

COUNCIL FOR WORLD MISSION

INSiGHT

NOVEMBER 2023





INSiGHT Contents

FOREWORD

- 4 Stop the War Now!

VIEWPOINTS Peace Building and Community Development

- 8 The Siege of Gaza and the Palestinian Right to Self-Determination: Peace in the Middle East is Dependent Upon the Rights of the Palestinian People
- 12 Towards a Positive Peace
- 14 The Ocean is Neither a Garbage Dump Nor a Human Property - Don't Let Contaminated Water From Fukushima Flow Into the Ocean
- 18 Piercing the Heart of Maya Homeland: Maya Train and Megaprojects in Southeast Mexico

AT A GLANCE CWM News

- 23 A New Face: Nurturing the Next Generation of Female Leaders
- 25 CWM Moderator, Rt Rev. Lydia Neshangwe, Elected First Female President of the AACC
- 26 CWM Board of Directors' Meeting in Durban: A Call to Rise to Life
- 28 CWM Member Churches General Secretaries' Conference Opened Under the Theme - "Rise to Life: Together in Transformation"
- 29 New Onesimus Guide Will Help Churches Access Funds to Address Injustice
- 30 School of Intersectional Ecotheology and Ecojustice Witness Inspires Young Environmental Advocates
- 32 CWM Demands Immediate Ceasefire in Palestine, Restoring Peace with Justice
- 34 Global Christian Organizations Urge UN to Redefine International Finance for Equity, Sustainability and Peace
- 35 Partners in Mission 2023 Global Gathering Brings Renewal, Reconnection
- 36 Training in Mission: Young Graduates Show Persistence—And Aillingness to Challenge the Church

Assembly News

- 37 CWM Assembly 2024 LOC meets in Durban to discuss Assembly preparations
- 38 CWM Assembly 2024 Logo Unveiled
- 39 CWM Assembly Host Churches Organize Joint Worship to Foster Unity



War and related conflict have proliferated to the extent that they have become normative in several parts of the world. There is an entire generation of people who do not know what it is like to live without the consistent noise of gunfire and the fear of being bombed. Around the world, small and large conflicts kill and maim men, recruit young boys into armed conflict, perpetrate violence against women and girls, and destroy the environment. At the same time, we are also witnessing increasing violence by the state against its own people. Dissent is quickly and firmly thwarted by coercive forces and the propaganda machine, quelling thought and restricting debate. We are being seduced into a state of numbness, drugged from the pain of the violence around us.

The moral crisis facing the world is not only that militarization creates poverty, hunger, and malnutrition but also that defense budgets around the world are only increasing while public spending on health, education and poverty eradication is being cut back. The obscene amounts of money being invested in this indecent cult of violence serve to impoverish many while at the same time generating wealth for those involved in the manufacture and trading of weapons. It is no coincidence, then, that the war mongers are also business leaders.

Properly named as the patriarchal military industrial complex, the global war machine legitimizes hierarchy, glorifies and justifies violence, reduces people's rights and freedoms and increases the gap between the rich and the poor in the world. It is the way in which Empire consolidates its centres and expands its margins.

In the midst of this rampant deification of power, it is the God who is wounded for our sake (Isaiah 53:5) that calls out to us from the cross. In the cross we find an alternative strategy of resistance to Empire; the cross is not a site where violence and suffering are glorified but is a place which calls for active confrontation of Empire through solidarity and struggle.

We are watching Israel's atrocious siege of Palestine, in particular of the people of Gaza. In the similar vein or even more, we need to expose and condemn the culpability of the western powers, the main drivers of the modern military empire, in continuously aiding and abetting the Israeli occupation of Palestine, its settler colonies and mass atrocities against the Palestinian people. Knowing too well, beyond any doubt, that evacuation of 1.1 million people from the city of Gaza is impossible within 24 hours, Israel's demand to do so is nothing but a cover-up for ethnic cleansing.



The Israeli-Palestinian conflict did not start now. Totally blinded by their faith in the most modern military hardware/software accompanied by racial supremacy, the 'golden calf', Israeli state perceives itself as invincible and impenetrable as it has been constructed as indispensable by the will of the empire, not by the will of God of the Bible or the Hebrew Scriptures. The continuous flowing river of blood and the ocean of tears that surround this piece of land which is holy to the Christians, Jews and Muslims are generated by the very forging of the Israeli state as part of the geopolitical design of the empire in subduing the Arab world in general and Palestinians in particular. Such lustful designs for domination and oppression make the powers that be believe that any eruption of violence can be contained or even eliminated fully while maintaining absolute military power over the subjugated peoples. This is what Israel believes. This is why the USA and UK immediately send its most advanced military hardware to the Middle East. It is blood sacrifice that is offered at the altar of the 'golden calf' and cries out to heaven.

In the name of the blood of thousands of people that cry out to heaven, we call upon all faith communities to resist the 'golden calf' of imperialist militarized security and walk on the path of justice and peace. "A time comes when silence is betrayal (Martin Luther King Jr.)". That time has come for us in relation to Palestine.

The ongoing violence in the North-Eastern Indian state of Manipur is abhorrent yet, unfortunately, familiar. Hundreds have lost their lives, and thousands have been forced to flee their homes – mostly Christians. This violence occurred fifteen years after India experienced its worst episode of anti-Christian violence in Kandhamal, Orissa. Similarly, instances of "everyday" violence are becoming more rampant.

A "raging fire of brutality" is engulfing Myanmar, where military forces have killed more than 4,000 civilians since seizing power in a 2021 coup, according to an independent United Nations expert on Myanmar.

Since Russia's full-scale invasion, its war against Ukraine has had a disastrous impact on civilian life, killing thousands of civilians, injuring many thousands more, and destroying civilian property and infrastructure. Russian forces committed a litany of violations of international humanitarian law, including indiscriminate and disproportionate bombing and shelling of civilian areas that hit homes and healthcare and educational facilities.

How do we reconstruct our theological reflections informed by the dead, tortured and mutilated bodies of the victims of war and conflict? What is the theological significance of the memories of the dead, tortured and mutilated ones in re-imagining our public witness in the

midst of war and conflict? Our remembrance of the dead, tortured and mutilated bodies involves political, spiritual, and subversive practices, inviting and inspiring us to witness the God of life in the public sphere through our active resistance against all forces and systems of torture, domination, war and militarization.

The Jesus movement was a system-threatening movement, and the cross was the consequence of Jesus' public witness which exposed and challenged the sinfulness of the prevailing order. Acts of the Apostles present the early church as a church engaged in public witness through "turning the world upside down." Speaking to the truth as public witness is the Christian praxis of engaging in the public affairs of our times, offering critiques, convictions, insights, and alternatives to transform our social relations based on the vision of the reign of God. Public witness is not an appendix to the mission of the church; rather the church becomes missional as it engages in public witness by rejecting the claim of empire.

The Programme Area on Peacebuilding and Community Development of CWM is committed to sharing God's mission of peace, justice, and community development around the world. The CWM views peace as a multifaceted concept, encompassing not just the absence of violence, but also justice, reconciliation, and sustainable development. Peace is seen as God's intention for the cosmos, where all living beings can flourish in a just and harmonious society.

In the first article, Xavior Abu Eid discusses the policies implemented by Israel over the years towards Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. He further explains that instead of military personnel, Israel relies on advanced technology such as biometrics and surveillance aircraft for control. He suggests that these measures have not achieved peace or security but instead may aim at preventing the independence of a Palestinian state. These policies have transformed the territories into walled enclosures with ethnic cleansing and forcible displacement.

The problem with systems of displacement, is that God is excluded from the very conversations of life and peace among the communities. On the contrary, the ones who are suffering are those who were not a part of the conversations to begin with, such as the mother who lost a son at war, the innocent children obliterated by bombs, the land of ancestral stories: forbidden in history as a social hazard and memorial site...etc. Sudhir Selvaraj discusses the ongoing violence in Manipur, particularly highlighting the widespread anti-Christian incidents taking place in the country. He suggests that recognizing the interactive and enabling abilities of multiple forms of violence can help develop a broader approach to understand and respond to violence.

A major part of our agenda is the importance of fostering dialogue and reconciliation among individuals and communities in conflict. To achieve peace, the CWM recognizes the need to address the root causes of conflict such as poverty, inequality, and injustice, specifically within the third world. Despite representing over two-thirds of the world's population, the third world is still affected by enduring remnants of Western colonization, fascism, and industrialization, which persistently hamper the global peace and developmental progress.

Ana Esther Ceceña exposes this reality in her article by indicating the development projects in Mexico, such as the Maya Train and Interoceanic Corridor, are causing significant damage to the environment and culture of the region. These projects are aimed at connecting Mexico's wealth sources with the United States and gaining access to strategic materials.

The article by 'Everyone's Data Site' further reveals this as it addresses the issue of releasing ALPS treated contaminated water from a nuclear plant into the ocean. It highlights the importance of listening to the concerns of fishermen and the fisheries community, as they will be directly impacted by the release.

Let me close with a prayer of Rabbi Alissa Wise:

May the One Who Remembers allow us to hold in one hand 75 years of occupation, dispossession and violence and in the other a future of peace, justice and freedom; May the One Who is Slow to Anger soften our hearts and our fists helping us to put down the sword even at the height of the arc of our rage; May the One of Possibility remind us that a future of peace with justice is possible; May the One Who Awakens Us to Life hold us in our pain and vindictiveness until we set those down for the sake of life; May the One Who Endures allow us to act for the sake of the coming generations; May the One Who is Without Limit expand our senses of what is possible as we reach for justice, freedom and peace for us all.

Amen.



Dr Sudipta Singh
Deputy General Secretary
Programmes

Viewpoints

The Siege of Gaza and the Palestinian Right to Self-Determination:

Peace in the Middle East is Dependent Upon the Rights of the Palestinian People



A political scientist, Xavier Abu Eid served as an adviser to the Palestine Liberation Organization. Author of “Rooted in Palestine: Palestinian Christians and the Struggle for National Liberation” (Dar Al Kalima University Press, 2022), he is a PhD candidate on Religious, Theological and Peace Studies at Trinity College (Dublin).

In less than ten days, since 7 October 2023 until the time of writing, Israeli bombardments have killed over 1,000 Palestinian children in Gaza. It is more than the total number of Ukrainian children killed during the past two years. Israeli authorities demanded from over 1.1 million Palestinians, the entirety of the population in the northern Gaza governorate, to leave their homes and move towards the south.

This was immediately denounced as an attempt to ethnically cleanse the area and to forcibly displace hundreds of thousands towards the Egyptian Sinai. All of this took place while Israeli officials publicly announced, and effectively implemented, the cutting of

electricity, water, gas, food and medicines to the people in Gaza in violation of their obligations under international humanitarian law. Israeli officials argue that this is part of their policy to respond to the attack conducted by Hamas on 7 October. To the Palestinians, however, this is part of an ongoing campaign against the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination.

There has been a relentless effort by Israel's allies to present such policies as an Israeli response to the surprise attack by Hamas rather than as a continuation of what has been going on in Palestine for decades. However, by simply looking at various statements and actions of Israeli officials, one would easily realize that while the magnitude of what we are witnessing now may appear as bigger than previous occasions, this is the same agenda that was pushed forward by the masterminds behind the Nakba, catastrophe, of the Palestinian people: The forced displacement of the Palestinian people that began in 1948.



This is not the first time that Israel has bombarded Gaza. Nevertheless, there are several characteristics that make the current situation more dramatic and dire, including the cutting of water, electricity, gas, food and medicines from Gaza, which constitutes a war crime under international humanitarian law. This has been even termed as genocidal by some Israeli intellectuals. Israeli historian and professor of Holocaust and Genocide Studies Raz Segal noted that “Israel’s genocidal assault is quite explicit, open, and unashamed. Perpetrators of genocide usually do not express their intentions so clearly”¹.

The use of the term “genocide” to describe what is happening in Palestine has been largely challenged by Western officials. However, in this instance, there seems to be a wider acceptance as few media officials have publicly challenged the accusations of “genocidal policies” made by several Palestinian officials and human rights activists against the Israeli siege of Gaza. The onslaught against the Palestinians has been justified by portraying them to the Israeli public and the world as subhuman and through the dehumanization of the indigenous population. Israel’s minister of defense Yoav Gallant refers to Palestinians as “human-animals”². Israeli president Isaac Herzog attempts to depict civilians in Gaza as a legitimate target³.

It is in this context that the Israeli call for the “evacuation” of 1.1 million people from the northern Gazan areas rang alarms in the region, particularly in Egypt and Jordan. The threat of this “evacuation” becoming a permanent resettlement became a central subject of discussion in the Arab world and in Palestine, particularly in Gaza where over 70% of the population are already refugees. Some people referred to the options being either “genocide or ethnic cleansing”. It is not a coincidence that Chris McGreal, former Guardian correspondent in Jerusalem and Washington, after looking into the various statements delivered by Israeli officials on Palestinians said that the language being used to describe Palestinians is “genocidal”⁴.

If the goals of the Israeli attacks on Gaza are about destroying even a mere part of the Palestinian people because of their national, ethnic, racial or religious identity, this falls under the crime of genocide as expressed in the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide⁵, which Article III of the Convention refers to as punishable “direct and public incitement to commit genocide”⁶. This tends to align with the references consistently made by Israeli officials when talking about Gaza. The dehumanization of the Palestinian people has been an integral part of Israeli plans to justify a ground invasion of Gaza. At this stage virtually no Palestinian can agree



with the official Israeli narrative that this is merely about Hamas: This is an aggression against the Palestinian people.

Gaza has long been a nightmare for Israel, decades before Hamas was created. It was there where the first “fidayeen” (“men of sacrifice”) or Arab commandoes were trained by the Egyptian intelligence in the 1950s. Several operations were conducted from Gaza that sabotaged a number of Israeli targets in the lands occupied in 1948. Between December 1955 and March 1956 alone there were 180 operations conducted by the fidayeen from Gaza registered by the Israelis⁷. The first sabotage operations against the Israeli occupation in 1967 took place in Gaza. The first Intifada began in Gaza. All Palestinian national and Islamic factions are present in Gaza.

Israel has constantly avoided addressing the reality of Palestine from a political perspective. Gaza has been mainly treated as a security issue, rather than a political question, in the Israeli insistence to avoid resolving the core issues that turned this small strip of land into an occupied territory. The Palestinians refuse to surrender to Israeli conditions: Israel continuously denies the inalienable right of the Palestinian people for self-determination, including notably the right of return. Such Israeli policies don't just apply to Gaza but to all of Palestine.

Over 70% of the population of Gaza are refugees from 1948⁸. Most of them come as a result of the ethnic cleansing conducted by Zionist groups on ancient coastal cities such as Jaffa and Asqalan, as well as from villages around Gaza and the Naqab desert⁹.

Two-thirds of what was defined as the “Gaza governate” before 1948¹¹ was annexed by Israel¹⁰, meaning most of the agricultural hinterland of Gaza. The demand for the Palestinian right of return, a principle deeply enshrined in international law as well as through UN Resolution 194, has been consistently rejected by the Israelis regardless of their acceptance of the resolution as a condition of their admission to the United Nations as a member state in 1949¹². As Israel in fact has never implemented any UN resolution for the past 75 years, the international community should realize that to continue avoiding to face what is going on is not going to bring about a solution for Israelis, Palestinians and the rest of the region. Peace in the Middle East is utterly dependent upon the human rights of the Palestinian people.

Israeli policy regarding the occupied territory of Palestine has been to maximize geographical control while minimizing the Palestinian demography. Accordingly, they proceeded with the withdrawal of Israeli settlers from the tiny Gaza in 2005, while rapidly increasing the number of settlers in the West Bank. Policies of separation from the Palestinians that were first implemented in Gaza are now being adopted in the West Bank. Israeli political scientist Neve Gordon affirmed in 2008 that “instead of deploying soldiers to patrol city streets, Israel now employs biometrics and surveillance aircraft backed up by F-16 fighter jets, Apache helicopters and ground-to-ground missile launchers, and the rule of law has been for the most part, suspended. Spatially both regions have been transformed into hermetic ghettos¹³...”.



Over a decade later it has become clear that such policies did not bring about either peace or security. Perhaps they were never meant to do so. Rather the goal was simply to prevent the freedom of an independent State of Palestine no matter the costs. There is a perpetuation of the negation of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, particularly at a moment where there seems to be a consensus amongst the Zionist political elite to strengthen the colonial-settler occupation in the West Bank, including Jerusalem, and prevent any lasting political solution that involves ending the illegal Israeli occupation. Therefore the latest campaign against Palestine and its people, whether they are in Gaza or outside, with all its Western backing, should not be considered to be as a legitimate Israeli response to the attacks it suffered on 7 October but rather as one of the most brutal stages in the Zionist project against the Palestinian right to self-determination.

It should be clear that, instead of seeking a political solution, Israel has been seeking a Palestinian surrender that legitimizes the idea of a Jewish Supremacist Greater Israel rather than a two-state solution on the 1967 border or a one democratic state solution. It is precisely the Israeli rejection of a political solution based on international law which provides the context to the brutality that has been witnessed over the past 10 days, to the extent that experts are designating Israel's current war on the Palestinian people as a genocide, in line with its history of ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian people.



By Xavier Abu Eid

1. <https://jewishcurrents.org/a-textbook-case-of-genocide>
2. <https://www.aljazeera.com/program/newsfeed/2023/10/9/israeli-defence-minister-orders-complete-siege-on-gaza>
3. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/israel-gaza-isaac-herzog_n_65295ee8e4b03ea0c004e2a8
4. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/oct/16/the-language-being-used-to-describe-palestinians-is-genocidal>
5. https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/atrocities-crimes/Doc.1_Convention%20on%20the%20Prevention%20and%20Punishment%20of%20the%20Crime%20of%20Genocide.pdf
6. Ibid.
7. Sayigh, Yezid (2011) "Armed Struggle and the Search for State: The Palestinian National Movement 1949 – 1993" Oxford University Press. New York: P 64.
8. https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/gaza_thematic_6_0.pdf
9. Morris, Benny (2004) The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited. Cambridge University Press: New York.
10. Roy, Sara (1995) The Gaza Strip: The Political Economy of De-development. Institute for Palestine Studies. Washington DC: P 65.
11. <https://www.un.org/unispal/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/ARES194III.pdf>
12. UN Resolution 273 <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/210373?ln=en>
13. Gordon, Neve (2008) Israel's Occupation. University of California Press: London. P 218.

Towards a Positive Peace



The ongoing violence in the North-Eastern Indian state of Manipur is abhorrent yet, unfortunately, familiar. Hundreds have lost their lives, and thousands have been forced to flee their homes – mostly Christians. This violence occurred fifteen years after India experienced its worst episode of anti-Christian violence in Kandhamal, Orissa. Similarly, instances of "everyday" violence are becoming more rampant. The United Christian Forum recently reported that there were 525 such incidents in the past eight months in India, including physical attacks and desecration of church property.

October 2nd is an interesting time to be writing this piece. After all, it is the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the Indian nation and a name synonymous with ahimsa or non-violence. Gandhi's quote, "Ahimsa is the highest duty. Even if we cannot practice it in full, we must try to understand its spirit and refrain as far as is humanly possible from violence", comes to mind. While I have no objections to the importance of striving for non-violence, this moment calls for us to do more - we must move from non-violence to positive peace.

A valuable framework for understanding this is Norwegian peace scholar Johan Galtung's typology of violence, which includes direct, structural and cultural violence. For Galtung, an act of direct violence is visible, constituting aggressors, victims and harm. Structural violence is more subtle. It is caused by social, economic and political structures which prevent a person from achieving their potential (a form of harm). Cultural violence is the justification deployed to defend direct and structural violence, thus rendering them acceptable in society. So, what, then, is peace? Galtung suggests that peace has two forms - negative peace (the absence of direct violence) and positive peace (the flourishing of just and equitable systems and structures). To illustrate, even when a ceasefire is called, victims of war are most likely still subject to displacement, marginalization, and discrimination. Thus, while negative peace has been achieved when the guns are put away, we are still far from realizing positive peace. Significantly, much like in war, those impacted by the absence of positive peace are often society's most economically, politically or socially marginalized. And worse still, for those who lie at the intersection of these margins.



Using this framework, I have made the argument elsewhere that Christians in India face multi-form violence. In addition to the physical violence mentioned earlier, anti-conversion laws present in several Indian states and the discriminate denial of state benefits to Dalit Christians (who make up a majority of India's Christians) should be seen as forms of structural violence as they limit the ability to practice their faith, guaranteed in the Indian Constitution. This structural and direct violence is justified by proponents and sympathizers of the Hindutva ideology, a right-wing nationalist ideology which foregrounds dominant caste Hindu male supremacy at the cost of other religious, caste and gender minorities. The Hindutva movement is experiencing its political and social apex in India currently. The ideology (in brief) perceives Christians as "foreign" and (demographic and cultural) "threats" to the "Hindu" nation. This view is heavily propagated in public rallies, traditional media and increasingly social media, thus serving as cultural violence. Crucially,

recent research, including mine, shows how these forms of violence enable, sustain and spur each other on, forming a holistic system of anti-Christian violence.

Importantly, in addition to the state, some Christians also face structural violence by the church due to the intersection of their religious and caste identities. Research shows that this manifests as limited opportunities and mistreatment of Dalit and Adivasi Christians in some churches.

Using India as a case, I have advocated for a broad approach to the understanding of violence which allows us to look beyond spectacular episodic violence to recognize the other forms of harm. Significantly, this broad approach acknowledges the interaction and enabling ability of multiple forms of violence. If this is the diagnosis, what then should be our prognosis?

I offer the following suggestions in hopes of not being too prescriptive. First, we must adopt a broad understanding of what violence is to deepen our understanding and our ability to respond. This broad approach allows us to recognize the multiple interconnected forms of violence plaguing communities. Relatedly, we must also recognize that a community's experience of violence differs based on their social, economic and political position. For example, a Dalit Christian, in most cases, is subject to more forms of violence than a Christian from a dominant caste background because of the intersection of their caste and religious identity.

Once we recognize these, we must move towards advocating for a positive peace which leads to just systems where individuals can flourish. If we recognize the links between direct, structural and cultural violence, could we perhaps create forms of direct, structural and cultural peace that could combat these forms of violence and possibly have a knock-on effect, creating and sustaining systems of peace?

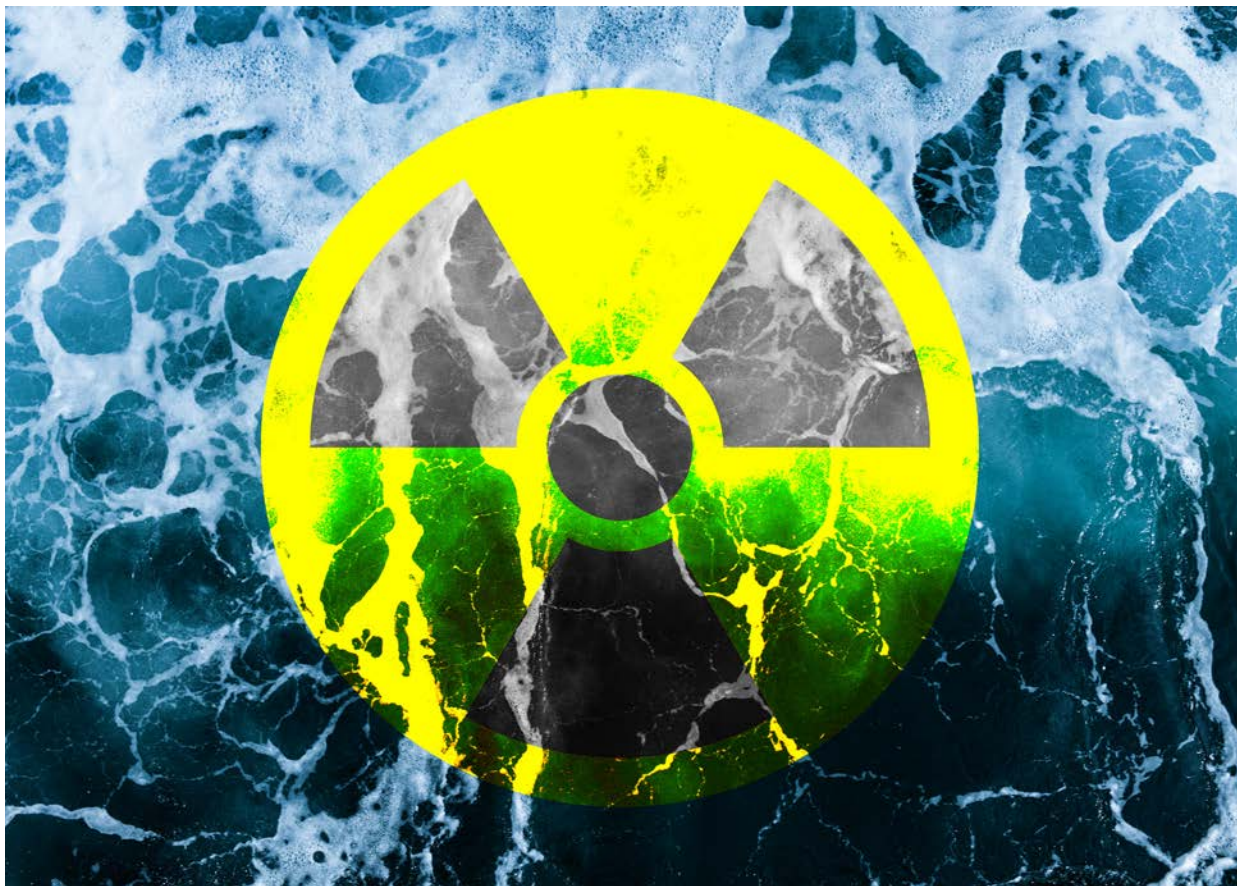


Dr. M. Sudhir Selvaraj is a Lecturer in the Department of Peace Studies and International Development at the University of Bradford, UK. He completed his PhD in Politics from the King's College London where his research focused on anti-Christian violence in India. He hails

from Bangalore, India and is a member of the Church of South India.

The Ocean is Neither A Garbage Dump Nor A Human Property

Don't Let Contaminated Water in Fukushima Flow Into the Ocean



In 2011, a magnitude 9.0 earthquake struck the Pacific coast, followed by a massive tsunami. Three of the four reactors at TEPCO (Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings, Inc.)'s FDNPS (Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station) exploded, mainly due to the power loss of the cooling system caused by the tsunami. It is said that approximately 80% of the large amount of radioactive material which leaked out from the damaged reactors spread across the ocean via the wind from the west, and the residual 20% contaminated the land.

According to the 2013 report of UNSCEAR (United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation), FDNPS already released 7.5 quintillion becquerels (7,500 petabecquerels) of radioactivity into the atmosphere within almost one month. This amount of radioactivity far exceeds the total amount of radioactivity emitted annually by normally operating nuclear power plants around the world. No further radiation release from the damaged reactors is acceptable.



Despite this, TEPCO forced the release of contaminated water into the ocean in summer 2023.

There is a risk of bioconcentration of radioactive substances under the food chain and they may be taken into human body through food. They could cut DNA and cause genetic abnormalities in all living beings. As a result, chances of developing cancer increase. We raise our voice so that TEPCO immediately stops releasing radioactive materials intentionally from the damaged nuclear reactors into the ocean.

What kind of water is TEPCO releasing into the ocean?

Currently, there are over 1,000 tanks, which store a total volume of 1.24 million tons of treated radioactive water. Why has such a huge amount of water been produced? Nuclear fuel at nuclear power plants needs to be filled with water and cooled to prevent re-criticality. However, at FDNPS, the reactors got cracks during the accident and the water started leaking through them. As a result, more water must be continuously injected to keep the damaged reactors cool. Furthermore, there is a rich groundwater vein in the upper part of FNDPS and the natural water flowed into the damaged reactor building. The groundwater mixed with the radioactive cooling water and met directly with the melted nuclear fuel debris in the

buildings, forming a large amount of ultra-highly radioactive water.

After the accident, the contaminated water flowed directly into the ocean. To stop the water outflow, TEPCO decided to establish various facilities to pump up the water that had accumulated within the buildings, to filter it with an ALPS device, and to store it in tanks. (As a matter of fact, to control all of the contaminated water is impossible and it is estimated that a considerable amount of contaminated groundwater has already flowed into the ocean. TEPCO will never make this public.) The water stored in the tanks contains more than 62 types of radionuclides in addition to tritium, which is difficult to remove.

Let us see the level of the contamination of the water in the tanks. Roughly speaking, 30% of the water in the tanks meets the national regulatory standards and the remaining 70% does not. In other words, the water in the tanks consists of contaminated water that meets regulations and extremely contaminated water that does not even meet regulations. We believe that both are not safe at all.

The Japanese government and TEPCO named the ALPS-treated water 'treated water' and the Japanese media follow them to give people the impression that it is 'cleaned' water. Actually the water released into the ocean is still highly contaminated, as we already mentioned above.

According to TEPCO, the 'treated water' will be repurified by ALPS to make the level within regulatory limits. In addition, the water will be diluted with sea water before being released into the ocean. However, the method of diluting polluted water with sea water to meet the standards is the same practice as the polluting companies commonly did back in 1970s in Japan. We believe that it is nothing more than a declaration of a new practice of environmental pollution.

The Japanese government and the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) have stated that the release of ALPS-treated contaminated water into the ocean is at a concentration of 1,500 becquerel per liter or less, which is a one-fortieth dilution of the tritium wastewater standard of 60,000 becquerel per liter. And they loudly say that the release of ALPS-treated contaminated water into the ocean is 'based on scientific evidence' and it 'meets international safety standards'. The standards on which the Japanese government and the IAEA rely are the ones introduced for normal operation of nuclear facilities. It is unreasonable to evaluate the contaminated water generated from nuclear reactors that went through meltdown on the same basis as wastewater discharged from normally operating reactors.

It is also regrettable that the Japanese media report uncritically and widely publicize the statement issued by the Japanese government and the IAEA under the brocade flag of justice, both domestically and internationally.

There is no threshold for the risk of cancer

On the one hand, since Roentgen discovered X-rays in 1895, we have received many benefits from radiation. On the other hand, we have also encountered health risks due to low-dose exposure and went through mass killings by the atomic bombings on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Radiation protection essentially aims to reduce the risk of radiation exposure as much as possible. However, ICRP (the International Commission on Radiological Protection), a private international academic organization specializing in radiological protection, has made recommendations based on analyses that reflect historical changes. In other words, it emphasizes social benefits over health risks. Reportedly in 1959, by collaborating with WHO (the World Health Organization), IAEA, UNSCEAR and ICRP began to be influenced by the IAEA, the nuclear power proponent.

Nevertheless, ICRP still adheres to the LNT (linear no-threshold) model for the stochastic effects of low-dose radiation exposure: the lower the radiation exposure, the fewer the negative health effects. Even in France, a nuclear powerhouse, a joint report from the French Academy of Sciences and Medicine in 2005 said that it could be a practical and useful tool to establish radiation protection regulations for doses above about 10 millisieverts. In addition, the NRC (US Nuclear Regulatory Commission) concluded in 2021, based on several years of verification results, that the LNT model will provide a sound regulatory foundation to minimize the risk of unnecessary radiation exposure to both members of the public and radiation workers.



We support the LNT model. We also support the idea of the precautionary principle, which was affirmed at the 1992 Rio de Janeiro Global Environment Summit (International Conference on Environment and Development).

Don't release but store: Increase storage tanks and all-out efforts for zero emission!



Opinions against the release of tritium and other ALPS-treated contaminated water into the ocean have been expressed domestically and internationally. Especially, the government and TEPCO must listen to the voice of fishermen and the rest of the fisheries community who are involved in distribution and processing and are expected to have a significant economic impact by the enforcement. The government has been using the word 'rumor' to control the people's understanding of radioactive substances spread into the environment by the accident. 'Don't worry. Products are all safe enough. It is just a rumor if someone complains about it.' The government is trying to silence the fisheries workers by saying that it is just 'rumors'. Contaminated water is a rumor! However, the massive release of radioactivity is not a rumor but an actual harm to everyone's health, including all other living organisms in the ocean and land.

TEPCO and the government insist that all contaminated water tanks are full, no more tanks can be added, and the only option is to release the 'treated water'. However, there are approximately 64 hectares of vacant land remaining within the FDNPS site. According to TEPCO and the government, this vacant land is necessary to decommission the nuclear power plants within thirty to forty years. But the Atomic Energy Society of Japan's Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant Decommissioning Committee's Waste Subcommittee Interim Report (July 2020) says that it will take from one hundred to three hundred years to

complete decommissioning. In fact, there is no hope of recovering nuclear fuel debris from the damaged reactors to commence decommissioning. The decommissioning roadmap within thirty to forty years is nothing but a political lie. Out of care for life in all its forms people guided by their own life experiences and the knowledge of the experts demand to halt the release of contaminated water into the ocean. Out of political expediency the rulers reject such genuine calls. It's not too late for them to take proper actions.

Contaminated water should not be dumped into the ocean. More tanks should be built above ground and daily management of the water should be continued. The best solution for contaminated water management is to continue developing technology by which radioactive materials can be almost completely removed from contaminated water. We claim that it is the responsibility of the company that caused the accident to minimize further release of radioactivity into the environment.

The ocean is neither a garbage dump nor a human property. The ocean is the source of all life, and all water is connected through circulation. We reiterate that the intentional contamination cannot be tolerated, not only because it affects the people, sea and land around the plant, but also beyond the borders. It will have an intergenerational impact.



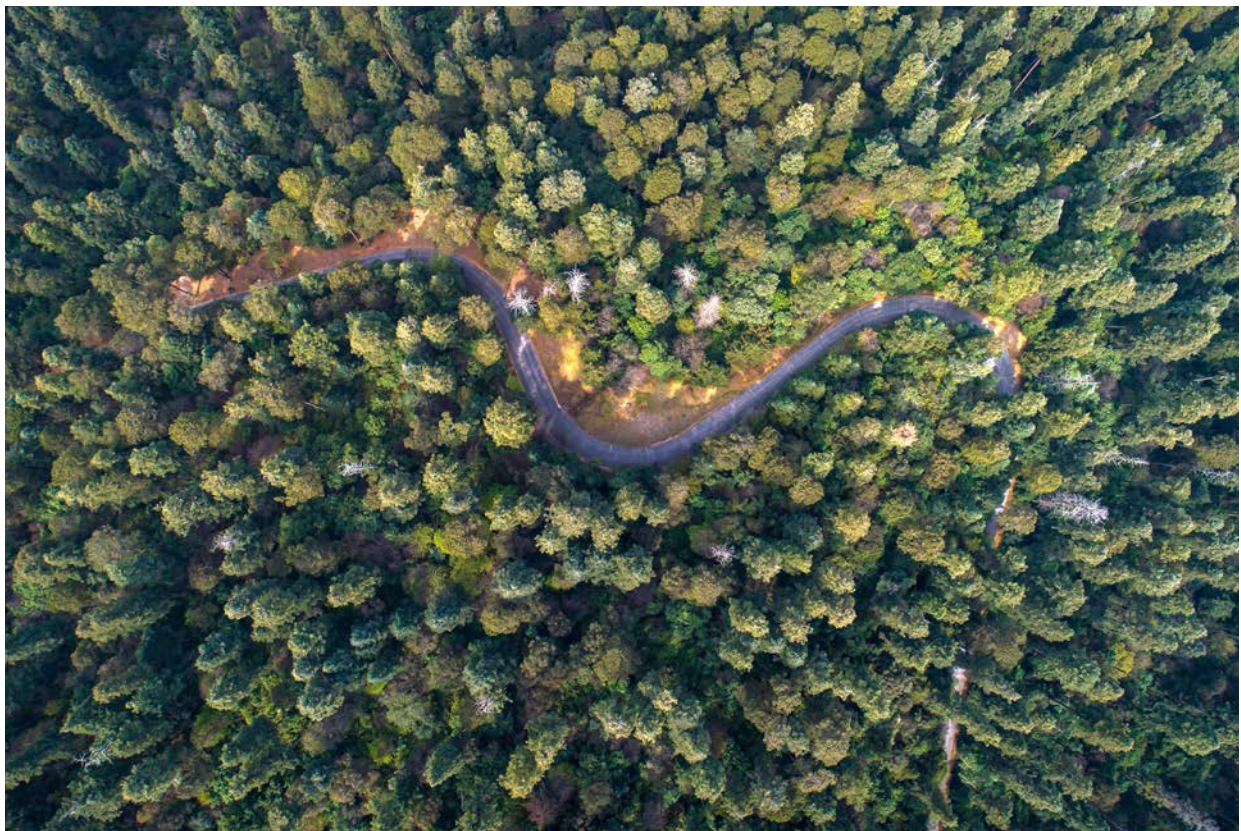
Nahoko Nakamura
Everyone's Data Site

This article is written by Everyone's Data Site, a Japanese non-profit organization formed in 2012 as a group of citizens who work in radioactivity measurement labs and their supporters from

around the country. They independently conduct measurement activities and disclose information to protect people from radiation exposure.

website: <https://en.minnannods.net/>

Piercing the Heart of Maya Homeland: Maya Train and Megaprojects in Southeast Mexico



In the southeast of Mexico, as in several other parts of the world, the insatiable lust for profitability falsely couched as development brutally intrudes upon the traditional territory to re-configure it for wealth appropriation and accumulation. Large-scale extraction and associated transport infrastructures that are aimed at redesigning the routes and contents of global trade grossly violate ways of life of the native communities while destroying the natural conditions that sustained life on the blue planet for millions of years.

The southeast of Mexico, a place of ancient civilizations and enormous biodiversity, is under unbearable siege by two major interconnected projects: the Maya Train and the Interoceanic Corridor of the

Isthmus of Tehuantepec. It is a war by other means which is called 'development'.

The territorial key

Mexico is a megadiverse country, with more than 5,000 species of native (endemic) plants, diverse ecosystems (including marine ones), and a species diversity that exceeds 70% of those known on the planet.

The tropical rainforest of the Americas extends from the Amazon basin to the southeast of Mexico and constitutes one of the most biodiverse areas on the planet. In its northernmost part, the Selva Maya, which covers a vast portion of the peninsular territory, is the



largest tropical rainforest in Mesoamerica and the second largest on the continent. With an area of 42,300 km², it comprises 20 ecosystems. This rainforest connects with its counterpart in South America through biological routes in the Central American area. The connection in this extensive territory is an essential support for eco-systemic creativity, as it allows diversification and the development of varieties that strengthen biological evolution and creativity, which are dangerously threatened by contemporary ecological catastrophe. This abundance of natural life is accompanied by and responds to its cultural diversity, which has survived 530 years of permanent colonization. Mexico has 26 million people recognized officially as indigenous (one-fourth of the total population), and 61 linguistic cultures, 44 of which inhabit the southeast region. These are living cultures and peoples who have continued to maintain their ways of life in interaction

with those of the colonizers, whose most recent wave appears in the form of megaprojects known as the Maya Train and the Interoceanic Corridor of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec.

This region was impacted 65 million years ago by a meteorite that caused the extinction of the dinosaurs and led to the formation of underground caves called cenotes, which create a unique system of flooded caves, the longest on the planet. The soil is porous, making these caves receptacles of crystal-clear waters, housing not only Mexico's largest underground aquifer but also unique species and remnants of human life dating back approximately 13,000 years.

Bordering the coast, which is part of the Caribbean Sea, is the world's second-largest coral reef, home to a wide variety of marine species. Bacalar Lagoon, known for its waters' seven different colors, produced by a



significant bacterial reef inside it (the world's largest), is also on the list of world wonders. In addition to the Selva Maya, this area contains extensive mangrove areas, 55% of Mexico's total (Mexico ranks fourth globally), which not only protect against hurricanes but also have the ability to capture four times more carbon than other plant species.

The Isthmus of Tehuantepec region is different. It is crossed by mountains that have created numerous ecological niches, making the Chimalapas rainforest the most biodiverse in Mesoamerica. This region has a millennia-old history. It has been home to the Maya, Zoque, Zapotec, and other civilizations for over 3,000 years. It was also the homeland of the Olmec civilization, one of the most iconic in the pre-Columbian world. Considering the archaeological heritage in the area, in addition to what current inhabitants know but is not included in records, this appears to have been a densely populated region where the jungle was cultivated as part of life's care. For these civilizations, there was no separation between nature and society because everything belonged to Mother Earth, and humans were as much a part of her children as the rest of the species. They all needed each other and complemented each other; the care of one was the care of all, and many of the current inhabitants continue to act and think this way.

The Mexican Caribbean stretches for 1,176 km and represents 10.57% of the country's coastline. Its exuberance and beauty have made it a highly valued tourist attraction. Cancun initiated the push for tourism 50 years ago, and today the Maya Train project aims to extend tourist activity along the entire coast. What is not mentioned is the environmental devastation, the disruptive impact, and the growth of criminality (drug addiction, prostitution, and violence) that this tourism has had on the communities and towns inhabiting the area.

The Maya Train and Interoceanic Corridor megaprojects cause irreversible ecological damage to this territory that is invaluable for maintaining the planet's vital health. The destruction of mangroves; fragmentation of ecosystems; the vibration, barrier, and noise effects produced by trains; the deforestation of jungles and biosphere reserves; social redesign; and urbanization resulting from the reordering of activities, all contribute to the process of the sixth extinction and global turmoil predicted by scientists, instead of helping to stop the environmental catastrophe.

Furthermore, the cultural damage is immense as it destroys the buildings and testimonies of the millennia-long journey of civilizations that have resisted the genocidal onslaught of capitalist colonization for

530 years. This genocide is not only carried out through the physical annihilation of peoples and the dispossession of their territories, but also through the erasure of their history, their constructions, their references, their ways of life, and their senses of reality. It is a war by development based on profitability that is being engineered to destroy peoples, physically, socially, culturally and spiritually.

THE GEOPOLITICAL KEY

In addition to the notable and invaluable socio-biodiversity of these territories, they are also rich in strategic materials. The country's oil reserves are concentrated in the southeast, as are some other highly prized minerals, making them part of the considerations for becoming a prominent node in the so-called supply chains that mainly connect Mexico's wealth sources with the United States economy.

Mexico's geography gives it a special place. On the one hand it is the link to the United States, still the world's largest market, and on the other, it has extensive coastlines that make it accessible to maritime trade (80% of world trade transits by sea). Additionally to its diversity, the Mexican territory displays a silhouette that narrows at the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, which has been envisioned since the European invasion as suitable for facilitating interoceanic exchange.

At various times in history, efforts have been made to establish a passage corridor in the Isthmus, but the project did not prosper due to the mountainous and highly complex topography of that strip, resistance from the peoples inhabiting it, or nationwide mobilizations. However, the new conditions of hegemonic rivalries in the world and the enormous growth in the volume of transported goods have renewed its importance. The economy has gradually shifted from the Atlantic to the Pacific in recent decades, leaving the east coast of the United States, responsible for 38% of its Gross Domestic Product, in unfavorable circumstances, even with connections via Panama. However, the Panama Canal is already insufficient, as it is currently on the brink of collapse, and other possible channels or corridors through Central America have not been able to gain momentum.

Mexico is located within the territory of North America, much closer to the United States than Panama, and the crossing is only 300 km long, so it can be a very good substitute, regardless of whether this damages the Selva Chimalapa and the lives of the region's peoples. For Mexico, from the government's perspective, the corridor is favorable for transporting its oil to both oceans. The corridor is envisioned as a maquila or assembly zone, where goods are processed while migrants from the south are retained, presumably

with precarious jobs. In other words, conditions of very low labor costs, agility in crossing, and controlled connection between the two oceans are offered, with an estimated circulation of 1.4 million containers per year. The northern border, between the United States and Mexico, shifts southward. Its control is in the hands of Mexican authorities, including the retention or deportation of migrants.

The question is whether, as in Panama, the security of world market goods crossing will be entrusted to Mexican security forces, at the risk of being overwhelmed by the forces of criminal groups, or if it will be entrusted to American troops as part of their agenda of turning the entire territory of North America, comprising Mexico, Canada and the USA into their own amplified homeland. And it is worth asking in both cases whether these security forces would actually be the armed forces. In other words, will the Isthmus of Tehuantepec fall under the care and supervision of the United States Joint Command?

The Mayan homeland has been converted into a territorial and geopolitical key that unlocks the pathway to conquer, commodify, control, and thereby destroy everything that sustains life, not only of the native communities, but also of the entire globe. Resistance to such barbarism not only from the affected communities, but also from across the borders.



Ana Esther Ceceña is the Director of the *Observatorio Latinoamericano de Geopolítica* and Professor/Researcher at the *Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México*.

At A Glance

A New Face: Nurturing the Next Generation of Female Leaders



Eight women pastors from various CWM member churches across the six regions arrived in Taiwan from 2-22 November 2023 to attend “A New Face.”. A six-week course offered in two three-week blocks over two years (2023/2024), “A New Face” seeks to provide a safe space for established women to share, be empowered and ultimately equipped for female leadership in their respective churches.

Church Leadership a Boy’s Club?

It has been observed that one of the biggest obstacles to having an effective female clergy leadership is the presence of the patriarchal culture that still pervades the Church today.

That the upper echelons of Church leadership continue to be likened to a “boy’s club” does not bode well for the growth and development of successful

female pastoral leadership. It continuously stymies female believers’ journeys in fully realizing their Christian potential and in exercising their unique spiritual gifts.

Participants from the first block, through exploring gender justice issues, as well as feminist and womanist theologies, and engaging in intercultural womanist discernment, were thus equipped for executive ecclesial leadership. They were also taught to identify and work around unique social nuances within a church’s ecosystem thereby developing their own style of leadership that will prove to be invaluable within their individual ministries.

As a form of knowledge transfer and a show of continuity and female solidarity, the first cohort will be invited to mentor the next group of participants during the second block of the course.



"Women have unique gifts and capacities that are sometimes unnoticed and need to be named and held dear as part of our ecclesial future," explained Rev. Dr Amelia Koh-Butler, CWM's Mission Secretary for Education and Empowerment, Pacific Region.

"There is a value in coming together as strangers with different experiences and forming new community. We learn together and grow, but we risk losing wisdom resources if we are returning to only a local setting. Therefore, we need global connections," continued Rev. Dr Koh-Butler.

Not All Work and No Play

The programme is not all work after all. Participants were brought on to take part in fun, peripheral activities aimed at ice-breaking and to create a spirit of camaraderie and kinship. Nature and the appreciation of it were a significant focus of these activities.

Team-building exercises eschewed the usual stuffy conference room settings in favour of a hiking trip in the great outdoors of Smangus—a remote mountain village that is home to the indigenous Atayal people. Through the hike, the ladies discovered Taiwan's abundant biodiversity and traditional methods of conservation such as those employed to protect the Yaya Tree, an ancient arboreal feature that is 2,500 years old!

Through the hike, the participants came to experience the spirit of unity displayed by the Atayal people who lived in a communal setting. The participants also got to interact with the local female population and learnt about the roles of women across the indigenous societies in Taiwan, giving them fresh

perspectives to take home as pastoral women looking to minister in their own local communities.

"[The] women's stories are diverse, powerful and inspiring. [It taught us that] we must keep speaking and listening to one another with openness and care," said Rev. Sanya Sita Beharry, a participant from the Presbyterian Church of Trinidad and Tobago.

The participants also got the chance to stay with the local tribes and ate with them through the programme. During the stay, not only did the participants get together to experience the day-to-day activities of the local women such as cooking and marketing, they also got to engage in deep and meaningful conversations surrounding difficult topics such as gender-based roles and gender-based violence.

One special moment was the visit to the church of the Paiwan tribe. The Paiwan Presbytery was one that was extremely unique as it has been utterly affirming of women pastoral workers for the past 25 years. The participants learnt that 52% of the presbytery's pastors are women and they fill some of the high-ranking roles, giving them a picture of hope and infinite possibilities as key takeaways.

"[The programme] is the beginning of a key network that can encourage and influence the development of capable, Spirit-filled women who are full of spirit and commitment... We were privileged to encounter indigenous leaders and be witnesses to their faith and dedication to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the Maker of all Creation. We read and explored scripture together, sang and danced, enjoyed banquets together, and walked and climbed several pilgrimage routes. The journey, however, has been one of beginnings and we all look forward to the ongoing work next year," shared Rev. Dr Koh-Butler.

CWM Moderator, Rt Rev. Lydia Neshangwe,
**Elected First Female President
of the AACC**



In a historic decision, the Council for World Mission (CWM) Moderator, the Rt Rev. Lydia Neshangwe, was elected as the first female President to serve the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC). A delegate of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (UPCSA), the Rt Rev. Neshangwe was elected into her new role during the 12th General Assembly of the AACC, held in Nigeria, where the AACC was first established, from 18-23 November.

The AACC is a continental ecumenical body representing over 200 million Christians across Africa. The AACC is the largest association of Protestant, Anglican, Orthodox, and Indigenous churches in Africa and a member of the worldwide ecumenical network.

While also serving as the President of the AACC, the Rt Rev. Neshangwe is also the current Moderator of UPCSA and the Moderator of CWM.

“CWM is delighted to hear the news of the Rt Rev. Neshangwe’s election as the newest AACC President,” Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum, CWM General Secretary, said. “We are confident that Rt Rev. Neshangwe will offer strong leadership with a clear vision and relentless commitment to the churches of the AACC to transform themselves into life-flourishing communities.”

CWM Board of Directors Meeting in Durban:

A Call to Rise to Life



The Council for World Mission (CWM) held its Board Meeting in Durban, South Africa, from 13-14 November 2023. The meeting brought together Board Members and management staff to discuss and deliberate on issues facing CWM.

The meeting also created a special opportunity for Board Members and staff to visit and worship at the North Durban Presbyterian Church and Groutville Congregational Church on 12 November.

The two-day meeting commenced with an Opening Worship led by CWM Moderator, Rev. Lydia Neshangwe, who preached from Matthew 25:14-30. The chapter recounted the parable of the faithful servants who multiplied the talents given to them by their Master, save one who was admonished. It illustrated the call to the Church to always be fruitful in carrying out God's mission.

Rising to Life in a Post-Pandemic World

Following Rev. Neshangwe, CWM General Secretary, Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum, delivered his report that illustrated the various CWM activities between June and October 2023.

Rev. Dr Keum opened his report with an observation

that a beleaguered post-pandemic world is once again besieged by a growing number of military conflicts and a radically reshaped new world order. He pointed out that the latest slew of armed crises wrought by global empires have threatened to destabilise communities and further exploit and oppress marginalised communities to the benefit of a few.

In the face of global fear and fury, Rev. Dr Keum drew the Board's attention to a yearning of apocalyptic faith that cries to God to meet and answer a world embroiled in deep crisis. He emphasized the point that the upcoming CWM Assembly 2024 must be a kairotic moment not only for CWM, but also for its member churches and ecumenical partners.

“We need to make our assembly a kairotic moment of the re-envisioning of the missional movement so that we can transform the current crisis into an opportunity for a movement to ‘Rise to Life’ together!” said Rev. Dr Keum.

Subsequently, Rev. Dr Keum also detailed various other key CWM events and programmes such as the global launch of the Transformative Ecumenism (TE)



movement in Kenya, the re-launching of the Training-in-Mission (TIM) programme that was cancelled during the pandemic, and the global consultation on Interfaith Eco-spiritualities held in UK last month.

He also highlighted the CWM Partners in Mission (PIM) Global Gathering that was held in September. The gathering was brought forward from its planned meeting in 2026.

Organised in Georgetown, Guyana and hosted by the Guyana Congregational Union (GCU), the meeting brought together 18 mission partners for a week of spiritual encouragement, renewal, and recharge.

The APG Report on the CWM Assembly 2024

In lieu of the upcoming CWM Assembly that will be held in Durban from 12-19 June 2024, the Assembly Planning Group (APG) delivered a report to the Board that highlighted various approved logistical arrangements such as event venue, logo, and working groups.

The APG unveiled the sub-themes of the Assembly that will support the main theme of "Rise to Life: Together in Transformation". They are "Transforming Power", "Revisioning Mission", and "Building Life-Flourishing Communities". The sub-themes will help to structure the daily Assembly sessions and messages.

Board Approval and Endorsement

The Directors approved an updated MOU with the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) for the period of 2024-2025, following the conclusion of the previous MOU for the period 2019-2023. The MOU reaffirmed CWM's commitment to support the WCRC's justice work from January 2024 to December 2025.

Meanwhile, the CWM Statement on "CWM Demands Immediate Ceasefire in Palestine, Restoring Peace with Justice" received endorsement from the Board.

Closing

Elder Lim Kar Hor, Director of East Asia, closed the meeting with a prayer thanking God for the fruitful meeting. The next Board Meeting will be hosted by the United Church in the Solomon Islands, and will take place from 25-28 February 2024, in Honiara, Solomon Islands.

CWM Member Churches General Secretaries' Conference

Opened Under the Theme -
"Rise to Life: Together in Transformation"



The CWM Member Churches General Secretaries' Conference opened on 4 October in Singapore under the theme "Rise to Life: Together in Transformation."

The conference brings together general secretaries of CWM member churches from around the world for fellowship, learning, and discernment.

In his opening address, Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum, CWM General Secretary, said that the conference is an opportunity for "all of us to connect with one another, to develop friendships, to foster partnerships, and to

engage ourselves in productive conversations." He added that it is also an opportunity for "us to involve ourselves in a discernment process by sharing our common wisdom, experiences, and contextual knowledge to find better ways to implement CWM projects in partnership with the member churches."

The keynote address was delivered by Prof. Kenneth R. Ross, who spoke about the need for transformation in the world today. "As we survey our contemporary reality, it seems that the stench of death meets us on all sides," he said. "For God is a God of life; and death is overcome by resurrection."

Prof. Ross noted that "if ever there was a time when the world was crying out for transformation, it must be now!"

"We need to be together in transformation," he said. "One thing we have discovered through our involvement in mission is that it is the relational quality of human life that enables us to flourish."

The conference, scheduled to continue until 6 October, will feature in-depth discussions on several key topics, including The Onesimus Project (TOP), CWM Assembly 2024, and the New Programmatic Structure (NPS).



New Onesimus Guide Will Help Churches Access Funds to Address Injustice



The Council for World Mission (CWM) has published a new “The Onesimus Project: Guidelines to Access Different Funds” to help member churches access three different types of funds. The booklet was launched on 4 October at the CWM Member Churches General Secretaries’ Conference.

The Onesimus Project seeks to address the roots of racialised inequalities and injustices within the CWM family of churches and the wider world.

The three funds described in the guide are the Reparatory Justice Fund, Healing of Memories Fund, and Modern Day Slavery Fund.

For each of the three funds, the guide outlines a description, aim, and guidelines on how to access.

Another section of the publication offers guidelines for writing proposals, including a detailed suggested outline.

Member churches are asked send project proposals with a cover letter from the general secretary of the church to CWM 90 days prior to the board meeting. CWM management will process proposals and submit them to the board for approval.

The Onesimus project is named after an enslaved member of Philemon’s household, who as the guide’s introduction says, “offers us a Biblical perspective on the issues of enslavement, release, confession, agency, and discipleship that poignantly speaks to the human tragedy experienced in the transatlantic slave trade and which continues to mutate into complex forms of modern-day enslavement.”

School of Intersectional Ecotheology and Ecojustice Witness

Inspires Young Environmental Advocates



The School of Intersectional Ecotheology and Ecojustice Witness (SIEEW) convened on 24 September through 13 October, bringing passionate discussions, local immersive experiences, and a budding network of young environmental advocates.

Drawing 22 participants from Council for World Mission (CWM) member churches and the All Africa Conference of Churches, the school was held both online and in-person in Lusaka, Zambia.

The school has been developed to address the critical issue of climate justice by equipping young people with the knowledge and skills to champion climate justice in their churches and communities.





Fostering a new generation of environmental advocates, the school recognizes the urgent need to address climate change and its impact on the most vulnerable communities

A key aspect of the programme is an immersive experience within local communities founded on the philosophy that lasting change requires firsthand experience and empathy with those affected.

Rev. Daimon Mkandawire, CWM Mission Secretary for Ecology and Economy, said that the School of Intersectional Ecotheology and Ecojustice Witness marks a momentous occasion for CWM. “It’s a manifestation of our commitment to addressing climate justice and empowering the youth to be catalysts of change,” he said. “We firmly believe that the future of our planet rests on educating and inspiring our youth.”

One young participant said the time spent in local communities was an eye-opener. “It’s one thing to study climate justice academically, but to witness its real-world impact is transformative,” she said. “I’m leaving with a renewed sense of purpose and a deep connection to the communities we aim to serve.”

The young people collectively reported that they left the school with the ultimate goal of making a tangible impact on climate justice, both in their churches and the wider community. “This is just the beginning of a movement that will continue to gather momentum and contribute to a brighter and more sustainable future,” the group reported.



18TH OCTOBER, 2023

CWM Demands Immediate Ceasefire in Palestine

Restoring Peace with Justice



The Council for World Mission (CWM) condemns, in the strongest terms, Israel's atrocious siege of occupied Palestine that has been uprooting, displacing, and killing innocent civilians and destroying their homes. While the Hamas militants' acts of violence against Israeli civilians in kidnapping and killing are inhumane, Israel's egregious siege of Palestine, in particular of the people of Gaza, is even more inhumane and must be condemned.

The Israeli military's evacuation order to relocate 1.1 million people is disastrous, threatening the lives of innocent people. The unfolding humanitarian crisis is unprecedented due to the total blockade of central supplies like food, water, medicine, and electricity. The complete blockade of Gaza, wilfully leading innocent people to starvation and death, is a crime against humanity under international law. It is nothing but a genocide of an innocent population of over one million.

The current vicious cycle of violence indicates that the Israeli

government shows no respect for international law and no value for human life. It indicates that they are determined to wipe out the entire population of occupied Palestine.

The continued suffering of the people in Gaza, along with the loss of innocent lives, is a distressing humanitarian crisis that demands immediate attention from the international community. We are, therefore, compelled to raise our collective voices and demand the following:

- We call upon both Hamas and Israel for an immediate ceasefire and end to the violence. It is crucial for both Hamas and the Israeli government to unequivocally denounce any attempts at war, genocide, invasion, or the use of violence as a means to resolve this conflict.



- We demand Israel immediately stop the blockade and allow delivery and access to humanitarian aid. Ensuring access to food, clean water, medical care, and shelter is a moral imperative.
- We demand all parties adhere to international law, including the protection of civilians and their human rights. Israel must be held accountable by the global community for violating international law through the ongoing total siege.
- We demand the Israeli government stop their constant control, surveillance, and violence against innocent civilians in Palestine by upholding freedom, autonomy, and human dignity. Using digital media platforms to spread fabricated information and hatred of Palestine must stop.
- We call upon the nations for their shameless silence over the Israeli atrocities against innocent civilians. we expose and condemn the culpability of the USA and UK, the main drivers of the modern military empire, now joined by the EU, in continuously aiding and abetting the Israeli settler apartheid system.
- We join with all the voices across the globe in building peoples' power to thwart the imperialist designs in the Middle East, to stop the siege of Gaza and to put a total end to the occupation of Palestine.

"He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." (Isaiah 2:4 NRSV)

Global Christian Organizations Urge UN to Redefine

International Finance for Equity, Sustainability, and Peace



Representing over 600 million Christians in 120 countries, the Council for World Mission (CWM) and four other global Christian organizations have called for a New International Financial and Economic Architecture (NIFEA) that fosters equity, sustainability, and peace.

In a letter to the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), the Council for World Mission, World Council of Churches, World Communion of Reformed Churches, Lutheran World Federation, and World Methodist Council said that an inevitable part of NIFEA is the fair redistribution of wealth and social protection, as a matter of justice and human rights.

The organizations welcomed and applauded the UNGA's inclusion of an agenda on the promotion of inclusive and effective international cooperation on tax matters. They said that through the Zacchaeus Tax (ZacTax) campaign, they have long been calling for the development of fairer and more transparent tax rules

under the aegis of the UN where there is broad participation of all countries.

The organizations called on the UNGA to consider their repeated calls under the ZacTax campaign for the enactment of progressive wealth taxes, financial transaction taxes, and carbon and pollution taxes.

"We pray that you will place impoverished communities, the common good, and our only planetary home at the centre of the UNGA discussions, and that the outcomes of the UNGA will contribute towards global reparation, restoration, and resiliency in a time of polycrisis," the letter concludes.

Partners in Mission 2023 Global Gathering

Brings Renewal, Reconnection



The CWM Partners in Mission (PIM) Global Gathering, held in Guyana last month, was a week of renewal, refreshment, and reconnection for the 18 mission partners who attended. The theme of the gathering was “Together as Mission Partners.”

The gathering provided an opportunity for mission partners to connect face-to-face, share their mission stories, learn from each other, and receive support and encouragement.

Key highlights of the event included the official launch of the PIM Training Handbook 2023, designed to help mission partners understand CWM, the PIM program, and the call to service in the mission.

The event also provided a platform for mission partners to share their personal experiences and encounters. In the PIM Clinic, participants engaged in one-on-one conversations with PIM staff to address various aspects of their service, including job scopes, training, finance, and program administration.

In her welcome address, Rev. Julie Sim, Mission Secretary for Mission Programme & Partnership, East Asia, and South Asia, stated that no CWM member church is too big to receive a mission partner and none is too small to send a mission partner. She encouraged the serving PIMs to “not run away from challenges but run over them!”

The gathering concluded with a closing worship service and Holy Communion, where the mission partners rededicated themselves to their service and enhanced their connectedness to each other.



Training in Mission: Young Graduates Show Persistence— and Willingness to Challenge the Church



Eight students from the latest class of the CWM Training in Mission (TIM) programme in Fiji and Jamaica celebrated their graduation on 23 November. The ceremony, held at the Webster Memorial Church in Jamaica, was the most recent in the series of TIM courses that have been nurturing the scope of the church's public witness for the last 40 years.

The TIM curriculum—which has evolved over the past four decades—aims to empower a new generation of leaders with practical and radical understanding of what means to be leaders in mission—locally, regionally, and globally.

The course, which spans about six months, was hosted this year by the International University of Caribbean in Kingston, Jamaica. The students, ages 18-30, are single, and not yet ordained. As they graduated, they reported that they feel equipped with applied leadership skills in mission and education that will enhance their employment and voluntary opportunities.

The current TIM programme is the culmination of decades of updating the curriculum to assure it's relevant to modern mission.

TIM also equips CWM member churches with individuals who can lead a wide range of Christian mission roles, and help bring about life-flourishing communities locally and beyond.

"Our actions matter"

Dr Sudipta Singh, CWM Deputy General Secretary,

Programmes, addressed the graduates, exhorting them to rise to the challenge as witnesses and missionaries sent into a world that is rife with compromise and complicity.

"The ecumenical movement was created by young people... [and] we need young people who love the church so much that they will quarrel with it and challenge it to stand up to be counted amongst those who will not settle for mortgaging the future. We need young people who believe that our opinion, our voices, our actions matter when it comes to building life-transforming communities," said Sudipta, "and I dare to suggest that we have those young people here today!"

"My mother was right"

Graduating from TIM was especially significant to Siphmandla Fayaka. From the United Presbyterian Church in South Africa, Fayaka is the first in his family to graduate from a tertiary education programme. Fayaka, who purchased his graduation robes as a keepsake, dedicated his success to his mother.

"Indeed, my mother was right when she told me that a persistent person [will] never meet unfortunate circumstances," he said. "This achievement is not only for me, but for my family... and all those who come from the marginal lines of society. This programme proves that, despite our disadvantageous backgrounds, we can still do well if we put in the hard work."

CWM Assembly 2024 LOC Meets in Durban

to Discuss Assembly Preparations



The Local Organising Committee (LOC) for the Council for World Mission (CWM) Assembly 2024 met on Thursday 16 November in Durban, South Africa, to discuss a number of important issues related to the upcoming Assembly.

The LOC is chaired by UCCSA General Secretary, Rev. Kudzani Ndebele, UPSCA General Secretary, Rev. Lungile Mpesheni as secretary, and includes representatives from UCCSA and UPSCA.

During the meeting, the LOC discussed travel arrangements for delegates, security measures, meals and catering, health services, spiritual life and worship arrangements, and the Assembly programme. "We will work hard to ensure that all aspects of the

Assembly are well organised and that participants have a safe, enjoyable and spiritually enriching experience," said Rev. Ndebele.

CWM Assembly 2024 will be held in Durban from 12-19 June 2024.

LOC MEMBERS:

Rev. Kudzani Ndebele: General Secretary of UCCSA, Chairperson
 Rev. Lungile Mpesheni: General Secretary of UPSCA, Secretary
 Ms. Patience Zimbili Sibisi: CWM Assembly Coordinator
 Rev. Mthobisi Wellington Sibanda: LOC Convenor & Assembly Communications Working Group Member
 Rev. Michelle Black: LOC Communications Member
 Rev. Thandi Mwelase: Spiritual Life and Worship Group Member
 Rev. Thabani Masikane: Spiritual Life and Worship Group Member
 Mr. Theophilus Doc Nasshengo: Protocol and Transport
 Mr. Aaron Nhlathi: Protocol and Transport
 Mrs. Ningi Ngcobo: Culture and Emersion Visit Member
 Dr Mkhonzeni Gumede: Culture and Emersion Visit Member
 Rev. Betram Swartz: Johannesburg Travel Logistics and Protocol
 Rev. Sandile Dlamini: Safety and Security
 Mrs. Valmai Du Toit: Administration and Logistics
 Mrs. Natalie Baldwin: Administration and Logistics
 Rev. Sandile Sokhela: Protocol Member for King of the Zulu Nation



CWM Assembly 2024 Logo Unveiled



The CWM Assembly Planning Group (APG) has approved the Assembly logo for the CWM Assembly, which will be held in Durban, South Africa, from 12-19 June 2024.

The Assembly logo embodies the theme “Rise to life: Together in Transformation.” The baobab tree at the centre is an iconic ‘tree of life’ of the African continent. It also symbolises the creation at the heart of mission and spirituality reconnecting humanity and creation.

Around this symbolic tree, people from diverse backgrounds join hands,

signifying just and inclusive communities that are called to rise together towards life-flourishing communities.

The traditional Zulu patterns at the bottom symbolise the vibrant and diverse cultures in South Africa. The background of the logo is a rising sun, representing rising to life and Africa as a continent of the fullness of hope and the centre of gravity of world Christianity.

The Assembly meets every four years. However, the 2020 Assembly was not able to convene due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

CWM Assembly Host Churches

Organize Joint Worship to Foster Unity



The United Congregational Church of Southern Africa (UCCSA) and the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (UPCSA) organized a Ministers Joint Worship in preparation for the upcoming Council for World Mission (CWM) Assembly to be held in Durban, South Africa, in 2024. The event, held in KwaZulu Natal on 31 October, brought together ministers and Local Organizing Committee members from both denominations to foster unity, collaboration, and spiritual preparation for the Assembly.

The joint worship service was a significant milestone in the journey towards the CWM Assembly, providing an opportunity for ministers to come together, share their experiences, and engage in collective worship. The event emphasized the importance of unity among Christians and highlighted the common mission and purpose shared by the UCCSA and UPCSAs.

By hosting a joint worship service on Reformation Day, the UCCSA and the UPCSAs emphasized their shared commitment to the principles and values of the Reformation. These principles include the authority of Scripture, salvation by grace through faith, the priesthood of all believers, and the importance of individual and corporate worship. The act of worship on this day served as a reminder of the historical significance of the Reformation and its ongoing relevance for the participating churches.

Rev. Thandi Mwelase, who also serves in the Spiritual Life Working Group, was the liturgist. The

worship service included prayers, hymns, and sermons delivered by Rev. Mthethwa, former Moderator of the UPCSAs. The preacher used the Book of Jeremiah, Chapter 1, to reflect on the word of the Lord. Rev. Ian Booth, Rev. Mthokozisi Hlela and Intern Minister Miss Sharon Shabalala led intercessory prayers for the Assembly.

Rev. Wellington Mthobisi Sibanda (UCCSA Communications and part of the Communications Assembly Working Group) offered a history and introduction to CWM. Assembly Coordinator Miss Zimbili Sibisi gave an update on the CWM Assembly, the theme and the Assembly logo. The event also served as a platform for ministers to discuss the logistical and organizational aspects of the upcoming CWM Assembly.

Rev Thabani Masikane led the second part of the event. Participants had the opportunity to exchange ideas, discuss challenges, and plan for the involvement of their congregations in the Assembly.

As the UCCSA and UPCSAs continue their preparations for the CWM Assembly, this Ministers Joint Worship event laid a solid foundation for collaboration and cooperation between the two denominations. It reinforced their commitment to working together towards the shared goals of the Assembly and deepening their relationships as brothers and sisters in Christ.

Article by Rev. Wellington Mthobisi Sibanda
(UCCSA Director of Communications)



Council for World Mission Ltd.

114 Lavender Street
#12-01, CT Hub 2
Singapore 338729

T: (65) 6887 3400
F: (65) 6235 7760
E: council@cwmission.org
W: www.cwmission.org

Company Limited by Guarantee
Registered in Singapore
Unique Entity Number 2012061 46Z

Copyright © 2023 Council for World Mission Ltd. All Rights Reserved.
Content may not be reproduced, downloaded, disseminated, published,
or transferred in any form or by any means, except with the prior written
permission of Council for World Mission Ltd.