

# Holy Wisdom

## Peace: Showing That Others Matter!

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Publication of the Syrian Orthodox Church in America on United Nations Affairs. 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 parish-ioners and all those under your care. The Earth is holy and a manifestation of God. Pray for peace and the UN.

**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 par-ties 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 that results in a resolution. It is time for us as people to acknowledge that there is something more that exceeds 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...

## THE DPI/NGO RESOURCE CENTRE

*Kathryn Rabill, graduate intern for the NGO/DPI Executive Committee, sat down with Maria-Luisa Chávez, Chief of NGO Relations at the Department of Public Information (DPI), and Werner Schmidt, Public Information Officer of the Capital Master Plan (CMP), to obtain information on the history, current condition, and future plans for the DPI/NGO Resource Centre at the United Nations Headquarters. Also present were Jeffery Huffines, Chair of the Executive Committee, and Dr. Elaine Congress, Chair of the Resource Center Subcommittee of the Executive Committee.*

### **How was the decision made to place the DPI/NGO Resource Centre in Room GA-37? Who made the decision?**

**Chávez:** As you know the NGO Relations Section was originally located in the basement, first level, which was very convenient. It was located next to the Dag Hammarskjöld Auditorium. We were told that the DPI/NGO Resource Centre was to be moved from that area to its present location temporarily because the whole area was going to be reconfigured for the offices of CMP (Capital Master Plan).

There are pros and cons with our current location. The DPI/NGO Resource Centre is now in a very big area; it's spacious. And so from that point of view, we are lucky.

### **Can the space be upgraded?**

**Chavez:** That is exactly what we're working on right now. It has already started. We are going to get rid of the old furniture and bring in some fresh furniture. We are also getting the place repainted. Thanks to CMP and Facilities Management Service (FMS), the DPI/NGO Resource Centre is going to get a good facelift to help the staff and the NGOs make it more livable until it is permanently relocated.

### **How would you describe the workplace experience of the NGO Resource Centre within the past year?**

**Chavez:** It has been very inhumane. I have received a lot of concerns from NGOs that I brought to the attention of management. Both the USG of DPI and the Director of OD have come and witnessed first hand the conditions. Then we had the problem with the mice because of the surrounding construction. As you know, the infestation was so bad we had to temporarily close down the Resource Centre for a couple of days and send announcements to all of the NGOs to advise them not to come. Also, the noise was unbearable. For instance, I was once giving a speech to a university group and I had to stop at one point because they could not hear me, it was that bad. I can see some positive movement towards finding a solution.

**Schmidt:** The word "health" has been mentioned a lot and I want to clear that up. Facilities Management Services are currently handling the mice. This problem can be solved. You mentioned asbestos abatement. Rest assured this is not something that you have to be concerned about. We have been doing asbestos abatement since the beginning of the CMP. We are about to complete asbestos abatement now in the Secretariat and Conference building. This is something that has been extremely regulated. An independent environmental consultant has been hired to ensure that asbestos particles do not leave the worksite. So while you see signs that say 'asbestos abatement is going on right now,' this is

not something you should be concerned about. In regards to ventilation, it is unpleasant and it shouldn't be unpleasant. So Facilities Management Services is certainly looking into it; but again it is not something you should be concerned about in regards to your health.

### **What is your vision for a future space for NGOs associated with the United Nations?**

**Chavez:** It is important to have a good conference room, maybe even a bit bigger than the one we have now. I also think we should be located in a facility that can fit both the DPI NGO Relations offices and the DESA offices. Our NGO constituents are from both DPI and ECOSOC and it is just logical that we should be in an area where we are all together.

**Schmidt:** Now is the time to start thinking about what DPI, the Executive Committee, and NGOs want with the future permanent site. We [CMP] need to know what kind of requirements you need, such as in accessibility. Do you need the DPI/NGO Resource Centre on the UN Compound, or in an annex building? These are the things that would be helpful for us to know right now.

**Kathryn Rahill**

Graduate Intern for the NGO/DPI Executive Committee

## **The Open Debate on the Situation in Afghanistan in the Security Council Chambers**

Dr. Anthony DeLuca, Grymes Hill, 20 year special advisor to the Kyrgyzstan Mission to the United Nations, was allowed to be seated at the UN Security Council with Ambassador Kydyrov during the latter's presentation of Kyrgyzstan's position in the Debate on the Situation in Afghanistan on September 29.

The Security Council is faced with having to make plans for the time US forces leave. This would create a dangerous vacuum in the area with accompanying instability in the entire region. Most countries were in agreement that internal forces loyal to the government have to be strengthened, the rule of law implemented, counter-terrorism units set up, a stable economy be in place on the model of the New Silk Road, (making use of local resources of countries along the old route), control of illegal drug production and its trade, use of UN resources and that of regional organizations, dealing with the Taliban and Al Qaida. In a word, this is a monumental task in a time of transition calling upon the whole family of nations to assist.

## **Remarks from Ambassador Susan E. Rice, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations, At a Security Council Debate on Afghanistan.**

September 29, 2011

Thank you, Mr. President. Foreign Minister Rassoul, thank you for being here today. You honor us with your presence and we're grateful for your remarks. Special Representative de Mistura, thank you for your briefing and your continued extraordinary service. I hope you will also convey to all of the staff of UNAMA the enduring gratitude of the United States, for the important work that they do every day

throughout Afghanistan, under considerable hardship, for the benefit of the Afghan people. We are also grateful for the important contributions of Deputy Special Representative Martin Kobler, who is on his way to Iraq to be the new SRSG there.

This morning, I will focus my remarks on security, upcoming events that frame the 2014 transition, and the New Silk Road initiative.

Earlier this month, as you know, the U.S. Embassy compound in Kabul was attacked. Afghan National Security Forces have responsibility for Kabul and they responded ably. They ended the assault on the Embassy, there was minimal damage to Embassy property and our compound and no U.S. personnel were killed. However, the insurgent attack killed five Afghan national police and eleven other Afghans, including children. While the security situation in Afghanistan continues to present challenges, notably including the insurgents continuing targeting of fellow Afghans, our goal remains to shift gradually to a supporting role, as Afghan National Security Forces continue to develop their capabilities. The deployment of additional U.S. military service members together with additional troops committed by our allies and partners has helped stabilize more of the country and shifted the momentum away from the insurgency. Together, we have made significant progress.

The tragic assassination of Afghanistan's former President, and Chairman of the Afghan High Peace Council, Professor Rabbani, has only strengthened our collective resolve. We will continue to work in support of the Afghan government and the Afghan people to end the insurgency, pursue justice against those who fund, direct, and carry out the violence, and realize a peaceful future for all Afghans.

President Obama has been clear that the strong U.S. relationship with Afghanistan will extend well beyond 2014. We continue to make progress on our Strategic Partnership document, which outlines our long-term cooperation during the transition period and beyond. As President Obama and President Karzai reaffirmed in their meeting last week, we will have a strategic partnership between our nations that provides a long-term framework for bilateral cooperation on security, economic and social development, and institution building.

As Afghanistan moves towards the 2014 transition, we know that government alone cannot grow Afghanistan's economy, so we must all continue to work to create an environment that attracts private-sector investment. Last week Foreign Minister Rassoul, German Foreign Minister Westerwelle, and Secretary of State Clinton met with 27 of Afghanistan's neighbors and partners to advance their shared vision of a New Silk Road. The New Silk Road is an Afghan-led venture—a rallying point for securing Afghan, regional, and international commitments to support Afghanistan's transition and develop a sustainable Afghan economy that will benefit the whole region. The creation of a New Silk Road will help Afghanistan and its neighbors to maximize the value of their natural resources, build human capacity, create jobs, generate revenue to pay for needed services, and capitalize on the region's economic potential. The New Silk Road will also promote women entrepreneurs, since we know that sustained and successful development depends on women becoming equal partners.

The international community has an important role to play in supporting Afghanistan and the region's efforts to make this vision a reality. The New Silk Road initiative will reinforce the search for diplomatic solutions to end the war in Afghanistan.

Mr. President, 2011 remains a pivotal year. The International Afghanistan Conference at the end of the year in Bonn will be a key opportunity for the Government of Afghanistan, its neighbors, and the

international community to strengthen economic cooperation in the region. This will be complemented by regional efforts to strengthen mutual confidence and neighborly relations at the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Istanbul in November. We also welcome the start of the comprehensive review of UNAMA's mandated activities and the United Nations' support in Afghanistan.

We reaffirm our gratitude for the crucial and continued commitment of the United Nations. UNAMA is working in partnership with the government of Afghanistan for the benefit of all Afghans in their quest for peace, security, and stability.

Mr. President, we will continue to support the Afghan government and people, regional partners, and the international community as we work to establish stability and prosperity in Afghanistan and throughout the region.

## **Inside Look at Major UN Actions & Events...**

### **Statement by Ambassador Susan E. Rice, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations, on the UN Human Rights Council's Special Session on Syria.**

August 23, 2011

I welcome today's decision by the UN Human Rights Council to launch an independent investigation into the gross human rights abuses committed by the Assad regime in Syria. With today's resolution, which the United States supported alongside 32 countries from every region of the world, the chorus of international condemnation against the Syrian regime has grown louder and more unified. Yesterday's attacks on protestors after a visit by UN humanitarianists should only further unite the world against the regime's brazen crackdown.

The United States has long insisted that President Assad lead a democratic transition or get out of the way. He has refused to lead responsibly and now must go. We have reinforced this message by applying international pressure and targeted sanctions to ensure that his regime feels the consequences of its extreme brutality.

We will pursue additional action in the Security Council to increase pressure on the regime, and we call on the Syrian government to allow the commission of inquiry to fulfill its mandate. We stand with the people of Syria, who are demanding a government that represents their will and respects their universal human rights.

## **AIDS EPIDEMIC AT CRITICAL JUNCTURE IN ASIA-PACIFIC REGION, SAYS NEW UN REPORT**

New York, Aug 26 2011 10:10AM

The AIDS epidemic in Asia and the Pacific is at a crossroads, says a United Nations report released today, which adds that while the region has seen impressive gains in the HIV response, greater and sustained efforts will be needed.

An estimated 4.9 million people were living with HIV in Asia and the Pacific in 2009, according to the [report](#) by the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) that was launched at the 2011 International Congress on AIDS in Asia and the Pacific, in Busan, Republic of Korea.

The majority of them are living in 11 countries: Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Thailand and Viet Nam.

The report found that the region has seen a 20 per cent drop in new infections between 2001 and 2009, and a three-fold increase in access to antiretroviral therapy since 2006. Notably, Cambodia, India, Myanmar and Thailand have reduced their HIV infection rates significantly with intensive HIV prevention programmes for people who buy and sell sex.

At the same time, the report warned that this progress is threatened by an inadequate focus on key populations at higher risk of HIV infection and insufficient funding from both domestic and international sources.

In addition, while more people than ever before have access to HIV services across the region, most countries there are a long way from achieving universal access goals for HIV prevention, treatment, care and support, according to a news release issued by UNAIDS.

“Getting to zero new HIV infections in Asia and the Pacific will demand national responses based on science and the best available evidence,” said UNAIDS Executive Director Michel Sidibé.

“HIV programmes must be sufficiently resourced and solidly focused on key populations. Investments made today will pay off many-fold in the future,” he stressed.

The report also cited an estimated 15 per cent drop in new HIV infections among children since 2006. However, regional coverage of HIV services to prevent new HIV infections in children continues to lag behind global averages, particularly in South Asia.

New HIV infections in the region remain concentrated among key populations: people who buy and sell sex, people who inject drugs, men who have sex with men, and transgender people. And yet, “most programmes to protect key populations and their intimate partners from HIV infection are inadequate in size and scale,” said UNAIDS.

In addition, stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV and populations at higher risk of infection are still a problem. Around 90 per cent of the countries in the region retain punitive laws and policies that effectively prevent people living with HIV and key populations from accessing life-saving HIV services.

Lack of funding is another concern, according to the report, which said that an estimated \$1.1 billion



was spent on the AIDS response in 30 countries across the region in 2009 – just one third of the funding needed to achieve universal access goals to HIV services.

The report added that investments to protect key populations from HIV remain insufficient. Among countries reporting detailed expenditure data in 2010, only 8 per cent of total AIDS spending in South Asia and 20 per cent in South-east Asia focused on HIV prevention among key populations at higher risk of HIV infection.

In a related development, UNAIDS today applauded a decision by the Government of Fiji to lift its restrictions on entry, stay or residence based on HIV status – which was officially announced by the country's President at the conference in Busan.

“This is a clear breakthrough in our efforts to secure the global freedom of movement for people living with HIV,” said Mr. Sidibé, adding that restrictions that limit movement based on HIV-positive status only are discriminatory and violate human rights.

After the removal of Fiji's restrictions, UNAIDS counts 47 countries, territories, and areas that continue to impose some form of restriction on the entry, stay and residence of people living with HIV based on their HIV status. At least, 128 countries have no such restrictions.

## **UN REPORT OUTLINES INVESTMENT STRATEGIES TO REDUCE WATER SCARCITY**

New York, Aug 25 2011 11:10AM

An annual investment of \$198 billion, or 0.16 per cent of global gross domestic product (GDP), in the water sector could reduce water scarcity and halve the number of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation in less than four years, the United Nations said today.

In the water chapter of its Green Economy Report, the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) said that investing in sanitation and drinking water, strengthening local water supply systems, conserving ecosystems critical for water supply, and developing more effective policies can help avert the high social and economic costs resulting from inadequate water supplies.

Cambodia, Indonesia, the Philippines and Viet Nam, for example, lose an estimated \$9 billion a year, or 2 per cent of their combined GDP, due to problems caused by poor sanitation, according to the report, which was released during the World Water Week conference in Stockholm.

“Improving access to cleaner drinking water and sanitation services is a cornerstone of a more sustainable, resource-efficient society,” said UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner.

## **WORLD MUST FUND FAMINE-WRACKED SOMALIA TO PREVENT GENERATION DYING, UN WARNS**

New York, Aug 25 2011

African leaders convened a fund-raising conference today for famine-wracked Somalia, where tens of thousands of people have already died and 3.2 million are on the brink of starvation, with a top United Nations official warning that the crisis stretches far beyond hunger to issues of health,

protection and livelihood.

“The future of an entire generation hangs in the balance,” Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiro told the pledging conference hosted by the African Union (AU) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. “If we do not respond, the consequences will reverberate for years. We will be asked how we stood by and watched a generation die, how we allowed a crisis to become a catastrophe, when we could have stopped it.”

She noted that communities had already been shattered and a generation of orphans would bear the scars of hunger for the rest of their lives.

### **BAN CALLS ON SOUTH SUDAN TO RESTORE SECURITY AFTER DEADLY ETHNIC FIGHTING**

New York, Aug 23 2011

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today called on the Government of South Sudan to restore security in Jonglei state, where recent ethnic clashes have claimed at least 600 deaths.

Unconfirmed reports indicate that almost 1,000 people have also been wounded during the fighting between the Murle and Lou Nuer communities in Jonglei that followed large-scale cattle raids by members of the two groups which have led to the theft of between 26,000 and 30,000 cattle.

“The Secretary-General calls on the Government of South Sudan to take all steps to restore security in Jonglei state, to protect civilians affected by this violence and to work with both communities to reduce tensions,” a statement issued by his spokesperson said.

The statement added that the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) stands ready to assist the Government fulfill its primary role to provide security and protect civilians.

### **SAD HISTORY OF SLAVE TRADE CAN HELP MANKIND LEARN COMMON HUMANITY – UN OFFICIAL**

New York, Aug 23 2011

The head of the United Nations agency tasked with conserving the world’s cultural heritage today exhorted mankind to learn the history of the dehumanizing transatlantic slave trade to discover their common humanity and intensify the fight against prejudice and racial discrimination.

“Each of us must be empowered to learn about this past and to reclaim it, as a necessary step in building new common ground,” said Irina Bokova, Director-General of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), in a message to mark the International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition.

“Managing cultural diversity and fighting prejudice and racial discrimination raise high stakes in globalizing world,” she said, adding that the Day was an opportunity to reflect on the tragedy of slave trade, and to pay tribute to those who struggled for its abolition in the light of the universal recognition of human rights.



## **TOP UN HUMAN RIGHTS BODY ORDERS INQUIRY INTO SYRIAN VIOLENCE**

New York, Aug 23 2011

The top United Nations human rights body today called for an immediate end to all violence in Syria and decided to dispatch an independent international commission of inquiry to investigate alleged abuses committed during the Government's crackdown on protesters.

In a resolution adopted at the end of a two-day special session, the Geneva-based Human Rights Council also strongly condemned the "continued grave and systematic human rights violations by the Syrian authorities."

By a vote of 33 in favor to 4 against, with 9 abstentions, the 47-member Council also welcomed the report of the fact-finding mission of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), which UN human rights chief Navi Pillay presented yesterday, and expressed profound concern about its findings.

The report, which covered the period from 15 March to 15 July, outlined a litany of Government abuses ranging from murder, enforced disappearances, deprivation of liberty and the torture even of children to an apparent "shoot-to-kill" policy against protesters with snipers posted on rooftops.

## **THOUSANDS STILL ARRIVING ON ITALY'S SHORES FROM LIBYA AND TUNISIA – UN AGENCY**

New York, Aug 16 2011

People are continuing to flee Libya and Tunisia for a variety of reasons, the United Nations refugee agency reported today, noting that almost 2,000 people arrived on the Italian island of Lampedusa over the weekend from the two North African nations.

The majority of the new arrivals, some 1,800, set sail from Janzour, 12 kilometres west of the Libyan capital, Tripoli, where they had waited for over a week for calm sea conditions to depart, according to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

As for why they made the perilous sea journey across the Mediterranean, a group of Sudanese men told UNHCR staff that they were rounded up in Tripoli and forced on to a boat. Others said they had lost jobs in Libya and were hoping for work in Europe, said the agency.

To date more than 1,500 people have lost their lives attempting to reach Italy's shores, often because of unsafe vessels and an absence of qualified skippers onboard. At the beginning of June at least 150 people who fled Libya drowned in one of the year's deadliest boat incidents in the Mediterranean.

UNHCR noted that some 52,000 people have arrived in Italy since the unrest in North Africa began earlier this year – 27,000 of them departed from Libya and the rest from Tunisia.

The agency supports initiatives by the Italian Government for voluntary assisted repatriation of people found not to be in need of international protection.

## **NEW UN GUIDEBOOK AIMS TO IMPROVE PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT FOR DISASTER VICTIMS**

New York, Aug 17 2011

The United Nations health agency and its partners have launched a guide to help fieldworkers provide vital psychological support to people affected by humanitarian emergencies.

“In the last five years the psychological damage left in the wake of tsunamis, earthquakes, droughts and conflicts has proven as devastating as the physical damage,” said Bruce Aylward, Assistant Director-General for Polio, Emergencies and Country Collaboration at the UN World Health Organization (WHO).

“Recognizing that we can do more and do better for the mental health of disaster-affected populations, WHO and partners have developed this guide to ensure that standards and best practices are consistently applied in humanitarian settings,” added Dr. Aylward.

The guide is being released to coincide with World Humanitarian Day, celebrated on 19 August, which recognizes the sacrifices and contributions of those who risk their lives to give others help and hope.

Produced jointly by WHO, the War Trauma Foundation and World Vision International, the guide reflects the emerging science and international consensus on how to provide basic support to people in the immediate aftermath of extremely stressful events.

“This guide gives simple, practical guidance for supporting people in ways that respect their dignity, culture and abilities,” the three organizations said in a joint news release.

It will enable humanitarian and emergency workers from all over the world to provide critical psychological support to people in acute distress, including helping distressed relief workers themselves, they added.

## **GENERAL ASSEMBLY OPENS NEW SESSION WITH PLEA FOR UNITY TO TACKLE GLOBAL CRISES**

New York, Sep 13 2011

The General Assembly today opened its annual session with a fervent plea for cooperation in tackling looming crises from conflicts to climate change, and a nostalgic look back to a former secretary-general who died 50 years ago in the service of peace.

“Moving forward the myriad of issues before us will require hard work, integrity, and partnership,” the Assembly’s President for its 66th session, Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser of Qatar, told the meeting, which was dedicated to the memory of Dag Hammarskjöld, who died in a plane crash in 1961 while trying to bring peace to the nascent country now known as the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

“The sands are shifting. We have before us a unique opportunity to shape change and ensure that our next chapter will be safer for the most vulnerable, more prosperous for those in need, and kinder to Planet Earth.”

He outlined four main areas of focus for this year's session. The first is the peaceful settlement of disputes, a need that has become more relevant and urgent than ever. "It is my view that the General Assembly should, through its revitalization, become more engaged and empowered on issues of mediation, so that it can fulfill its role as the world's preeminent peacemaker at this major juncture in international relations," he said.

Turning to UN reform, Mr. Al-Nasser called for revitalizing the Assembly's work so that it remains efficient, effective and representative, especially in responding early to emerging crises, and for reforming the Security Council.

The Council, whose resolutions alone are legally binding while the Assembly's are recommendations, has not changed in decades, with five permanent members with veto powers – China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States – and 10 non-permanent members without veto elected for two-year terms. Formal talks to reform it have been under way for more than 18 years.

"There is no shame in recognizing that after six decades our organization needs reform," Mr. Al-Nasser said.

On the third priority, improving disaster prevention and response, he cited the unprecedented surge of natural and man-made disasters. "Populations across the world are experiencing increased vulnerability, food insecurity, and health and education crises," he said. To address these critical issues, we must enhance cooperation among various actors."

In the last area, sustainable development and global prosperity, he stressed the primacy of the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the eight ambitious targets set in 2000 that aim to slash hunger and poverty, maternal and infant mortality, a host of diseases and lack of access to education and health care, all by 2015.

"With the target date for the achieving the MDGs on the horizon, and as we face global economic turmoil, improving global governance and finding innovative financing modalities will continue to be on our agenda," he said, citing the challenges of climate change and the urgency of solving the global financial crisis. "No one can fix this issue alone and the UN should be the central forum to discuss this issue."

In a separate speech Mr. Al-Nasser praised Mr. Hammarskjöld as a pioneer of preventive diplomacy, the effort to resolve crises before they become deadly and intractable. "Mr. Hammarskjöld was formative in shaping the UN's methods of operation," he said.

"Mr. Hammarskjöld was the driving force behind the establishment of the first United Nations Emergency Force, dedicated to securing and supervising the cessation of hostilities in the Suez Canal — an approach that is now a core function of our activities — today called 'peacekeeping'."

Praising his predecessor, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon told the 193 Member States: "Nothing could be more fitting at this tumultuous time than to reflect on the life and death of Dag Hammarskjöld... we are inspired by the power of his conviction and we pledge to carry on the work of the United Nations that he died defending."

He noted that one Mr. Hammarskjöld's deepest convictions was that the UN exists not for the major

powers but for the other, smaller, weaker countries, especially at that time the newly independent nations of Africa.

“His words ring as true today. This reason for the UN’s existence was tested recently in Libya and in Côte d’Ivoire,” Mr. Ban said, referring to two West African countries where the UN more recently helped to promote democracy after civil wars. “In those cases and others, we stood firmly on the side of democracy, on the side of justice, on the side of the people.”

## **GAPS BETWEEN BOYS AND GIRLS IN DEVELOPING WORLD WIDEN AS THEY GET OLDER – UN REPORT**

New York, Sep 13 2011

A new report by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) highlights significant gaps in areas such as education and health, mostly favoring males, as boys and girls in developing countries grow older.

“While there is little difference between boys and girls in early childhood with respect to nutrition, health, education and other basic indicators, differences by gender appear increasingly more pronounced during adolescence and young adulthood,” said Geeta Rao Gupta, UNICEF Deputy Executive Director.

The report, which was presented today in New York, is the most comprehensive compilation to date of sex-disaggregated statistics on children and young people in the developing world, the agency stated in a news release.

Data from the report, entitled “Boys and Girls in the Life Cycle,” suggests that gender disparities are relatively small in children’s early years of life in the four areas examined – education, health, nutrition and protection.

For example, children are equally likely to be registered at birth irrespective of sex; exclusive breastfeeding rates in the first six months of life are similar for both sexes; and the likelihood of being undernourished is the same for boys and girls under age five.

Also, in most countries with available data, similar proportions of boys and girls attend pre-school education. However, gender inequalities in access to education, health and protection are significantly greater as children approach adolescence, the report notes.

The data shows that girls are significantly more likely to be married as children (under 18 years of age) and to begin having sex at a young age. Young women are less likely to be literate than young men and are less likely to watch television, listen to the radio and read a newspaper or magazine.

In addition, young men are better informed about HIV/AIDS and are also more likely to protect themselves with condoms during sex. Young women in sub-Saharan Africa, the report says, are two to four times more likely to be infected with HIV/AIDS than young men

## **UN CONFERENCE TO FOCUS ON WAYS OF IMPROVING LIVES OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**

New York, Sep 6 2011

Hundreds of delegates from governments and civil society will gather at United Nations in New York tomorrow to discuss ways to improve the lives and well-being of people with disabilities by addressing some of the challenges they face, including unemployment.

The three-day Fourth Session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities will bring together up to 500 delegates, including 78 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with more than 300 representatives, under the theme “Enabling Development, Realizing the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.”

Ronald Clive McCallum, the chair of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities stressed, at a news conference at UN Headquarters, the need to provide employment opportunities for people with disabilities to help them support themselves and give them the opportunity to use their talents for the larger good of society.

“It is only through employment that we can play full roles as citizens in our countries. It is only through employment that we can use our talents to contribute to the better of society. It is only through employment that we can support ourselves and our families,” said Mr. McCallum, who has a visual disability himself.

## **ROLE OF ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS MORE VITAL THAN EVER, SAY UN OFFICIALS**

New York, Sep 23 2011

With its ability to foster cross-cultural understanding among peoples and societies, the Alliance of Civilizations initiative is crucial in the struggle to combat intolerance, extremism and bigotry worldwide, United Nations officials stressed today.

The work of the Alliance touches on many of the threats at the top of the global agenda, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon noted in his remarks to the ministerial meeting of the Group of Friends of the Alliance, which was set up in 2005 by Spain and Turkey under UN auspices.

“Two out of every three major conflicts in our world have a cultural dimension. Extremism, religious strife and bigotry fuel the fire,” Mr. Ban said.

“Even the most stable democracies suffer horrific acts of hatred and the killing of innocent civilians singled out for their identity or their beliefs,” he added. “Across the world, bridges of understanding strain under the weight of intolerance and polarization.”

He told the meeting, held at UN Headquarters on the margins of the annual high-level debate of the General Assembly, that promoting dialogue and understanding has long been considered a form of ‘soft power’ because it brings about change slowly, without military action.

“But the events of this year taught us that when people unite in common cause, they can change the

world more quickly than anyone could imagine... and more forcefully than any amount of military might," said Mr. Ban.

"The youth in Egypt, Tunisia and elsewhere demonstrated how firing off an email could be more powerful than firing a gun. They proved that even with no position in government, no weapons and barely any resources, they could shape the future and the present."

The Alliance has a mandate to marshal this power for good, he said, adding that it can also contribute to preventive diplomacy efforts. "The Alliance of Civilizations can help to empower a great cadre of civilian negotiators, diplomats and ambassadors who can fortify the bedrock values that sustain and promote peace," said the Secretary-General.

General Assembly President Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser noted that recent acts of terrorism around the world, including the attacks in Norway in July, have underscored the urgency of the Alliance's mission.

"We must focus our efforts to bridge differences and overcome the intolerance and divisions which potentially threaten world peace," he told the meeting.

Mr. Al-Nasser pointed out that the Alliance has mounted a range of innovative projects since its establishment to improve understanding between peoples across different cultures, and to counter the forces that fuel divisions, incitement to hatred, and extremism.

"The events around us are challenging," said the President, adding that events such as those in the Arab world recently underscore the urgent need for governments and communities to commit to building a culture of peace and sustainable development.

The Alliance will hold its fourth forum in December in the Qatari capital of Doha.

## **CHRISTIANS CURRENTLY MOST PERSECUTED RELIGIOUS GROUP IN WORLD, HOLY SEE TELLS UN**

New York, Sep 27 2011

Warning that Christians currently suffer more persecution because of their faith than any other religious group, the Holy See today told the United Nations the denial of religious freedom threatened peace and security and precluded integral human development.

"Respect for religious freedom is the fundamental path for the construction of peace, the recognition of human dignity and the safeguarding of human rights," Archbishop Dominique Mamberti, Secretary for Relations with States for the Holy See, which has observer status at the UN, <"<http://gadebate.un.org/66/holy-see>">told the General Assembly on the final day of the annual general debate.

"The particular influence of a specific religion in a nation should never imply that citizens belonging to other faiths should be discriminated against in social life or, even worse, that violence against them should be tolerated," he said, reiterating the Holy See's appeal to the authorities and religious leaders for the protection of religious minorities wherever they are threatened.



The archbishop cited religious freedom among three challenges he raised, the other two being the duty of the international community to take care of its weakest members, and the prolonged global economic and financial crisis.

On the former he mentioned the victims of the drought and famine raging in the Horn of Africa, linking it with the responsibility to protect, under which the international community has the duty to intervene if states cannot or will not guarantee that protection.

He noted that the responsibility to protect was invoked in cases of conflict and warned that the use of force should be the very last resort; after all other efforts at prevention have failed.

On the financial crisis the archbishop stressed that the economy cannot only function by market self-regulation, and even less in accordance with agreements limited to reconciling the interests of the most powerful.

“It needs an ethical basis in order to function for humanity,” he said, calling any other non-ethical basis “ingenuous or cynical, and always fatal.”

### **AT UN, INDIA CALLS FOR GLOBAL COOPERATION TO OVERCOME ECONOMIC WOES**

New York, Sep 24 2011

India today cautioned against protectionism in the face of the global economic slowdown, calling at the United Nations for effective ways to promote the coordination of microeconomic policies in the world’s biggest economies.

“Declining global demand and availability of capital, increasing barriers to free trade and mounting debt pose a threat to the international monetary and financial system,” said Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in his address to the annual general debate of the General Assembly in New York.

“The reform of governance systems of international financial institutions ought to be pursued with speed and efficiency.”

## Religious New from Around the World...

### **Christian agencies warn that 10 million people face famine in Horn of Africa**

7 July 2011

London (ENI). With the United Nations warning that the Horn of Africa and other parts of Africa are facing their worst drought in sixty years, Christian Aid and several other relief agencies have called on their supporters to help, despite global economic uncertainty. "More than ten million people are thought to be affected across the region, with Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia hardest hit," said Kirsty Smith, director of the Methodist Relief and Development Fund. "Two successive failed rainy seasons have meant lost harvests, and the decimation of livestock. Soaring food prices have exacerbated the situation, leaving people hungry and unable to meet their basic needs," she said.

### **Roman Catholic bishops in Eastern Africa seek interfaith dialogue**

Nairobi, Kenya (ENI). Interfaith dialogue is crucial for peaceful co-existence and ending tensions in Eastern Africa, which faces the threat of religious fundamentalism and fanaticism, said Roman Catholic bishops in the region on 6 July. The comments came at the end of the 17th Plenary Assembly of the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA) in Nairobi, which ran from 26 June to 6 July. The assembly coincided with the organization's golden jubilee celebrations and was attended by cardinals, archbishops, bishops, priests, representatives of the Holy See, and others.

### **Mormons add shorter stints to boost service in international missions**

Salt Lake City, Utah (ENI). As Mormon leaders seek to add more senior couples to their shrinking missionary force, they're hoping that less will mean more: less time and expense, more missionaries, reports the Salt Lake City Tribune via Religion News Service. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) has announced that, come September, retired couples will be able to serve international missions for as short as six months or as long as 23 months. Until the change, missionaries serving outside their own country were required to devote at least 18 months to the assignment.

### **Indian Christians criticize teaching of Hindu scripture**

14 July 2011

Bangalore, India (ENInews)--Church groups have joined secular protests against the southern Karnataka state government for promoting the teaching of Hindu scripture in state-run schools. About 100 students and social activists demonstrated on 14 July at the Gandhi statue in Bangalore, Karnataka's capital, demanding end to the teaching of the Hindu Bhagavad Gita scripture. The state is ruled by the Hindu nationalist BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party).

### **Aid workers tend Somali refugees in Kenya camp**

Nairobi, Kenya (ENInews)--Christian agencies are stepping up interventions in the Dadaab refugee camp in northern Kenya, where about 1,500 drought-stricken Somali migrants are arriving daily. "Most of the people arriving are dehydrated and very hungry. Many lack clothing and are barefoot," said Lennart Hernander, a representative of the Lutheran World Federation's (LWF) Department for World Service, on 13 July. The influx to the LWF-managed camp increased early this year due to prolonged drought and insecurity in Somalia, and now about 360,000 people are at the camp, humanitarian officials said.

### **Kenya promises to expand camp for refugees**

19 July 2011

Nairobi, Kenya (ENInews)--The Kenyan government has promised to expand a refugee camp for thousands of desperate Somalis fleeing a drought crisis in the Horn of Africa, and faith groups and humanitarian agencies are praising the move.

"The LWF [Lutheran World Federation] welcomes the decision as a vital life-saving measure, especially in view of the current high influx of Somali refugees fleeing drought and insecurity at home," the Rev. Martin Junge, the LWF's general secretary said in a letter on 18 July to Kenyan President Mwai Kibaki and Prime Minister Raila Odinga. The LWF, which manages the camp for the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, is working with other agencies to provide food and water to the refugees, many of whom are starving children.

### **Archbishops call for more support for Christians in Holy Land**

London (ENInews)--"We cannot wait for politicians to sort things out, we have got to make a difference ourselves," the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, told reporters at the conclusion of a two-day conference at Lambeth Palace on "Christians in the Holy Land," which he jointly hosted with Archbishop Vincent Nichols, the leader of the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales.

The meeting, which was attended by more than 60 Christian, Jewish and Muslim faith leaders and politicians from the Middle East, Europe and North America as well as young Palestinian Christians, had been called to consider the decline in the Christian population in the Holy Land and how these communities could be assisted to remain.

### **Religious groups in New Zealand praise new immigration rules**

21 July 2011

Wellington, New Zealand (ENI). Migrant religious workers in New Zealand are welcoming the opportunity to be permanent residents after the government announced changes to the law on 19 July. Starting in November, an updated temporary visa will allow workers to stay in the country for four years before applying for residency.

Religious leaders said current laws discriminate against respondents to a “calling,” which are not a job advertisement, and hope the new law will alleviate clergy shortages. Many successful visa applications require evidence of paid work, a barrier for the Catholic Church, since a quarter of New Zealand's Catholic priests come from abroad. Buddhist priests are also unpaid and face a similar problem.

### **State Department tries to raise visibility of religion**

Washington (ENI). Often accused of ignoring religion as they craft foreign policy, the White House and State Department are trying to show that religion is a rising priority for U.S. diplomacy. The most recent case in point: Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton in Istanbul last week (15 July) promoted a new U.S.-backed international agreement to protect freedom of speech and religion, an accord described by her department as a "landmark" change.

### **Christian agencies continue work in Somalia despite security issues**

Nairobi, Kenya (ENI). Christian relief agencies providing aid to millions of people facing drought in Somalia face security issues in the war-torn country, where humanitarian officials say operating is difficult, but not impossible. Nearly 3.7 million people, half of the country's population, are affected by a serious food crisis, according to the United Nations, which declared famine in two regions of southern Somalia. An estimated 2.8 million people have been affected by the crisis.

### **British Museum exhibition will help explain the Haj to non-Muslims**

26 July 2011

Canterbury, England (ENI). The British Museum, known for its vast collection of world art and artifacts, is preparing to hold the first major exhibition in Britain dedicated to the Haj, the pilgrimage to Mecca all Muslims are expected to make at least once during their lives if they are able. Sponsored by HSBC Amanah, the global Islamic financial services division of the banking group HSBC, the exhibition will open on 26 January 2012 and run until 15 April. It will bring together historic artifacts and contemporary art related to the Haj.

### **Indian churches launch hunger strike to protest treatment of Christian Dalits**

Bangalore, India (ENI). Major churches in India are taking part in a hunger strike that began 25 July in New Delhi to demand an end to discrimination against Christian Dalits. "This strike is the expression of hunger for justice, hunger for equality and hunger for the human dignity of Christian Dalits," said Rev. Roger Gaikwad, general secretary of the National Council of Churches in India at the launch of the protests, set to run until 28 July.

### **Interfaith coalition urges Congress to protect Medicaid**

Washington (ENI). A letter signed by 36 national organizations across the faith spectrum, including the National Council of Churches (NCC) Justice and Advocacy Commission, states that while deficit

reduction efforts may be necessary, drastic cuts to Medicaid would be devastating to the disability community, according to an NCC news release. "The shared values of our faiths lead us to support policies and programs that promote independence and dignity for people with disabilities so they can continue contributing to their communities and congregations," said the letter. "Any decisions about Medicaid funding or the structure of the program should take into consideration the ability of people with disabilities to live healthy, independent lives."

### **More efforts required by different faiths to prevent violence, says Norwegian church leader**

28 July 2011

Geneva (ENI). Different faiths around the globe need to do more to promote human solidarity, said Rev. Olav Fykse Tveit, general secretary of the World Council of Churches (WCC), in the aftermath of the bomb attack and mass killings in his native Norway. They also need to work together to find common values and ways to respect one another, and to "find ways to live together without violence," he said.

### **Religious leaders speak out on importance of dealing with climate change**

Jerusalem (ENI). Jewish, Christian, and Muslim leaders met in Jerusalem on 18 July at the Interfaith Climate Change Forum to raise awareness about the vital role religion can play on environmental issues. "At the heart of our faiths and maybe of all faiths is the sense that there is more to our cosmos than purely its material components," said Rabbi David Rosen, international director of the American Jewish Committee. "That awareness should not only lead to a sense of connectedness to everything in the world, but also to a sense of responsibility and obligation to both respect the physical world and protect it and sustain it for future generations."

### **African bishop challenges politicians to honor their commitment to eradicate malaria**

London (ENI). One of the Anglican church's most committed activists in the fight to roll back malaria in Africa and other parts of the world has returned home to Mozambique after a tour of the United Kingdom, where he met with members and supporters of the London-based Mozambique Angola Association (MANNA). "The fight against malaria, which kills around one million people worldwide every year--50 percent of those deaths are in Africa--is proceeding, but far too slowly" said Dinis Sengulane, Bishop of Lebombo.

### **Norway's churches at center of country's efforts to heal after attacks**

29 July 2011

Trondheim, Norway (ENI). A Norwegian bishop addressing the recent bombing and shooting attacks in his country said Norway has "countered this insane terrorism by demonstrating love and solidarity." "We have brought out a social capital we maybe even did not know was there. We must rebuild our trust in human beings as fellow human beings," said Church of Norway Bishop Tor Singsaas of Nidaros at the opening of the annual St. Olav Festival in Trondheim on 28 July.

### **Famous Anglican evangelist dies at 90 listening to Handel's "Messiah"**

Canterbury, England (ENI). Rev. John Stott, one of the most influential Anglican clergymen of the 20th century, died of natural causes on 27 July at the age of 90. "Time" magazine once described him as one of the 100 most influential people in the world, and historian Adrian Hastings, in "A History of English Christianity, 1920-1985," called him "one of the most influential figures in the Christian world."

### **Orthodox Patriarch calls for reconciliation of Russia and Georgia**

Moscow (ENI). Patriarch Ilia II of the Georgian Orthodox Church has called on his Russian Orthodox counterpart to reconcile Russia and Georgia, which have remained at odds since a short, bloody war in August 2008. "Your Holiness, those political relations that have taken shape between Russia and Georgia are completely unacceptable," he said to Patriarch Kirill I, after co-celebrating the liturgy with the Russian Orthodox leader in Kiev. "We are close Orthodox peoples, and these relations were created by the envy of our foes."

### **Christian churches in India blame government for 'betraying their hopes'**

1 August 2011

Bangalore, India (ENI). Church groups and Christian activists completed a four-day protest in New Delhi on 28 July, speaking out against Indian government policies that discriminate against Christian Dalits. Nearly 10,000 Christians, including four dozen bishops of different denominations, took part in the protest, which included a hunger strike and ended with a march to India's Parliament building.

### **Bishops in Kenya take new stance on genetically modified foods**

Nairobi, Kenya (ENI). Roman Catholic bishops in Kenya told people to eat genetically modified foods to check starvation amid a serious drought in the Horn of Africa. The bishops spoke in response to opposition from some non-governmental organizations and legislators to a government plan to import genetically modified maize from South Africa.

### **U.S. politicians pass bill to help religious minorities under attack**

Washington (ENI). The House has passed a bill that would create a special State Department envoy for religious minorities in the Near East and South Central Asia, where Christians have come under attack in recent years, particularly in Muslim majority nations. Rep. Frank Wolf, R-Va., introduced the bill in January after a spate of violence against Christians in Iraq and Egypt, and in response to persistent concerns for religious minorities in Pakistan and Afghanistan, among other nations. The bill passed last Friday (27 July) by a 402-20 tally.



## **London vigil walkers call for peace as violence spreads**

9 August 2011

London (ENInews)--With the smell of smoke and wail of sirens in the background, about 200 to 300 people from a range of faiths on the evening of 8 August gathered for prayer and a walk to the center of Tottenham, north London, scarred by a weekend of rioting. Called a "Vigil of Hope," the walk took place in an atmosphere of escalating violence in London and other cities in Britain. A 26-year-old man was reported killed in Croydon, south of London and hundreds have been arrested as business and shops were burned and looted in a third day of violence. Prime Minister David Cameron recalled Parliament and vowed to put an additional 10,000 police officers on the streets to quell outbreaks in London, Birmingham, Liverpool, Nottingham and Bristol.

## **In England, faith groups work to heal riot-scarred neighborhoods**

London (ENInews)--Many faith communities in England are working together on the front line this week after three days of rioting in which hooded youths ransacked hundreds of businesses and shops in many parts of London, Birmingham, Bristol, Liverpool, Leeds, Nottingham and smaller towns. Parishes around the country have been offering support to shell-shocked residents. The Anglican church of St. Mary the Virgin in Tottenham, where the unrest began on 6 August, is distributing meals, providing hot water and phone charging facilities to those left without electricity. St. Ignatius Catholic Church in nearby Stamford Hill is offering food and counseling. The Rev. Valentin Dedji of St. Mark's Methodist Church in Tottenham is caring for the family of Mark Duggan, a 29-year-old whose killing by police last week sparked a peaceful demonstration on 6 August that spiraled into violence.

## **Northern Sudan Christians face challenges after South's secession**

Nairobi, Kenya (ENInews)--As Christians in South Sudan mark one month after independence, churches in the Muslim north are facing pressure from government officials and members of the public who are demanding their closure. The development is causing some church leaders to close schools and congregations and consider moving to the south, but even those actions are difficult because they see themselves as northern Christians.

## **Religious restrictions increased for two billion, study says**

Washington, D.C. (ENInews)--One-third of the world -- about 2.2 billion people -- live in nations where restrictions on religion have substantially increased, according to a new report. The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life study, released 9 August, also shows intolerant countries growing more hostile to religious freedom, and tolerant ones growing more accommodating, Religion News Service reports. "There seems to be somewhat of a polarization," particularly in countries with constitutional prohibitions against blasphemy, said Brian Grim, the primary researcher of the report.

### **Mar Thoma church in India celebrates 175th anniversary**

23 August 2011

Bangalore, India (ENInews)--India's Mar Thoma church celebrated the 175th anniversary of its reformation with a visit from the general secretary of the Geneva-based World Council of Churches (WCC), who said that "reformation requires a unity in which we challenge one another." The "gift of the cross binds us together. Our open arms can be a sign of the ecumenical movement of the cross, showing that we need one another," said the Rev. Olav Fyske Tveit, addressing church leadership at the headquarters in Thiruvalla, Kerala state.

### **Catholic church in Tripoli reports break-in as fighting rages**

Nairobi, Kenya (ENInews)--A Roman Catholic church in Tripoli, the Libyan capital where heavy fighting is raging, has reported a break-in, according to an Anglican Church leader who has responsibility over Libya, Algeria and Tunisia. "My priest had told me that one of the Catholic churches in Tripoli had been broken into, but everyone is fine," said Bishop Bill Musk of the Province of North Africa told ENInews in a telephone interview from Tunis, Tunisia on 23 August. There are Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Anglican and some Pentecostal churches in Libya, who have been supporting each another and have been in good fellowship, according to Musk.

### **Earthquake damages Washington National Cathedral**

24 August 2011

New York (ENInews)--An unusual magnitude 5.8 earthquake that struck in central Virginia on the afternoon of 23 August significantly damaged the central tower of Washington National Cathedral in the U.S. capital, about 84 miles northeast of the epicenter. Cathedral spokesman Richard Weinberg told Episcopal News Service by phone that the finials or capstones fell off three of the four corner spires of the central tower, which was completed in the 1960s and restored in the 1990s after lightning damage. There were also cracks in some of the flying buttresses that support the cathedral, but there appeared to be no damage to the stained-glass windows.

### **Religious minorities criticize Indian anti-corruption campaign**

Bangalore, India (ENInews)--While churches in India are generally endorsing the campaign against government corruption led by activist Anna Hazare, they have joined Muslim and secular activists in expressing concern over whether political opponents of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's Congress party are trying to politicize the protests. "We are concerned about rampant corruption and support the protest against it. At the same time, we are also wary of Hindutva (Hindu nationalist) elements trying to exploit the campaign for political gains," the Rev. Roger Gaikwad, general secretary of the National Council of Churches in India (NCCI), told ENInews on 24 August.

### **Vatican summons traditionalists to Rome**

Vatican City, 24 August (ENInews)--The Vatican has summoned the head of a traditionalist group to Rome to assess the results of a two-year doctrinal dialogue between the schismatic group and the

Holy See, Religion News Service reports. Monsignor Bernard Fellay, superior general of the Society of St. Pius X (SSPX), will meet on 14 September with top officials who are trying to normalize relations, including American Cardinal William Levada, head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

### **Lohre named to ecumenical post at U.S. Lutheran denomination**

Chicago (ENInews)--Kathryn Mary Lohre has been named director of ecumenical and inter-religious relations, effective October 2011, for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), the denomination announced on 24 August. Lohre, who is also President Elect of the National Council of Churches (NCC), will be installed as NCC president in November. The Rev. Donald McCoid, assistant to the ELCA presiding bishop for Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations, noted that Lohre brings "great gifts and important ecumenical and interfaith experience to our church wide ministry."

### **Washington cathedral faces millions in repairs after quake**

25 August 2011

Washington, D.C. (ENInews)--The iconic Washington National Cathedral, already struggling with financial problems, faces millions of dollars in repair costs from the damage inflicted by the 23 August U.S. East Coast earthquake. And nothing is covered by insurance, according to a church official. Clergy and a team of architects and engineers spent the day after the magnitude 5.8 quake assessing the cathedral, and found significant damage, including fallen carved angels on the church's roof, cracks in flying buttresses, and missing finials from the pinnacles of the central tower, Religion News Service reports.

### **Fiji government again cancels Methodist conference**

Wellington, New Zealand (ENInews)--The annual conference of Fiji's Methodist Church, due to start 23 August, was cancelled by Fiji's military government for the third consecutive year after church leaders defied a government directive to step down from their positions. Fiji's Land Force Commander Colonel Mosese Tikoitoga, also directed that no Methodist Church minister be allowed to leave the country, and banned permits under the Public Emergency Regulation for all official Methodist Church meetings. There are concerns that the ban will lead to the collapse of the Methodist church administration and severely affect funding.

### **Police confirm extremist group behind Bhatti killing**

Bangalore, India (ENInews)--The police chief of Islamabad has testified that an Islamic militant group engineered the killing of Shahbaz Bhatti, federal minister for religious minorities, rebutting reports that he was killed due to a family feud over property. Bani Amin, Inspector General of Police of Islamabad, Pakistan's capital, told a Senate committee that a group named Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan was behind the assassination. "The police have resolved the case and have identified two suspected terrorists who had fled out of the country after committing the crime," Amid said in a report in The Nation, Pakistan's leading English language daily, on 24 August.

### **Armed civilians heighten Tripoli danger, cleric says**

Nairobi, Kenya (ENInews)--Thousands of small arms and light weapons distributed to civilians by the government in Tripoli are adding to the danger and instability of the city as rebel forces continued to fight soldiers loyal to deposed dictator Moammar Gadhafi, a Libyan cleric has said. The Rev. Amado Baranquel, a priest at St. Francis Roman Catholic Church, the seat of the Vicariate of Tripoli, said the uncontrolled use of weapons was confining civilians inside their houses and causing extreme fear. "They are using the guns any way they want. Some are using them for looting," Baranquel told ENInews in a telephone interview on 25 August from Tripoli. "We hope this (fighting) will end soon."

### **Anglican diocese in Zimbabwe appeals court ruling on property**

New York (ENInews)--The Anglican Diocese of Harare in Zimbabwe said it has appealed a judge's decision that gave renegade bishop Nolbert Kunonga custody of church property and has led to chaos in the diocese. After the 4 August ruling by Chief Justice Godfrey Chidyausiku, "clergy and members of the laity ... across Harare, Mashonaland West, East and Central have been receiving threats, constant harassment and lately severe beatings from Kunonga's hooligans, masquerading as clergy, accompanied by ... hired thugs," said a news release from the diocese on 25 August.

### **Lutheran federation asks U.N. to intervene in Honduras**

Geneva (ENInews)--Increasing violence and lawlessness in Honduras could soon spiral out of control, according to the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), and the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights should establish a presence in the Central American country "without delay." In a letter to High Commissioner Navanethem Pillay, LWF General Secretary the Rev. Martin Junge urged her "to take note of the alarming violence in Honduras that can easily become much worse and even affect other countries in the region." Junge noted that violence has recently increased, especially over land issues.

### **Mexican Presbyterians end relationship with U.S. church over gays**

New York (ENInews)--The National Presbyterian Church of Mexico has voted to end its 139-year relationship with the Presbyterian Church (USA), in response to the U.S. church's decision earlier this year to allow the ordination of sexually active gays and lesbians. According to a news release on the U.S. church's website, the decision came on a 116 to 22 vote of the Mexican church assembly on 19 August. The release said it likely will jeopardize the continuation of the work that 11 U.S. church mission co-workers have been doing in Mexico, including work along the U.S.-Mexican border, as well as the future of short-term congregational mission trips to Mexico and more than two dozen partnerships.

### **Interfaith efforts part of 9/11 anniversary**

2 September 2011

New York (ENInews)--Interfaith services are planned to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, with advocates acknowledging that their work has not been easy but has yielded tangible, if sometimes overlooked, results. "Religious diversity is a gift," said the Rev. Chloe Breyer, executive director of the Interfaith Center of New York. "It strengthens the civic fabric of the city." President Barack Obama, former President George W. Bush and other officials will attend on 11 September commemoration ceremonies in New York City.

### **Orthodox leaders smooth path to proposed summit meeting**

Moscow (ENInews)--The patriarchs of three ancient Orthodox Christian churches met from 1-2 September in Istanbul to discuss the situation of Christian minorities in the Middle East, and perhaps an even more prickly topic -- the move toward a historic pan-Orthodox council -- removing major stumbling blocks to what would be the first such gathering in centuries. The pan-Orthodox council is regarded with great interest by the world's Orthodox churches, many of which are in unstable regions following revolutions in the Middle East, or in countries facing a third decade of economic and social transition following the collapse of communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

### **In a secular Europe, churches see need to work together**

6 September 2011

Warsaw, Poland (ENInews)--Europe's churches can withstand secularization and make progress in mission work if they pool resources and co-operate more closely, according to a top ecumenist. "We haven't tried to plan long-term objectives, just to be realistic and see what needs to be done," said Viorel Ionita, interim general secretary of the Conference of European Churches (CEC). "But there's a strong feeling real chances exist for effective mission, and for winning back some of the ground lost by churches in Europe." The Romanian theologian was speaking after a consultation of CEC's Churches in Dialogue Commission in Budapest on 29-31 August.

### **Faith leaders take HIV prevention message to African sports tournament**

Nairobi, Kenya (ENInews)--Faith leaders are taking HIV and AIDS prevention messages to the 10th All-Africa Games, Africa's largest multi-sports tournament, currently underway in Maputo, Mozambique. The leaders are warning of increased vulnerability to HIV infections during the 3-18 September tournament. [538 words, ENI-11-0470]

### **11 September marked crucial turn in Vatican-Muslim relations**

Vatican City (ENInews)--A few weeks after the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, Pope John Paul II invited Muslim leaders to an interfaith prayer summit in Assisi, Italy, the site of a dramatic interreligious peace gathering he had hosted 15 years earlier. John Paul said the world needed to hear that "religion must never be a reason for conflict, hatred and violence," Religion News Service

reports. Catholic-Muslim dialogue took on a new intensity and sense of urgency.

### **In Indonesia, church runs afoul of Islamic street name**

Wellington, New Zealand (ENInews)--In a test case of religious intolerance in the world's largest Muslim-majority country, an Indonesian mayor is defying court rulings by pushing for a decree to block Christians from opening churches on streets with Islamic names. Members of the Taman Yasmin Indonesian Christian Church in the West Java town of Bogor are, after three years, still forced to worship on the sidewalk outside their building, protected by police. The administration of Bogor mayor Diani Budiarto revoked the church's building permit and sealed the building as the street had an Islamic name.

### **Top of the Agenda: Deadly Bomb Blast at India's High Court**

A bomb exploded outside India's High Court in New Delhi, killing at least nine people and injuring forty-seven. The incident--the second attack on the courthouse in less than four months--was labeled a terrorist attack (NYT) by Indian authorities.

The bomb was reportedly hidden in a suitcase (al-Jazeera) outside the court's first security checkpoint, where a large crowd of people were waiting in line to enter the building.

Investigators are in the process of examining e-mail from the Islamist extremist group Harkat-ul Jihad al-Islami (HuJI) claiming responsibility for the explosion (TimesofIndia). The message calls on Indian authorities to annul a death sentence for a man who was convicted of attacking the Indian parliament ten years ago.

The U.S. State Department lists HuJI as a terrorist organization with ties to al-Qaeda (BBC). The group's leader, Ilyas Kashmiri, is thought to have been killed in a U.S. drone strike in northwestern Pakistan in June.

### **Analysis**

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U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton pledged to press Pakistan on terrorism and tried to ease New Delhi's worries over Afghanistan on her visit to India this past summer. But a deteriorating U.S.-Pakistan relationship decreases Washington's ability to influence Islamabad on terrorism issues, explains this CFR Analysis Brief.

In a policy paper from the National Bureau of Asian Research, C. Christine Fair addresses the organizational nature and security situation of two Islamic groups in India: the Students Islamic Movement of India and the Islamic Mujahideen.

In this video, CFR's Daniel Markey discusses the strategic importance of normalizing India-Pakistan relations, for the region as well as the United States.



## MIDDLE EAST

### Syrian Forces Raid Homes

Syrian military tanks raided the central city of Homs this morning, killing at least seven people. The attack followed an anti-government demonstration (al-Jazeera) in the city last night that rallied two thousand protesters.

The Syrian regime's brutal crackdown on peaceful protesters didn't trip the same alarm bells as Libya's did for the UN Security Council, but the international community is gradually losing patience with Assad, says expert Edward Luck, a special advisor to the UN secretary-general, in this CFR interview.

### U.S. Religious-Freedom Report Singles Out Iran, Uzbekistan, China



Uzbekistan is called out in the U.S. report, along with Iran, China, and Burma. Here, exiled opponents of Uzbek President Islam Karimov hold a demonstration in Prague on September 2.

Last updated  
(GMT/UTC):  
13.09.2011 19:27

By: RFE/RL

WASHINGTON -- The United States has singled out Iran, Uzbekistan, and China as among the worst violators of religious rights -- countries where it says abuses are "egregious, ongoing, and systematic." The designations are made in the State Department's latest "Report on International Religious Freedom," which identifies widespread challenges in its survey of nearly 200 countries.

The stated goal of the Congressionally mandated report is to "bear witness to those who are persecuted because of their faith and shine a light on governments and societies that promote or tolerate such abuses." In unveiling this year's report -- which spans July to December 2010 -- U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said state-sponsored repression of religious rights marginalizes vulnerable populations, emboldens extremists, promotes and sectarian violence, thereby undermining a society's stability. On the other hand, she said, government respect for religious freedom aids security and prosperity.

"When governments respect religious freedom, when they work with civil society to promote mutual respect, or when they prosecute acts of violence against members of religious minorities, they can help turn down the temperature," Clinton said. "They can foster a public aversion to hateful speech without compromising the right to free expression. In doing so, they create a climate of tolerance that helps make a country more stable, more secure, and more prosperous."

### **'Particular Concern'**

The report identifies eight countries -- including Iran, Uzbekistan, China, North Korea, and Saudi Arabia - - as "Countries of Particular Concern."

The designation is applied to countries that have "engaged in or tolerated particularly severe violations of religious freedom," and where the abuses are "egregious, ongoing, and systematic."

It also allows the State Department to initiate sanctions against those so named.

Clinton said that in Iran, authorities continue to repress Sufi Muslims, evangelical Christians, Jews, Baha'is, Sunnis, Ahmadis, and other religious minority groups.

The top U.S. diplomat also noted that threats to religious expression do not always come from governments.

She cited a September 12 attack in Iraq that appears to have had sectarian roots.

"Just yesterday we heard reports that gunmen, masquerading as security officers, waylaid a bus of Shi'a pilgrims traveling throughout western Iraq. The women were abandoned by the side of the road, but the 22 men were shot and their bodies left in the middle of the desert. This sort of hateful, senseless violence has no aim other than to undermine the fabric of peaceful society."

Michael Posner, the assistant U.S. secretary of state for democracy and human rights, also spoke at the report's release.

He said Uzbekistan had been named a "Country of Particular Concern" for reasons that include, among others, the fact that it is illegal to proselytize in the country and "dangerous for a Muslim to even discuss religious issues outside of state-sanctioned mosque."

The report also notes China's continuing crackdown on Tibetan Buddhists, Muslim Uyghurs, and other minorities.

### **Promoting Freedoms**

Beyond the worst offenders, the report identifies nations including Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan as facing significant challenges in upholding religious freedoms.

According to the report, religious minorities continue to be persecuted in Pakistan through anti-blasphemy laws. The report also noted the continuing plight of Iraqi Christians and the first case in Russia of the

government bringing charges against individuals in possession of banned religious literature.

Clinton also warned that recent popular uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa had exposed religious and ethnic minorities to new dangers, raising the specter of sectarian strife:

"The people of the region have taken exciting first steps toward democracy, but if they hope to consolidate their gains, they cannot trade one form of repression for another," Clinton said.

The report also outlines steps the U.S. government has taken to promote religious freedoms around the world. Posner conceded that in countries like Iran, which does not have diplomatic relations with Washington, the task is particularly difficult. He said the report itself is one of the tools the United States can use.

"We raise these issues [and] we continue raising these issues," Posner said. "We have, obviously, a difficult relationship with that government [as with] North Korea [and] other places that are on the list, but I think it is, again, important for us to be clear about the facts [and] to hold every government to the same standard. It does reinforce people in those societies who understand and know that the United States government is listening and paying attention."

Other trends cited by the report include anti-Muslim sentiment in "many parts of Europe" and expanding restrictions on Muslim religious attire. The report also cited an increase in anti-Semitic actions and accusations "on every continent in the last year."

### **Suicide bomber attacks packed Indonesian church**

26 September 2011

Wellington, New Zealand (ENI). A suicide bomber blew himself up on the porch of an Indonesian church packed with hundreds of worshippers on 25 September, injuring 28 people, some critically. The bombing of the protestant Bethel Injil Sepuluh church in Solo, a city in central Indonesia's Java province, was the latest in a series of deadly attacks on minorities in the in the world's most populous Muslim-majority nation. Witnesses reported hearing the blast 500 meters away. Religious Affairs Minister Suryadharma Ali strongly condemned the attack and urged the police to investigate. [273 words, ENI-11-0512]

### **Scotland's gay marriage discussion stirring controversy among faith groups**

Edinburgh, Scotland (ENI). The Scottish government has begun a 14-week public consultation, running from 2 September to 9 December, on the question of legalizing marriage for gay couples, encouraging individuals and groups such as religious organizations to take part. Catholic church leaders have already begun to criticize the idea. Cardinal Keith O'Brien, in a homily given in early September at St. Patrick's Church, Edinburgh, said, "the view of the Church is clear. No government can re-write human nature: the family and marriage existed before the state and are built on the union between a man and a woman." [513 words, ENI-11-0513]

### **Nobel laureate Wangari Maathai was influenced by faith**

Nairobi, Kenya (ENI). Church leaders in Kenya paid tribute to Wangari Maathai, the first African woman

Nobel Peace prizewinner, who died on 25 September, as a person who cared for God's creation through campaigning for environmental protection. Maathai, who was a Roman Catholic, died at 71 in Nairobi Hospital from cancer. [462 words, ENI-11-0514]

### **25-year-old Belhar Confession still relevant for South African churches**

Cape Town, South Africa (ENI). Twenty-five years after a Christian statement of belief known as the Belhar Confession was adopted, the issues it raised are still important, according to a South African theologian. "We have not united, we have a lot of challenges, we do seek authentic church unity, but issues dealing with restorative justice have yet to be fully tackled," said Rev. Thias Kgatla, Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA) moderator. [409 words, ENI-11-0515]

### **WCC launches online library for theology and ecumenism**

23 September 2011

Geneva (ENInews)--The World Council of Churches (WCC) launched on 23 September the first online digital library covering theology and ecumenism, called GlobeTheoLib, saying it will help close the information gap between North and South. "The time has come to launch a new model of ecumenical sharing of theological resources in order to prepare world Christianity for the 21st century," said WCC general secretary the Rev. Olav Fykse Tveit.

### **South Koreans' visit to North Korea aims to ease tensions**

Tokyo (ENInews)--A four-day visit to North Korea by representatives of several South Korean religious denominations is a sign tensions may be easing between the two nations, observers said. Led by Roman Catholic Archbishop Kim Hee-joong of Kwangju, the 24-member delegation planned to deliver wishes for peace from South Korea's faith community, hold talks with religious counterparts and participate in joint prayer meetings. Members of the group represented Buddhist, Roman Catholic, Protestant, Confucian and other faith groups. They belong to the Korean Conference of Religions for Peace and are visiting the North Korean capital of Pyongyang and other cities from 21 to 24 September.

### **Pope's trip to Germany fails to meet ecumenical hopes**

Berlin (ENInews)--Pope Benedict XVI's visit to Germany on 23 September featured an ecumenical worship service in the town of Erfurt that was meant to reach out to German Protestants, but for many felt like a missed opportunity. In his sermon, Benedict said that "there was some talk of an 'ecumenical gift' which was expected from this visit ... Here I would only say that this reflects a political misreading of faith and of ecumenism." Many were disappointed there was no indication that the pope intended to relax a ban on non-Catholics taking communion in Catholic churches, or recognize Protestant denominations as "true churches" as opposed to "ecclesiastical communities."

## First Ever Interview with Archbishop Cyril

By Matthew John Hadodo

August 02, 2011



**Matthew John Hadodo was able to sit down with Archbishop Cyril where he took a few moments from his busy schedule to answer a few questions about his first time as a children's author, his ministry and his plans for the future.**

Matthew John: Barekhmor, Sayidna. (Bless me, lord Bishop {respectful greeting})

Archbishop Cyril: Alombarekh. (God bless you)

MJ: Many people want to know what led an archbishop to write a children's book. Why did you decide to embark on this journey?

AC: (chuckles) Well, many people may think it's unusual for an archbishop to write a children's story but I did it for a few reasons. First, as children are our future, it is our responsibility to ensure they receive the spiritual education they so deserve.

Unfortunately, public schools do not offer any form of religious classes and even parochial schools and church together are not enough to really get through to the children. The media

surrounds our children on a daily basis and they receive so much information on violence and other negativity; they deserve and require positive outlets from the media, as well. I believe God gave me a gift communicating with children, and I must use that gift.

MJ: Have you ever written before?

AC: I've written many texts before, however they all have been for adults and mostly clergymen, not young children. So, this was my first time dealing with a children's book which is much harder because you have to really get into the mind of a child, how they think and feel, etc. all of which is very different from the way adults are. Children have different expectations when reading.



MJ: And what made you decide on this theme for your very first children's book?

AC: We (the publishing team) decided on using the Holy Vocation as a theme because the Western world has a definite shortage of priests.

The Syriac community, having a smaller population especially has issues finding interest in American born children wanting to join the sacred priesthood.



I wanted to enlighten the children about the basic steps from altar boy upward so they better understand the process when attending mass and other church services. The idea of the priesthood being a calling from God is meant to show that God calls on all of us in different ways and we must not sleep on that; we must act, regardless of what our particular calling may be. If some young children read this book and are interested in actively pursuing a life of ministry, all the better. The priesthood really isn't a career; it's a highly honorable, blessed service.

MJ: Amen. Some people may think that as an archbishop telling the tale of a young boy who grows up to become an archbishop, you are telling your autobiography. Is that the case?



AC: (chuckles) Yes, I am an archbishop but this is not my life story. I told a completely fictional story to encourage the inquisitive nature of children. Actually, the character of Matthew is partially inspired by my nephew Christopher-Issa, who, while active in the church does not necessarily intend on joining the priesthood. He actually wants to be President of the United States!

MJ: How ambitious! I noticed you thank your nephew as well as Lydia and Saleeba. Who are they and what have they done?

AC: Ah, well Lydia and Sal are actually Sandy, the publisher's niece and nephew. They also helped inspire Sarah and John in In The Tree House. Lydia has lots of energy and a big personality and Sal is good friends with Christopher.

MJ: How was the process of writing for you?

AC: Well, it was much more difficult than I ever could imagine. Not only do you have to work on writing in a way approachable and appropriate for young children, you have to work as a team with



the publisher, editor and illustrator, all of whom have different ideas. I ultimately learned very much from each of them and am very glad I was able to see their different points of view. The book would never be what it is today without the help and tremendous talents of Brian Acquaire, Tom McMillian and of course Sandy Ghattas.

MJ: What do you feel you've accomplished by writing your first book?

AC: On a personal level, just writing the book itself was an accomplishment, as I'd never done so before. Learning from my coworkers and seeing what goes on first hand was an education to me. On a professional level, I was able to introduce the steps from altar boy to archbishop in an easy-to-understand way and in general have familiarized children with elements of the Church. I was able to highlight the Syriac Orthodox Church while still appealing to diversity within the Christian spectrum.

In fact, people from any religion can appreciate Matthew's story.

Most importantly, Children and adults of all ages have approached me with very positive feedback. Nothing is better than a smiling child who hugs me and tells me they loved the book!

MJ: Any plans on more children's books in the future?

AC: God willing, I'm currently in the process of developing my second title.

## **His Eminence Celebrates the Holy Liturgy in the Youth Retreat**



**The Archdiocesan Youth Organization has organized few retreats for the youth this summer, 2011.**

One of them was held from the 5th of August till the 7th, in Upstate New York, for the ages of 12 to 17. Almost 30 teenagers attended this spiritual retreat.

His Eminence, Mor Cyril Aphrem Karim joined them on Saturday afternoon and offered them a workshop entitled: "Introduction to the Holy Bible".

He explained to them how important the Word of God should be in their lives, and talked about different books of the Holy Bible, particularly the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books in the Syriac Bible. They were very delighted when they knew that His Eminence would sleep in their camp too.

joined their sister church in  
step.

Next morning, on Sunday, His Eminence celebrated the Holy Liturgy with the retreaters, where some participated in the service on the altar of the Lord, while the attendees followed the service in the “easy to follow” Liturgy Books distributed to them. After the Holy Qourobo they all had breakfast, followed by an “Open Forum” held by His Eminence, in which the Participants received satisfying answers to the many questions they had prepared for him.

After prayers, Mor Cyril Aphrem Karim bid them farewell and thanked them for a great time.



## His Eminence Celebrates the Assumption of Virgin Mary in Worcester

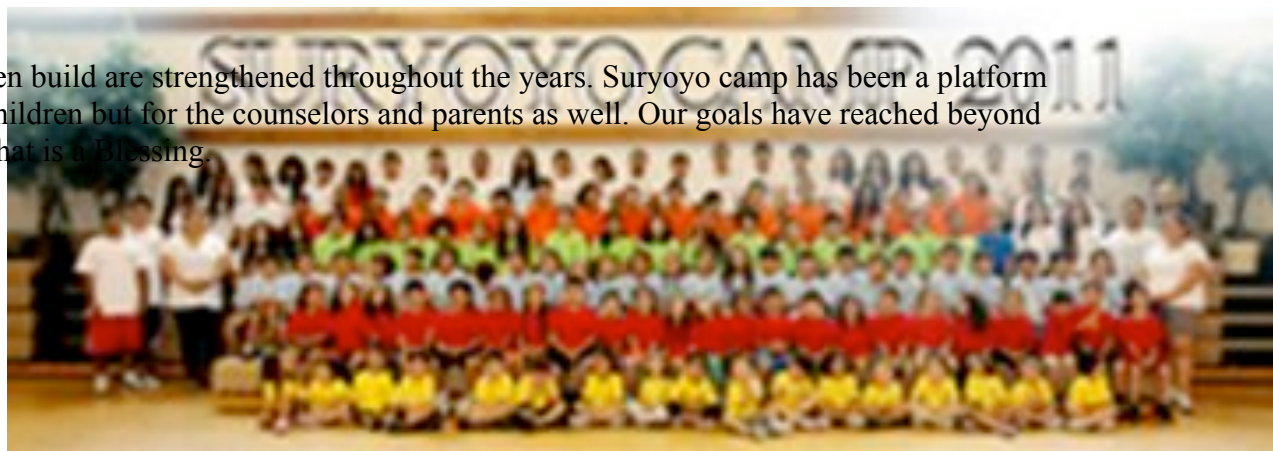
**The weekend of, August 13 and 14, 2011, His Eminence Mor Cyril Aphrem Karim paid a pastoral visit to St. Mary's Church in Worcester, MA.**

The occasion was the celebration of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, mother of God, to Heaven. Our Church in Worcester extended an invitation to His Eminence to hold a big festivity, in which our two other churches in New England participated too. Priests and parishioners from St. Ephraim Church in Rhode Island, and St. Matthew's



During the day His Eminence visited some families to offer condolences and prayed for the sick. In the evening His Eminence gave a lecture about vocations to the priesthood. After the lecture Rev. Shamosho (deacon) Asmar Asmar was honored for his long service to the parish. Sunday morning, after the Holy Liturgy, a picnic was held.

## First Ever Suryoyo Summer Camp!



that children build are strengthened throughout the years. Suryoyo camp has been a platform for the children but for the counselors and parents as well. Our goals have reached beyond children and that is a Blessing.

**This summer the first ever Suryoyo Summer Camp was established with the support of the Archdiocese of the Syria Orthodox Church for the Eastern United States.**

Our goal at Suryoyo Summer Camp was to develop friendships for life. The program was designed to provide a fun and safe summer camp program while instilling religious and cultural awareness in our children. The Daily Staff included a Director, Assistant Director, Teachers, Organizers, Parent Volunteers and Clergy involvement.

The Suryoyo Camp Board created a six week rotating schedule with a variety of classes and activities including sports, crafts, art, games, water activities, folklore, Capoeira lessons, science experiments and Bible and Suryoyo lessons. A total of 115 children registered between the ages of 4-13, they were separated into age groups wearing colored t-shirts respective to their age group. We carefully selected a staff of 39 counselors: 12 Senior Counselors (Ages 18+), 17 Junior Counselors (Ages 15-17) and 10 Counselors in Training (CIT age 14). These counselors were trained to guide and be responsible for the children daily while ensuring their safety.

Each day began and closed with a prayer lead by a member of our clergy. Counselors navigated children to their proper locations as noted on the daily schedule. Many special guests such as Magicians, Mad Science, Extreme animals and Jack Black Basketball entertainer entertained the children. The field trips included many exciting places such as the Liberty Science Center, Mets Baseball game, Peach Picking and Bowling. Each Friday the children learned Suryoyo Hymns and Cultural Dance lessons. Each Age group was assigned 1 water activity day per week. Our Parents have been so generous to donate their time by teaching science experiments, art lessons, serving lunch and providing snacks and supplies.



## **His Eminence Mor Cyril Aphrem Karim Celebrates Liturgy During the Annual Suryoyo Picnic**

**On Sunday, 21st of August, local parishes held their Annual Suryoyo picnic in St. Mary's Villa, Sloatsburg, New York.**

Despite a few light showers, the weather was beautiful and the attendance was superb.

His Eminence Mor Cyril Aphrem Karim celebrated the Holy Liturgy outdoors for parishioners who embraced the change in environment. The clergy of the NJ/NY area participated in the Holy Qurobo, with deacons from their parishes too.



After the Holy liturgy, everybody enjoyed the delicious barbecue from the grill, which was prepared by Mor Gabriel's Parish Ladies. His Eminence Mor Cyril Aphrem Karim spent time socializing and interacting with everyone as they all socialized, participated in sports, played games, and some walked around the beautiful premises. It was a beautiful, fun, and blessed day.

## **Syriac Orthodox Priests at United Nations Service**

**On Monday Sept 12, Very Rev. Fr. Asmar and Rev Fr. Hadodo represented His Eminence Mor Cyril Aphrem Karim by participating in the prayer service on the opening of the 66th session of the United Nations General Assembly.**

Hosted by the Archdiocese of New York, which is located directly opposite the United Nations Complex on 315 East 47 Street, Very Rev. Fr. Asmar and Rev. Fr. Hadodo participated in opening prayers celebrated by a cooperation of diverse religions known as the United Nations Parish. The heavenly prayers of the choir and organ music led the majority of those present participating in the service.



This year's ceremonies were particularly special due to the presence of The UN Secretary General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, who addressed the audience on the solemn 10th Anniversary of the attacks on the World Trade Center.

## **Archdiocese Executive Council Holds a Special Meeting on Midland Ave. Progress**



**On Saturday, October 8th, the Archdiocesan Executive Council held an all-day session at the Archdiocesan complex in Teaneck, New Jersey, for the sole purpose of reviewing plans for the Midland Avenue property.**

Final plan approval from the Borough of Paramus is imminent and it was felt necessary to immediately put the wheels in motion for what lays ahead.

After much discussion and deliberation the Council proposed focusing initially on the Youth Center and having the Archdiocese take on the ownership and responsibility of the building of the Multi Function Hall. His Eminence Mor Cyril Aphrem Karim clarified that the renovation of the existing building is primary and is part and parcel of the Youth Center. Once renovated, this building would immediately begin serving the needs of our youth, throughout the entire Archdiocese, as a retreat and meeting center. Sleeping accommodations along with meeting rooms and the chapel would all work well together and would provide the perfect spiritual and fraternal environment that our youth need. The building of the Multi Function Hall would complete the Youth Center requirement in totality.

Key decisions taken included preparing a project plan, reviewing fund raising methods, developing a comprehensive communication plan and the involvement of members of the clergy and the parish board president.

## **His Eminence Mor Dionysius Jean Kawak Visits the Archdiocese**



**Friday, September the 30th, 2011, His Eminence, Mor Dionysius Jean Kawak, the Archbishop in charge of the Patriarchal office in Damascus started a 40-day visit to the Eastern Archdiocese.**

His Eminence celebrated the Holy Qurobo (Divine Liturgy) at St. Mark's Cathedral in Teaneck on Sunday, October 2nd. During the Liturgy Archbishop Kawak was welcomed officially by His Eminence Mor Cyril Aphrem Karim as the honored guest of the Archdiocese of the Eastern United States. His Eminence Archbishop Kawak thanked his

brother Archbishop Karim and conveyed to the parishioners the blessings and best wishes of our Holy Father, His Holiness Moran Mor Ignatius Zakka I Iwas, Patriarch of Antioch and all the East.

Archbishop Kawak, who served St. Aphraim's Church in Washington D.C. and St. Helen's parish in Indiana for over two years, will be visiting parishes of the Archdiocese as well as some relatives and friends.

## **Oriental Orthodox Roman Catholic Consultation Meeting 2011**

**The United States Oriental Orthodox Roman Catholic Consultation held its 2011 meeting at the Divine Compassion Spirituality Center in White Plains, New York, on October 6 and 7.**

The Oriental Orthodox-Roman Catholic Consultation was established in 1978, and is sponsored jointly by the Bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs and the Standing Conference of Oriental Orthodox Churches America, which includes representatives from the Armenian (Catholicosate of Etchmiadzin), Coptic, Ethiopian, and Syrian Orthodox Churches.



The meeting, co-chaired by His Eminence Mor Cyril Aphrem Karim of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch and Catholic Bishop Howard J. Hubbard of Albany, New York, focused primarily on pastoral issues facing both churches.



## Oriental Orthodox Roman Catholic Consultation Meeting 2011

### *Photobook*

