



# J/P ALERT

CONFERENCE OF MAJOR SUPERIORS OF MEN JUSTICE AND PEACE OFFICE



September 2013 (*en español*)

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## Syria: U.S. Strikes Averted!

We should celebrate that our domestic and international pressure on our politicians contributed to preventing a broader war for

now. *Congratulations everyone* and thank you to our Pope Francis for calling for fasting and prayer on Sept. 7!

The **next action step recommended is to offer Letters to the Editors** in local newspapers in order to keep the momentum up for a political solution to end the violence, even after the chemical weapons proposal.



### Talking Points:

- Enhance our credibility by using U.S. leadership to defuse hostilities with a political solution
- Take the U.S. military threat off the table
- Call the armed resistance to the negotiation table and refuse to arm them
- Initiate restorative justice processes that produce authentic accountability
- Meet the urgent humanitarian needs of all people in the region

Sample Letter to the Editor in *NY Times*: see [David Keppel, Sept. 10, 2013](#).

[CMSM Statement on the Response to the Use of Chemical Weapons in Syria](#), Sept. 6, 2013.

**To email** the President and your representatives about *not supplying lethal aid to the armed resistance*, [click here](#).

### Reflections on the Current Situation

Thankfully, the president has postponed the Congressional vote until the Russian offer plays out. But there will be discussions going on about re-drafting legislation, which for some will still include ways to authorize military strikes. I think it is false to conclude that our "credible threat of military strikes" caused Russia to make this diplomatic offer. Russia has had a *periodic* pattern of promoting negotiations throughout the conflict. Although they may have been more effective doing this with an arms embargo on Assad, they were less likely to restrict arms while arms continued to flow to resistance groups. They have also condemned chemical weapons previously, so it would be logical for them to extend this concern after such an attack to making the present offer.

Thus, it appears more true to say that Russia's latest offer is *in spite of the military threat*

a) as part of their ongoing pattern for negotiations, b) due to their recognition that such strikes would likely broaden the hostilities rather than deter, and c) because of the increased risk of chemical weapons use by Assad or others in Syria, Russia, or beyond. Further, we have the power and influence of all the international and domestic pressure against military strikes, including the *Pope's global call for fasting and prayer* which likely impacted the conditions for this diplomatic opening. We must speak out against attempts to applaud our "military threats" and perpetuate the "[myth of redemptive violence](#)."

It is also highly untenable for the U.S. to proclaim that we've tried diplomacy for two years and it hasn't worked, so now it's time for military strikes. Although we have made significant efforts, diplomacy corrupted by over-blaming one side, requiring preconditions before negotiating, and consistent funding/support to the armed resistance makes our diplomatic efforts inadequate at best, and counter-productive at worst. The UN resolutions vetoed by Russia and sometimes China often put the primary blame on the Syrian government. When Russia and Assad showed willingness to negotiate, too often the armed resistance would refuse or the U.S. would stall at times due to requiring the precondition that Assad agree to step down before negotiating, or at times due to seeking "military advantage" before negotiating. Pretty much as soon as the resistance took up arms, the U.S. has been supporting it, funding it, providing communication resources, and refusing to call for restraint by other countries who provided them directly with arms.

There is enough blame on all sides, but now we must focus on healing and call our society to become better people by consistently, *without quit*, focusing on creative diplomatic solutions to this violent conflict.

Read [President Vladimir Putin's contribution](#) in "The Opinion Pages" of *The New York Times* (Sept. 11, 2013).

## *Immigration Reform*



**Fast Action Update:** So far we have over **6,300 people** signed up for fasting, prayer and advocacy from Sept. 9-Oct. 18th! Thank you to everyone who is participating. Please encourage others to sign up at <[www.fastaction.us](http://www.fastaction.us)>.

### ***Women and Civil Disobedience for Immigrants***

This past week 100 women, including moms, grandmothers and undocumented immigrants, risked arrest for immigration reform that keeps families together and treats women fairly. This included 25 undocumented women. These courageous women formed a circle and took over the intersection outside the House of Representatives.

### **Will you support them by [watching and sharing this video](#)?**

Every day, ordinary women show extraordinary courage — caring for children and parents, running businesses, working to support families, and improving their communities.

***Sandy Sorenson, Director of the United Church of Christ in DC***, shares her reasoning for participating and risking arrest:

"Religious leaders from across the country have been calling on Congress to pass just immigration reform, but few have recognized immigration as a women's issue. Women bear the burden of a failed immigration system, but the struggle of immigrant women often goes unseen. Every day we are the ones taking care of business: looking after the elderly and our children, working to support our families and contributing to our congregations and communities."

"Under the Obama Administration, we have seen more than 1.4 million deportations. Every day, mothers are being ripped away from their citizen children. When deported, some

women courageously try re-entering the country to reunite with their family at the risk of abuse and rape in the desert." Read the [full article here](#).

## *Economic Justice*

### **Week of September 16: House Expected to Vote on Cuts to Food Stamps**

The House is expected to vote on a nutrition bill as early as Wednesday, September 18! [E-mail](#) or [call](#) your Representative and urge him or her to oppose the \$40 billion in drastic cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP/food stamps). Tell your Representative a nutrition bill that would remove 4 to 6 million vulnerable people from the program violates our commitment to the common good. At a time of continued high unemployment these harmful cuts and changes will increase hunger among children, poor families, vulnerable seniors and workers who are underemployed or unable to find employment. Faith communities and charities cannot meet the needs of so many hungry people in our country by themselves.



### **September 18: National Call-In to Protect Programs that Fight Global Poverty, Hunger, and Disease**

The **Interfaith Working Group for Foreign Assistance** is organizing a National Call-in Day for September 18 to encourage full funding for international poverty-focused development and humanitarian assistance programs. **Please call 1-800-826-3688**, and urge Members of Congress to *protect programs that fight global poverty, hunger, and disease*. *Sample call -in script:*

- *I am a constituent of [Congressman Smith] or [Senator Jones]. I am calling as a member of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious to urge your support for full funding for international poverty focused development and humanitarian assistance.*
- *I also ask that congress puts an end to the devastating across the board cuts, known as sequestration, which could exacerbate poverty and hunger around the world.*
- *"Do you know [Congressman Smith's] or [Senator Jones's] position on funding international poverty-reduction aid?"*

### **September 19 Webinar: The New U.S. Poverty Statistics and Our Catholic Response**

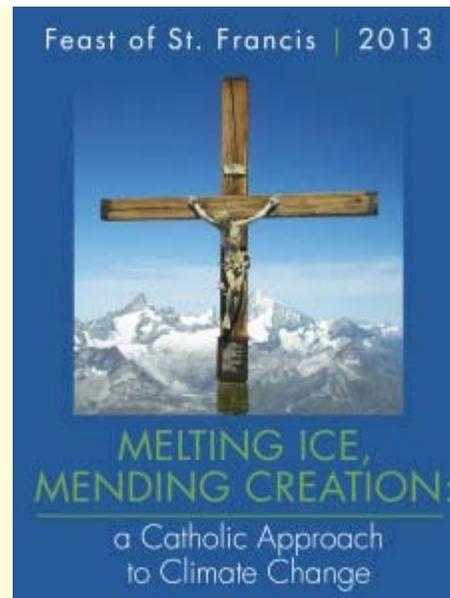
The U.S. Census Bureau will release new poverty data just a few days before this webinar. What will we learn? Is poverty on the rise? How are children, the elderly, and other vulnerable populations faring?

Join Tom Mulloy, policy advisor for Domestic Social Development at the USCCB to explore the new data and what it means for our national and local advocacy efforts. We will also hear from a Catholic parish that is taking seriously Bishop Blaire's call in his 2013 Labor Day statement to promote human dignity through economic justice. This free webinar is Thursday, Sept. 19, 2013 from 2:00-3:00 p.m. ET. [Register now](#).

**Catholic Coalition on Climate Change:** *Annual Feast of St. Francis Celebration, Oct. 4th*

[Resources available](#) at their website.

With the enormous success of the FOSF program last year (featuring the film *Sun Come Up* depicting some of the world's first climate refugees) the Coalition created a program this year that links the Pontifical Academy of Science's Working Group [Paper on Glaciers](#) (PDF) with the visual record of receding glaciers around the world through work of nature photographer Jim Balog and his *Extreme Ice Survey*. This evidence was highlighted in the widely-released documentary film [Chasing Ice](#).



## ***International Day for Peace Sept. 21, 2013***

As we witness the war drums beating for Syria, the need for prayers becomes absolutely clear. These prayers matter and the ways we work together to build hope and build power for peace is essential. Join people around the world in a day of peace and prayer. [Prayer resources are on the Peace Day campaign site here](#) and at the [International Day of Peace Website](#).

## ***Restorative Justice and Youth***

**Gingrich, Nolan: Young offenders can regain public's trust**  
August 22, 2013

"Scientific studies show that teenagers' abilities to understand the consequences of their actions are not fully developed until they are young adults. Parents don't need studies to understand this; and our laws take this into account. We don't let young people drink until they are 21; they can't sign contracts, marry without their parents' permission, vote or serve on juries until they are 18.

However, there is one area in which we don't consider teens' youth and impulsiveness: our criminal laws. Our laws often ignore the difference between adults and teens, and some youngsters commit serious crimes and are sent to prison for so many years that they end up serving what are, in effect, life sentences. Currently, if a juvenile commits a serious crime and is prosecuted as an adult, he or she has no opportunity for judicial review outside of the ordinary appeals. This provides no opportunity for rehabilitation.

As conservative Republicans, we believe that people who have done heinous crimes must pay their debts to their victims and be separated from our communities to protect public safety. That is what prisons are for. But we are also Christians and know that redemption is possible. We know offenders who have made remarkable transformations in their lives. Youngsters can and do change. In fact, juveniles have a greater capacity than adults to turn their lives around."

Newt Gingrich was Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives from 1995 to 1999 and is the founder of American Solutions. Pat Nolan was Republican leader of the California Assembly from 1984 to 1988 and was president of Justice Fellowship ([Justicefellowship.org](http://Justicefellowship.org)) from 1996-2012. Read the [full article here](#).

**CMSM**



- *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;*
- *provides a corporate influence in church and society.*

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