goal of the United Nations.

-Zachary Yesko, United Nations Youth Representative

Baccalaureate Service - Wagner College May 22, 2014 BENEDICTION



Dr. Anthony DeLuca

You look Radiant!

Just in case there are any misunderstandings between parents and graduates this weekend over whether Mom and Dad did enough, I quote from an article in Sunday Times, "Do our kids get off too easy?"

"Most of all, it's assumed that the best way to get children ready for the miserable "real world" that awaits them is to make sure that they have plenty of miserable experiences while they're young. Conversely, if they they're spared any unhappiness, they'll be ill prepared." So you might want to play that reverse psychology.

Dear graduates.

Do not be afraid.

Reflecting over today's service, some moderns might call it a gathering of the five metaphors- Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Christian, Islamic. Each religion has its own metaphor expressing its attempt to understand ultimate questions based on faith. Now are metaphors the "really real?" Well at this very moment, these metaphors are in conflict throughout the world with devastating consequences. So I would say they have some meaning. They also bring a great deal of consolation, hope, happiness and security to billions of people. At the same time, they still leave unanswered questions about the universe.

Physicists, through science, attempt to discover the origins of the multiverse- yes multiverse -because cosmologists tell us there is more than the universe - the multiverse. Each discovery leads to more unanswered questions.

It's the same problem which is ultimately incomprehensible and far exceeding the human mind's capacity. I don't think we are so narcissistic as to believe, based upon the contingency of millions of years of evolution, that the brain we have just now is capable of fully comprehending the multiverse. And you know intuitively, it will never happen. Remember from Math, parallel lines meet at infinity; parallel lines meet at infinity; next stop infinity; if you want to take that trip to find out whose meeting at that party, I'll pay for the tickets.

[Along the same lines one hears rumors about math faculty. If there is a math dept some place on this planet as to be so nuts as to believe that there will be a Mathematicians' Ball at the meeting of the parallel lines at infinity where all the great mathematicians from Euclid on, will meet there to party, then those faculty are smoking something stronger than cigarettes.]

And we know the mind has limits; we are not all graduating tomorrow with a 4.0. But Fear not.

On the same day, I may start with my religious experience (my metaphor, if you choose) but I know I have to transcend it in making sense of an ever revealing cosmos. So I celebrate Mass in faith and an hour later my reason is still struggling to find explanations for the origins of the multiverse and how to reconcile the two experiences.

In the eleventh century, St. Anselm was the abbot of a monastery. We know a place where monks out of deep faith have left the outside world for a life time commitment to contemplation, continuous prayer, sacrifice and labor. Well one day, a group of holy monks started banging on the Abbot's door and they said "Not that we have any doubts that there is a God, witness our chanting day and night and our faith and belief in the Mass but if you don't mind, could you come up with a proof?" I'm not going to give Anselm's argument, just the first line. "God is that than which no greater can be conceived." " God is that then which no greater can be conceived." Just play with that idea- that stretches your mind to its limits. Stretching to the limits is what you want to hold. It's imprinted there and you can't get it out. If after a while you get a headache, rejoice; you got it. Fear not.

When my daughter Antoinette, was about five or six, I asked her how much do you love Daddy. She said, "Till the end of counting." "Till the end of counting." That's reaching out to touch the infinite- maybe the Infinite Love; or as Dante put it " The Love which moves the sun and the other stars." Hold on to that idea- reaching out to touch infinity- because it is the same place we all arrive whether an Anselm, a child, a Dante or a Cosmologist.

Do not be afraid.

These are the ideas which will expand your mind to approach the transcendent. They are a beginning. Fear not. Stay with them, experience the struggle. You will have your moment of truth. You will pierce the veil of illusion.

Sometime I think we live in a parallel universe. I think the struggle between faith and reason will exist as long as we have the human mind. We recall from Bio and Psych - the right brain- the intuitive, symbolic, faith and the left brain- concrete, quantifying, measuring, reason and the valiant effort of the corpus

callosum to hold the two spheres together in splendid mediation communicating and integrating the differences and preventing us from splitting in two. Fear not.

Remember "Cognitive Dissonance" from Psych- "Cognitive Dissonance" - excessive mental stress and discomfort experienced when you hold two or more contradictory beliefs at the same time. And if you go through this, remember:

Blessed are they who have endured Cognitive Dissonance, for they shall behold the Truth- not "in a glass darkly but then face to face." Fear not, "It is good for us to be in this place." Rejoice and be Glad. Alleujah!

My greatest regret is that all your classmates are not here- perhaps they encountered cognitive dissonance, got scared and ran away from home. We may not have done enough for them.

Do not be afraid.

I go before you always.

Come follow me.

Amen.

International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers

29 May 2014

Since 1948, the United Nations has stationed troops across the world in the name of peace. These troops are non aggressive, meaning they do not partake in armed conflict unless they are fired upon.

May 29th is a day of honor for these troops, especially for the 106 that lost their lives in the past year. "We mourn the passing of every one of these courageous individuals. We grieve with their friends and families and we recommit ourselves to ensure that their contributions to the cause of peace will never be forgotten," UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon declared in his statement. He proceeded to lay a wreath in memoriam of the 106 peacekeepers and awarded them with the Dag Hammarskjöld Medal posthumously.

Today, there are over 116,000 UN troops stationed in nations around the world in order to prevent further violent conflict. Most of these individuals are stationed in Africa, in nations such as South Sudan, Mali, Central African Republic, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. They have set up camps and supply refugees with adequate food, water, and medical attention, as well as protection from armed militants. In addition, they mediate conflicts between warring parties and document any human rights violations. By providing protection to innocent civilians, it minimizes the death toll, therefore minimizing the possibility of human rights violations.

Obviously, there is a long way to go in minimizing armed conflict on our planet. UN peacekeeping operations lay the foundation for a sustainable future in war-torn areas. Little by little, the United Nations is working toward a war-free world. The new slogan of UN peacekeeping operations is a perfect snapshot of its aims and goals. It is: "UN Peacekeeping: A Force for Peace. A Force for Change. A Force for the Future."

-Zachary Yesko, United Nations Youth Representative

United Nations Academic Impact - Newsletter (June 2014)

Dear UNAI Friends,

Please see attached the June 2014 issue of the United Nations Academic Impact Newsletter.

Kindly note that you may also access this and all previous issues of the newsletter at

<https://academicimpact.un.org/content/newsletters>

Sincerely,

The United Nations Academic Impact Team

Newsletter Link:

<https://academicimpact.un.org/sites/academicimpact.un.org/files/Newsletter%20June%20.pdf>

Valerie Amos on Syria

04 June 2014

Earlier this morning, Valerie Amos, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs updated the public on the ongoing situation in Syria. This brief has come three months after the Security Council passed Resolution 2139. Resolution 2139 was passed in order to allow greater access to Syria, to ensure both parties adhere to international law, and to demilitarize school and hospital zones.

Amos admitted the resolution has not been effective. In fact, violence has increased in Syria since its establishment. There have been more bombings, mortar strikes, and even the release of poisonous gas in civilian areas over the past three months. Not only does this violate Resolution 2139, it violates basic international humanitarian law.

There are currently 241,000 citizens under siege in cities across Syria, and the number of displaced individuals now stands at over 6.5 million, over 20% of the global total. Aleppo, the most populous Syrian city saw nearly 2.5 million of its people go without water for a week, after main pumping station was shut down by armed opposition groups. On top of that, over 90,000 have been denied medical assistance.

The UN has vowed to increase its efforts to solve the current situation in Syria. Currently, humanitarian aid has only been able to reach 7% of the population. This number is so small because many peacekeepers and humanitarian workers have been killed trying to provide aid to citizens in harm's way. In addition, there are many defunct border crossings on the Syrian border of Lebanon and Jordan, meaning it is even difficult to enter the country, not only conflict-ridden areas.

With all of this being said, the UN, along with other international organizations need to further assist Syria in its quest for peace. With both sides of the conflict becoming more and more violent, the quest will not be easy, and Syria will need all the help it can get.

-Zachary Yesko, United Nations Youth Representative

This Week at the United Nations

13 June 2014

Over the past week, the United Nations has played a crucial part in the historic events that have taken place. In Afghanistan, the UN has assisted in the country's democratic elections. In tandem with the Afghan government, UN officials can ensure the elections are peaceful, transparent, and corruption-free.

In Iraq, an insurgent group has taken over the country's second largest city, Mosul. This group has also kidnapped many high-profile diplomats, most notably the consul general of Turkey. Because of the widespread violence, nearly a half million citizens have fled the city. This group is also active in the violence in Syria. United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon spoke out against the extremists' actions by saying "terrorist attacks on diplomats or civilians cannot be justified under any circumstances."

In London, UN Special Envoy and famed actress Angelina Jolie, along with other UN and British officials, chaired an event to end rape in violent conflict. During war, rape is used to demonstrate one side's power and dominance over the other, with no regard for the victims. There are more humane tactics to demonstrate superiority that warring parties can resort to.

On a more positive note, the UN General Assembly has elected its next president. When the 68th session ends, so does the tenure of John Ashe of Antigua and Barbuda. He will be succeeded by Sam Kutesa, the current foreign minister of Uganda.

On Friday June 13th, the world will be brought closer together for upwards of one month. The World Cup has begun in Brazil, with 32 nations competing for soccer superiority. The Secretary-General was on hand for the tournament's opening match between Brazil and Croatia. He believes the World Cup will bring the best values of sport to light. These values are: teamwork, fair play, and mutual respect. Also, he looks forward to seeing the power of sport bring together and unite people across the world.

-Zachary Yesko, United Nations Youth Representative

[Ban Ki-moon, Special Address on the Crisis in Syria](#)

20 June 2014

Today, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon briefed the Asia Society in New York on the current situation in Syria. His presentation outlined "six main priorities for the way forward" in the region. They will resolve the conflict between the government and rebel groups that have killed over 150,000 and displaced over 22 million.

The six priorities are:

1. Ending the violence
2. Having the international community protect all people and their human rights
3. Starting a more peaceful and serious political entity in Syria
4. Making sure responsibility for violent and inhumane actions is taken
5. Finishing the destruction of the country's chemical weapons

6. Addressing the extremist threat of the region

The Secretary-General believes that ending the violence will come from cutting off the flow of arms into Syria. With no weapons, both sides will find it difficult to keep fighting. He has called upon the UN Security Council to impose an embargo on such goods entering Syria. If this does not work, he hopes individual countries will refrain from sending weapons to the war-torn nation. Other countries are partially responsible for the violence if they supply combatants with arms. They can be equally as responsible for peace by stopping their shipments.

Ideally, Secretary-General Ban's six priorities will be carried out as soon and as effectively as possible to minimize the death toll in Syria, and lay the foundation for a peaceful nation.

- Zachary Yesko, United Nations Representative

Meetings reported by Dr. Anthony DeLuca, June 26, 2014

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. Election of twelve members of the Committee. 10am-1pm on site.

UN Alliance of Civilizations Group of Friends Meeting; theme ; role of young people in peace building. (3-6pm

by web cast. Introductory Remarks, Mr. Nassar Abdullaaz Al-Nasser, the High Commissioner. Qatar: sustainable development as a necessity of any dialogue. Remarks were made on the preparation for the Sixth Global of UNADC, August 28-30, 2014, Bali, Indonesia. Sports, Art, Music Entertainment fostering understanding through them. Use of religion and intercultural approaches to mediation.

Informal meeting with Felipe, NGO officer.

This Week at the UN – 27 June 2014

Over the past week, the United Nations has been quite busy in its efforts to resolve conflicts around the world. In war-plagued northern Iraq, over 500,000 have been displaced. Most of these citizens are headed to territory controlled by the Kurdistan Regional Government, away from the violence. The United Nations has added staff and stock to the areas of conflict in northern Iraq. Unfortunately, with the current funding and resources, the UN cannot support the displaced alone, as they look to the local and international community for assistance. Recently, there has been a request to pump \$300 million into the recovery and rebuilding effort. The UN believes it will take a combination of military, political, and humanitarian efforts to end the violent conflicts in northern and eastern Iraq.

In South Sudan, more refugees have been filing into United Nations camps. The tally stands at over 100,000, with the threat of violence still present. UNESCO has met with the president, as they vow to end the enlistment of children in the armed forces, and promote their involvement in more peaceful activities including sports.

Upon the release of a recent report by the UN and INTERPOL, the two organizations have teamed up to end environmental crime. The United Nations Environment Assembly has been established to develop

methods to see the end of such crimes. Environmental crime, which is a \$200 billion industry, includes anything from illegal logging to trade of elephant ivory. The profits usually finance militias, drug traffickers, and human traffickers, among other syndicates in sub-Saharan Africa.

On a more positive note, the United Nations has thanked all seafarers, who make world trade possible.

- Zachary Yesko, United Nations Youth Representative

Inside Look at Major UN Actions & Events

UN Report Details New Threats of Climate Change

A new United Nations report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change raised the threat (NYT) of global warming, warning of sweeping consequences to the environment and livelihood. The thirty-two-volume report, a three-year joint effort by hundreds of scientists, noted that a warmer world was posing a threat to global food stocks, pushing up food prices and triggering "hotspots of hunger" among the world's poor (Guardian). Its effects also include melting sea ice and a thawing Arctic, the killing of coral reefs in the oceans, and weather-related disasters. The report, released Monday, was the most authoritative so far from the UN climate panel, although disagreement has already surfaced (FT) among two of the report's scientists.

Analysis

"Contrarians have tried to spin the conclusions of the report to incorrectly argue that it would be cheaper to try and adapt to climate change and pay the costs of climate damages. In reality the report says no such thing," writes Dana Nuccitelli for the Guardian.

"In climate science, the real debate has never been between 'deniers' and the rest, but between 'lukewarmers,' who think man-made climate change is real but fairly harmless, and those who think the future is alarming," writes Matt Ridley for the Wall Street Journal.

"The melting of Arctic sea ice to record lows in recent years has prompted many nations, principally those with Arctic Ocean coastlines—the United States, Canada, Russia, Norway, and Denmark (Greenland)—to reassess their commitments and interests in the icy reaches atop the globe," says this CFR Infoguide on the Arctic.

Pacific Rim

Koreas Exchange Fire

North Korea fired more than 100 artillery rounds (Yonhap) into South Korean waters as part of a drill on Monday, prompting Seoul to respond with artillery fire and a stern diplomatic warning. South Korean residents of border islands Baengnyeong and Yeonpyeong were also evacuated.

Bruce Bechtol discusses North Korea's other weapons in this CFR blog post.

South and Central Asia

Musharraf Charged With Treason

Pervez Musharraf, Pakistan's former president, pleaded not guilty (Dawn) on Monday to five counts of treason, for which he could face the death penalty if convicted. The charges stem from his suspension of the constitution and imposition of emergency rule in 2007.

AFGHANISTAN: Taliban gunmen abducted a provincial council candidate (AP) and seven members of his entourage in northern Afghanistan, marking the latest tension in the lead-up to Saturday's national elections.

Middle East

Palestinians Killed in Clash With Israel

The United States, Israel, and the Palestinian Authority held meetings in a last-minute attempt (Haaretz) to reach an agreement that would prevent the collapse of the peace talks. Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu described the talks on Sunday as "verging on a crisis."

EGYPT: Egypt announced it will hold its presidential election (al-Jazeera) on May 26 and 27. Retired army chief Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, who toppled Mohammed Morsi, is expected to win the vote.

This CFR Backgrounder sheds light on the country's Muslim Brotherhood.

Africa

Nigeria Jailbreak Kills More Than Twenty

Twenty-one people died in an attempt to escape from jail at the headquarters of Nigeria's secret police in the capital of Abuja, where local media say many of the police detainees are suspected members of Islamist group Boko Haram (Vanguard).

AFRICA: The European Union made a plea (The Herald) to African governments yesterday not to boycott next week's EU-Africa Summit in Brussels. An arm of the African Union had called for African leaders not to attend the summit, saying the EU violated an AU resolution by determining the composition of Africa's delegation.

Europe

Kerry Meets Lavrov

U.S. secretary of state John Kerry told Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov on Sunday that progress in the Ukraine crisis depended on a Russian troop pullback (Reuters) from Ukraine's borders. The two met in Paris to hammer out the framework of a deal to reduce tensions over Russia's annexation of Crimea.

Former ambassador John Beyrle discusses the West's breaking point with Russia in this new interview.

FRANCE: President François Hollande will consider a cabinet reshuffle (France24) after his Socialist party took a significant hit in local elections, which gave the far-right National Front headway in a record number of towns.

Americas

Armed Militias Storm Venezuela Protests

Two died when masked pro-government militias attempted to dismantle a protestor barricade (AP) in La Isabelica, which has been a center of unrest since nationwide protests broke out last month. Similar shootings across Venezuela have claimed at least seven lives since the antigovernment protests began.

BRAZIL: A poll showed that support for President Dilma Rousseff has faltered (MercoPress) ahead of October's presidential election, although she remains a favorite to win a second term.

Statement by Ambassador Samantha Power, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations, on Elections for the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations, April 23, 2014

Repressive regimes that systematically limit the activities of non-governmental organizations have, once again, been elected to the United Nation's Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Committee. This is yet another reminder of how much remains to be done to protect civil society's role as a critical driver of progress and liberty in countries around the world.

The United States has been an active and outspoken advocate in the fight against the crackdown on civil society. And we will continue to challenge the growing, sophisticated and well-resourced effort to inhibit the right of people around the world to speak freely and to advocate peacefully for change. As such, we are very disappointed by the result of today's NGO Committee election, which will do nothing to help the cause of freedom.

The unopposed candidacy of Iran, where authorities regularly detain human rights defenders, subjecting many to torture, abuse, and violations of due process, is a particularly troubling outcome of today's election.

Against this backdrop, the United States' reelection to the NGO Committee today is all the more important, and we urge member states who see the vital importance of civil society to step up and stand for election to this important body. The United States will continue to use this forum to fight against those who seek to inhibit civil society's critical work, and we will continue to support the vital role nongovernmental organizations play at the United Nations.

Religious News from Around the World

Beloved Jesuit priest of Homs assassinated

A lone gunman shot to death the [Rev. Frans van der Lugt](#) Monday in the Syrian monastery where he had lived for decades and offered refuge to Muslims and Christian families alike as the country spiraled into chaos. The Dutch priest was protected by rebels. But it is not clear who killed him, and his death comes at a time of intense rebel debate over whether to accept a government amnesty offer. The priest was in his 70s.

“The Coptic Question” Protecting Minorities During Periods of Upheavals

Thursday, April 10, 2014

6–8 p.m.

US Courthouse , Southern District of NY

Court Room of US District Judge, Hon. Paul G. Gardephe | Room 705

40 Foley Square, New York

Coptic Christians, who make up more than 10% of the Egyptian population, were partners with their Muslim fellow citizens in Tahrir Square and Arab Spring. However, since 2011, scores of Coptic churches, monasteries, shops, schools, clubs and orphanages had been plundered and burned, and over the past year more than 100,000 Christians have fled Egypt with their families, leaving everything they know behind.

This program will explore the experience of the Coptic Christians as religious minority in Egypt and consider the potential for protecting Christian minorities in majority Muslim countries.

Keynote Speaker:

Dr. Yassin El-Ayouty, Esq., Adjunct Professor of Islamic Law at Fordham Law School, Fellow at the Louis Stein Center for Law and Ethics, Fordham University school of Law and Founder and President of SUNGLOW – Global Training in the Rule of Law. He is also an Adjunct Professor at the Cairo University School of Law, a practicing attorney in the US and overseas, and was a Principal Political Officer at the United Nations.

Responder:

Ms. Caroline Labib Doss, Esq., founder of Doss & Associates, PC, a law firm specializing in immigration issues. The client base for the law firm is primarily those from Egypt, particularly women and minorities, seeking asylum in the U.S. In addition to her legal work, since 2011 Mrs. Doss has served as the Vice President of Coptic Solidarity, a non-profit organization focused on assisting minorities in Egypt and supporting those in Egypt working for democracy, freedom and the protection of the fundamental rights of all Egyptians. Mrs. Doss has testified before the U.S. Congress on the issues facing Christians in Egypt, particularly focused on the concerns of women and girls.

Moderator: Mr. Joseph Guirguis

Enthronement of Patriarch of Antioch Aphrem II
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7gvX5Zmq4eQ>

Local Ecclesiastical News

Archbishop Cyril formerly of Syriac Orthodox Church Eastern USA



















Archbishop Cyril formerly of Syriac Orthodox Church Eastern USA returns for visit to St. Mark's Cathedral, Teaneck, NJ as newly elected His Holiness Ignatius Aphrem II Karim, Patriarch of Antioch and All the East.

After this brief return visit His Holiness will then leave to take his throne as Patriarch in Damascus, Syria. (Saturday, April 5, 2014, CC)

Religions Working for Peace and Justice

Good Afternoon Friends and Colleagues,

Please find the [link](#) to our co-hosted webinar with Religion Communicators Council: How to Master the Social Maze. Executive Director of Arab American Association of New York, Linda Sarsour, will be our guest and speak to us on the best practices and tools of promoting your organization's mission through social media. Rev. Bud Heckman will respond.



and **Religions for Peace** USA

Presents

Where Religions Come Together

How to Master the Social Maze

Techniques to Advance and Enhance your Religious News Coverage



Linda Sarsour



Host, Aaron Stauffer



Rev. Bud Heckman

Join Religions for Peace USA and the Religion Communicators Council on April 11th at 3PM ET as Linda Sarsour, Executive Director of Arab American Association of New York, and Rev. Bud Heckman of RCC explore the role of social media as an advocacy tool for the interfaith movement.



Come join us in an hour for our webinar broadcast on [this page of our website](#).

We look forward to you joining us!

Sincerely,

Aaron Stauffer

Presentation made by Dr. Anthony DeLuca to the Patriarch

May 9, 2014

His Holiness Ignatius Aphrem II Karim
Patriarch of Antioch and All the East
Damascus, Syria

Your Holiness:

This evening we have celebrated together the Last Supper. With 150,000 people killed in Syria, you will now enter Gethsemane then onto the via dolorosa. Your crown will be one of thorns.

When Peter, having fled Rome, met Christ on the road, he asked, "Quo vadis?" Where are you going? Christ answered, "Back to Rome to be crucified anew." Is the story so different today, when as successor to St. Peter and like him, you return. On your road, you will not easily see the Risen Christ. You will see Christ scourged and carrying his cross to Calvary along the roads of Douma, Daraya, Marat Al-Noa Man, Darat Azza, Deir Al Zoor, Jobar, Al Bab, Hama, Moad Hamiya, Darkoush.... When you come to Homs, you will see Christ being nailed to the Cross, in Aleppo - Christ crucified in agony on the Cross. Arriving in Damascus, you will find the broken body of Christ cradled in the arms of his mother.

But through a special grace and faith, you will hear Jesus say, "Do not be afraid, tell my followers to go to Galilee, there they will see me." Be not afraid, I go before you always.

Ignatius University had hoped to make this presentation publicly but the program was full. It is awkward to make a presentation to the spiritual head of the University. Ignatius University is in memory of St. Ignatius of Antioch (its bishop and martyr); the University has as its motto: "For it was at Antioch that the disciples were first called Christians." Founded at the turn into the third millennium, it is the only oriental orthodox university in the western hemisphere.

Because of all the good you have done and the evil you have endured,

Because of your kindness and generosity to me over the years as remembered when your assistant asked me to pay for an expensive Liturgical Book and you said, "It's OK; let Father have it." And the time that Father McBride presented the intricately researched text of our Sacred Liturgy with detailed and illustrated rubrics, you asked, "Who did this?" He said, "Tony." You asked, "Tony who?" And you were surprised and delighted that it was me.

Because you are not now able to complete your second doctorate at Fordham University, my alma mater,

Because of your great contribution to the dialogue between the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church and all the other ecumenical commissions you have served so well,

Because of your vision and efforts in establishing a whole complex of ecclesiastical buildings including a cathedral for the Syriac Archdiocese on its way to fruition,

Because of your loving service to the clergy and people of the Syriac Archdiocese as its Archbishop,

Because of all the innumerable accomplishments detailed by the community at the time of your first reception at St. Mark's Cathedral returning from Damascus,

Because of your election as successor of St. Peter as Patriarch of Antioch and All the East,

The Trustees of Ignatius University upon the recommendation of the Faculty of the School of Theology and by the power invested in me by the State of Indiana on this day respectfully confer upon Your Holiness Ignatius Aphrem II Karim, the degree of Doctor of Divinity (honoris causa).

His Holiness Aphrem II Karim, returns to St. Mark's Cathedral, Saturday April 5, 214 having been elected Patriarch of Antioch and All the East. The pictures shows the clergy and laity at the reception. (Pictures by Father George McBride).





























His Holiness Ignatius Aphrem II, Patriarch of Antioch and All the East (newly elected) and Father Faustino Quintanilla, May 2014.



Other Related News

The Indian Elections—What the BJP Has to Say About Foreign Policy

by [Alyssa Ayres](#)

April 7, 2014

This post is part of a [series on the Indian elections](#).

Earlier today, on the first day of India's five-week-long national elections, the opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) at last released their [2014 campaign manifesto](#). With the ruling Congress Party having released theirs on March 26, and the drumbeat of poll results showing the BJP with a commanding lead on the eve of elections, the platform's absence had become the [subject of much speculation](#).

The document offers a vision of India in the world which contrasts with that of the Congress: it speaks of alliances, where Congress speaks vaguely of goodwill and Non-Aligned Movement historic legacies. While it predictably emphasizes growth, it does so invoking a representation of India's civilizational past as one of traders, scientists, and economic leaders in the world, a position damaged by colonial rule and one necessary to recover: "Before the advent of Britishers, Indian goods were internationally recognized for their quality and craftsmanship. India had a much bigger role and presence in industry and manufacturing than any nation in Europe or Asia." In this emphasis on India as an ancient trading power, it differs slightly from [earlier BJP manifestos](#) which focused on the achievements of Indian civilization in agriculture, science and technology, medicine, and education.

On the international economic policy front, the platform shares with Congress an emphasis on making India "globally competitive," and takes that a step further by advocating a "Brand India built on quality." (Of course, as the party in opposition, the BJP is in a much less awkward position arguing the need for change to produce growth, since in doing so Congress tacitly acknowledges their own stewardship of economic problems over the past five years).

The BJP's statement on foreign direct investment (FDI) policy has already caught media attention. It is both general but specific relating to multi-brand retail: "Barring the multi-brand retail sector, FDI will be allowed in sectors wherever needed for job and asset creation, infrastructure and acquisition of niche technology and specialized expertise." In press interviews today, manifesto committee chair Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi has stated that the party [would seek to repeal](#) the current national policy permitting FDI at states' discretion, a move which would roll back a reform already in place.

On the more encouraging side, a specific section focused on industrial development notes an emphasis on innovation, and promises to "embark on the path of IPRs and Patents in a big way." Many international businesses will find these welcome words, although how they might be executed in practice is not clear.

On matters of national security and foreign policy, the BJP platform promises "zero tolerance" on terrorism and would seek a revamp of intelligence systems, defense, and defense production in order to better secure India. The manifesto envisions an India as a "global hub for defense hardware and software."

In a significant departure from the Congress platform, which uses the word "nuclear" only once to exhort the need to expand civilian nuclear energy, the BJP pledges to update India's nuclear doctrine to

“make it relevant to challenges of current times.” They would maintain India’s policy of a credible minimum deterrent “in tune with changing geostatic realities.” These statements have already been picked up [by the media](#) as representing a shift away from India’s no-first-use policy. According to Reuters, while the platform itself does not say it will review no-first-use, “sources involved in drafting the document...said the policy would be reconsidered.” This element of the manifesto will be of great interest around the world, especially given the past history of the BJP hewing to their platform statements regarding nuclear doctrine. Indeed, the [BJP manifesto of 1998](#) pledged to “Re-evaluate the country’s nuclear policy and exercise the option to induct nuclear weapons.” In May 1998, they did.

The foreign policy section of the manifesto, which takes up one page and comes at the end, in keeping with the BJP past again promises to be “guided by our centuries old tradition of [Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam](#)” (the world is a family) in working to achieve India’s rightful place in the world. The BJP, unlike Congress’s plan to strengthen relations with all, would create a “web of allies to mutually further our interests.” Alliances are selective and much tighter relationships of consultation and obligation, a position very different from one of non-alignment with all.

The foreign policy platform speaks of the importance of Indian soft power potential, and lays out a high-level “Brand India” plan through what it calls the “5 Ts: Tradition, Talent, Tourism, Trade and Technology.” They will develop talent by expanding the diplomatic corps. The Indian diaspora receives special mention as an asset in developing Brand India. Relations through regional fora, like the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), the “BRICS” emerging economies of Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa, G20, the “IBSA” countries of India-Brazil-South Africa, Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and others, also receive attention. In keeping with the manifesto’s domestic policy of deepening decentralization, the BJP promises to provide states a “greater role in diplomacy” specifically to “harness their mutual cultural and commercial strengths.”

The platform presents a straw man (“Instead of being led by big power interests”), which to my knowledge and diplomatic experience has never been true about India, to assert it will “engage proactively on our own with countries in the neighbourhood and beyond.” No individual countries receive mention, unlike the Congress document. On the neighborhood, the BJP will “pursue friendly relations” but “where required we will not hesitate from taking strong stand and steps.” These should be read as statements of orientation toward China and Pakistan, but enactment of any future policy steps will necessarily depend on immediate circumstances. Finally, similar to the German concept of citizenship by blood, the manifesto provides for India to serve as a “natural home” for persecuted Hindus around the world to seek refuge.

So: the BJP lays down some markers on FDI, India’s nuclear doctrine, and how it would approach its bilateral and multilateral relationships. As a roadmap for what the possible next Indian government might undertake, it thus offers some high-level guideposts, and important areas for external observers to watch closely.

[Father Faustino Quintanilla is part of the Sts. Peter & Ignatius Mission, Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church and United Nations Representative.](#)

The potent beauty of celebratory festivals, initiations and other traditional rituals will be conveyed through masterful objects made of wood, metal and terra cotta in the exhibit, Powerful Arts of

Cameroon: the Collection of Amadou Njoya, at the QCC Art Gallery, beginning January 30 through March 10, 2014.

Amadou Njoya is a fourth generation Cameroonian born into a family of distinguished artisans and advisors for the royal family of the Kingdom of Bamum. Known as Fons, their responsibilities include passing on cultural customs to younger generations, an oral history that dates back to 1392.

“It is a great honor for me and my family to display our treasures at the QCC Art Gallery,” said Mr. Njoya, who added, “My paternal grandfather and father were collectors for nearly four decades, from 1969 until 2005. Over the years, I gained an in depth knowledge about the pieces and was inspired to become a collector myself.”

“Cameroon is a culturally rich country, with some 20 million people who speak 250 dialects,” said Faustino Quintanilla, Executive Director of the QCC Art Gallery. “It’s distinctive diversity mirrors our own Queens community.”

The QCC Art Gallery, an educational and cultural resource for Queensborough Community College, as well as for all New York City and Long Island communities, boasts a superb permanent African Art Collection that has received critical acclaim from The New York Times art critic, Holland Cotter who states, “Queensborough Community College has quietly assembled an impressive collection of African Art...with luck, other university galleries around the country will emulate it.” Over the years, the QCC Art Gallery has installed major exhibits of wide-ranging interests such as Post-Modernism paintings, Pre-Columbian Art, sculpture, photography, Chinese pottery, and works of established and emerging artists.

Source: <http://www1.cuny.edu/mu/forum/2014/01/24/artifacts-of-the-african-tribal-arts-kingdom-to-be-exhibited-in-the-powerful-arts-of-cameroon-the-collection-of-amadou-njoya-at-the-qcc-art-gallery/>

At the Queensborough Community College Art Gallery, a delicate brass mask from 18th-century Cameroon smiles mischievously, with large puffy cheeks symbolizing wisdom.

Nearby, a sacred wooden carving of a coiled snake stands guard, waiting to deliver souls into the afterlife.



The Powerful Arts of Cameroon at QCC's Art Gallery. At left, Veronica Chin Hing, a Brooklyn College student, at right, Eric Vehstedt of Queensborough Community College viewing the display.

The rare pieces of art from African celebratory rites and festivals formed part of the recent exhibit, "Powerful Arts of Cameroon: The Collection of Amadou Njoya." The array of more than 100 traditional and contemporary objects from Njoya's personal collection included statues, masks, furniture, and other objects used by notable figures during ceremonies and rituals.



Njoya, a fourth-generation Cameroon-ian, was born into a family of disting-uished artisans and advisers for the royal family of the Bamum Kingdom. His longtime friendship and support of the QCC Art Gallery led him to display his prized collection in Queens for the first time.

“It is a great honor for me and my family to display our treasures at the QCC Art Gallery,” said Njoya. “My paternal grandfather and father were collectors for nearly four decades, from 1969 until 2005. Over the years, I gained an in-depth knowledge about the pieces and was inspired to become a collector myself.”

The Cameroon exhibit illustrates the QCC Art Gallery’s bold commitment to consistently showcasing a wide and eclectic range of works, from postmodernism paintings and pre-Columbian art to Chinese pottery and emerging artists. The current show is an exhibit of paintings and lithographs by Egyptian artist Marcel Salinas, the first retrospective of his work.

However, the QCC Art Gallery, nestled on the tranquil Bayside campus, has garnered the most acclaim for its Permanent African Art Collection, one of the largest in New York City. The collection has approximately 3,000 objects, representing sub-Saharan Africa, donated from individuals across the United States. A majority of the African objects are carved in wood, but there are also works made of other materials, including ivory, copper alloys, gold, fibers, beads, animal skins, and earthenware.

Faustino Quintanilla, executive director of the gallery, said the African collection is a valuable resource, not only for the Queensborough College community, but also for residents and art lovers in Queens and Long Island. “Before we started this collection, people had to go to Manhattan to see this type of African art and history. Here they have it right in their hands. It’s accessible to them.”

One of the gallery’s goals is to acquire permanent collections reflecting the diversity of QCC’s student population and the surrounding Queens community. In addition to the African collection, the gallery is

also building the Jaime Andrade Pre-Columbian Art Collection and has plans for a third permanent collection of Asian art.



The QCC Art Gallery began collecting African art in 2000 under the guidance of Leonard Kahan, a former African art gallery owner and aficionado, and in 2004, after a multimillion-dollar renovation of its facility, the gallery premiered its permanent display of African art.

New York Times art critic Holland Cotter praised QCC for its “broad vision” in elevating African Art.

“Queensborough Community College has quietly assembled an impressive collection of African art,” Cotter wrote. “With luck, other university galleries around the country will emulate it, and their numbers will grow, just as the global influence of Africa itself continues to increase.”

In describing the collection, Quintanilla noted that the exhibited objects are removed from their original context.

“Most masks were normally attached to a costume of raffia fibers or textile to hide or change the identity of the dancer,” he said. “Music and dance were an integral aspect of their active use.”

Statues, on the other hand, were generally stored in special rooms or structures — sometimes shrines — and accessibility was often restricted, especially to the uninitiated.

“In seeing these sculptures we are viewing only one aspect of the ritual or ceremony, quite divorced from the environment with which it interacted,” Quintanilla said. “But their power of form, surface or craftsmanship still carries multidimensional values to which we can relate.”



African costumes also have a significant place in the permanent collection, some for their consummate workmanship and beauty, others for their projection of power and magical properties.

“They, too, are part of the larger expression of each African culture’s interaction between art and life, between the vital forces of gods, spirits and ancestors and the community,” Quintanilla said.

Sampling of Exhibits At CUNY Galleries

The dozens of art galleries on CUNY’s campuses provide a wealth of cultural opportunities not only for students, faculty, and staff, but for the greater New York City community.

Here are a few notable exhibits for this spring:

- **Cuban America: An Empire State of Mind** includes more than 35 contemporary artists of Cuban descent who have been raised in the United States or Cuba. Artists bring social, cultural and political discussions to the table while old stereotypes are revisited. This exhibition begins the gallery’s 30th-anniversary celebration. Lehman College Art Gallery through May 14.
- **Ray Johnson: Collages of Art, Poetry, Music and Film** highlights the work of Johnson, an early proponent of Pop and Mail Art. The Sidney Mishkin Gallery at Baruch College. Through May 7.
- **Abdias Nascimento: Artist, Activist, Author** displays 40 artworks by Nascimento, an artist, activist, senator and founding force in Brazil’s Black Movement. This exhibition features works focused on the theme of orishas, the deities in the Afro-Brazilian religion Candomble. Godwin-Ternbach Museum at Queens College. April 28 – June 21. Opening reception on April 30.

The Powerful Arts of Cameroon at QCC's Art Gallery. At left, Veronica Chin Hing, a Brooklyn College student, at right, Eric Vehstedt of Queensborough Community College viewing the display.

Source: <http://www1.cuny.edu/mu/forum/2014/04/22/the-splendor-of-african-art-at-qccs-special-gallery/>

Pope: problem of drug use is not solved by other drugs

by *Elise Harris*

Vatican City, Jun 20, 2014 / 08:37 am ([CNA/EWTN News](#)).- In a message for an international conference on enforcing drug laws, Pope Francis denounced the trend of offering addicts narcotics as a substitute for hard drugs, stating that it only worsens the problem.

"Let me state this in the clearest terms possible: the problem of drug use is not solved with drugs! Drug addiction is an evil, and with evil there can be no yielding or compromise" the Pope declared in his June 20 message to the conference participants.

"To think that harm can be reduced by permitting drug addicts to use narcotics in no way resolves the problem" he said, adding that "Attempts, however limited, to legalize so-called 'recreational drugs,' are not only highly questionable from a legislative standpoint, but they fail to produce the desired effects."

Pope Francis made his declaration during the 31st International Drug Enforcement Conference, which took place in the convention center of Rome's Cavalieri Hotel June 17 – 19, and gathered together the heads of anti-drug agencies worldwide.

Opening his address, the pontiff thanked participants for their presence and work "in combating this most serious and complex problem of our time."

He expressed his hope that those gathered would accomplish their goals of discovering more effective policies on anti-narcotic drugs as well as finding better methods to share information and developing a working strategy to fight the ongoing drug trade.

Referring to the trade as a "scourge" on society, the Bishop of Rome explained that it "continues to spread inexorably," and is "fed by a deplorable commerce which transcends national and continental borders."

"As a result, the lives of more and more young people and adolescents are in danger" he said. "Faced with this reality, I can only manifest my grief and concern."

Going on, the Roman Pontiff condemned the efforts of some who seek to legalize milder drugs in order to lure addicts away from the hard stuff, saying that the legalization of "recreational drugs" is both questionable from a legal point of view, and fails to solve the problem.

"Substitute drugs are not an adequate therapy but rather a veiled means of surrendering to the phenomenon" he went on.

“Here I would reaffirm what I have stated on another occasion: No to every type of drug use. It is as simple as that. No to any kind of drug use.”

But in order to say this no, “one has to say ‘yes’ to life, ‘yes’ to love, ‘yes’ to others, ‘yes’ to education, ‘yes’ to greater job opportunities” the Pope explained, adding that “If we say ‘yes’ to all these things, there will be no room for illicit drugs, for alcohol abuse, for other forms of addiction.”

Observing how the Church follows Jesus’ command to go out and meet those who are suffering, hungry, thirsty and imprisoned, Pope Francis emphasized that it “does not abandon those who have fallen into the trap of drug addiction,” but rather “goes out to meet them with creative love.”

“She takes them by the hand, thanks to the efforts of countless workers and volunteers, and helps them to rediscover their dignity and to revive those inner strengths, those personal talents, which drug use had buried but can never obliterate, since every man and woman is created in the image and likeness of God.”

Those who are already in the process of overcoming drug addiction and working to re-build their lives serve as a powerful example and help us to have hope for the future

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American Institute for Creative Living offers the Credentialed Alcohol and Substance Abuse Counselor program (CASAC). This program leads to NYS License (OASAS)

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