

J/P Alert

CONFERENCE OF MAJOR SUPERIORS OF MEN *JUSTICE AND PEACE OFFICE*

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- *assists major superiors in their role as leaders;*
- *promotes dialogue and collaboration with the conference of bishops and other major groups in church and society;*
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J/P Directors Meet to Discuss U.S. Security Policy

Justice and Peace Directors from men's religious congregations and colleagues from justice organizations met at The Washington Theological Union in Washington, DC to discuss the implications of the U.S. Security Policy that has been in effect since the September 11, 2001 terrorists attacks. Many of the participants said that they and their congregations have struggled over how to respond to policies that promote U.S. hegemony and an erosion of human and civil rights internationally and domestically.

The two-day meeting, U.S. National Security Policy and Catholic Social Teaching, was co-sponsored by the Justice and Peace Office at CMSM and the Center for Ministry and Public Life at WTU. On Monday, March 29 participants heard from Capuchin Father John Celichowski and Catholic University Assistant Professor Dr. Maryann Cusimano Love who provided theological and pastoral reflections on the security policy and its effect in the U.S. and abroad.

Celichowski, who is also a member of CMSM's JP Committee, reviewed the national security document which articulates the visions and goals of the administration. While there are many goals that can be agreed to, he said, the application of how to achieve them seems inconsistent and its analysis of current international situations is

simplistic. Security as the policy defines it, according to Celichowski, is an international interest based on U.S. interests and values. There is an emphasis on civil and political rights but little is said about social or cultural rights. The policy is also inconsistent in what the U.S. demands of other nations and what it requires of itself. An example of this is that the policy calls for nations to eliminate weapons of mass destruction, but fails to require the same of the U.S. and also fails to address the role of U.S. and allies as the largest purveyors of arms worldwide. Catholic Social Teaching (CTS) can be used to address the inconsistencies in the policy and enable religious to speak clearly about issues such as arms trade and proliferation, human rights, regard for international law, and development. Also, the international dimension of many congregations enables religious to reflect on the consequences that these policies have around the world because of the number of religious who experience the effects on the daily lives of people, especially the most vulnerable. Religious must also remain committed to studying and evaluating policies such as the "just war" theory and the increasing use of "pre-emptive" actions against other nations.

Cusimano Love looked at the roots of current U.S. policy that fails to understand contemporary global issues because the majority of the policy makers still look at the world through a "Cold War lens," that sees the nation-state as the cornerstone of

international structures while it is clear that the rise of multi-national corporations and global networks that transcend the limits of and control by nation-states are major players in international policy. The national security policy continues to see nation-states as the central players on the global field with the U.S. in a messianic role, set as a model and enforcer of a global system that it determines for others. The moral failure of the national security policy is that the U.S. fails to see itself as part of the global community. CST recognizes that we are a part of the global, human family and offers a vision of solidarity with all people, especially the marginalized and vulnerable. It also recognizes that nation-states and governments are not the only means through which people act politically and socially and that borders are not determinate of identity. The U.S. must act as a part of the global community in order for our nation and world to be more secure.

A lively discussion followed this input and while there was no expectation that any project or policy would come from this meeting it was felt that religious must begin to articulate a new vision that promotes CTS as an effective tool in promoting just policies that can open dialogue and lead to lasting peace and security. Once this new vision begins to emerge it will be necessary to encourage religious and laity to take practical steps to build a community that is not determined by national boundaries or responding out fear, but through solidarity and tolerance. This has to be done through dialogue within the Christian community and by building bridges with other religious traditions and partners around the world. Several suggestions were made as to next steps from this and will be explored by the JP Office, including working with other organizations to provide resources to encourage dialogue in religious communities. More information will be shared as this dialogue continues.

Torture In Iraq

Recent revelations about the torture and humiliation of Iraqi prisoners at the hands of U.S. military and private contractors has shocked and angered the world community. Numerous reports and photographs document that detainees have been routinely subjected to cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment during arrest and detention. Methods include prolonged sleep deprivation; beatings; prolonged restraint in painful positions; prolonged hooding; and exposure to bright lights. A report by Maj. Gen. Antonio Taguba described acts of repeated

sexual abuse and humiliation, and threats of rape and torture by electric shock. These actions clearly violate the Geneva Conventions and could constitute war crimes.

One of the reasons the Administration gave for removing Saddam Hussein from power was the reports of the torture of Iraqis under his regime. These actions by occupying U.S. and Coalition forces further erode the reputation of the U.S. and its claim to promote rule of law and support for human rights around the world.

The Defense Department and the Administration have promised a full investigation and already some individuals have been arrested for their participation in the abuse. But as the investigation continues it is becoming clear that the ill treatment and torture of prisoners by the U.S. military were not limited to isolated incidents, but reflected "systemic and illegal abuse of detainees."

Now that these atrocities have been made public the Administration must take steps to investigate the situation, bring those responsible for the torture and abuse to justice, and take steps to ensure that any detainees now and in the future are treated according to internationally accepted standards. CMSM has issued a statement calling on the U.S. Administration and Congress to investigate and respond to these abuses. A copy of the statement can be found on the website www.cmsm.org. Contact your Senator and Representative and let them know that Americans are upset by these reports and demand that our military and contracted personnel be held to higher standards by protecting the rights and dignity of all detainees in Iraq and wherever we are holding prisoners.

Resource

Free Newsletter Religions for Peace – USA, part of the world's largest representative inter-religious organization, has launched a free e-newsletter that will give updates on interfaith efforts for peace nationwide, updates on the work of Religions for Peace, and highlight academic work and resources for interfaith peace and justice initiatives. To read the latest newsletter and to sign up visit their website at [www.rfpusa.org/news/ newsletter3.html](http://www.rfpusa.org/news/newsletter3.html). CMSM is a member of RFP.

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