

MERCY GLOBAL ACTION NEWSLETTER

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GREETINGS FROM THE MERCY GLOBAL ACTION OFFICE!

This year one of the core focuses of MGA will be on homelessness. During 10-19 February, 2020, the 58th session of the United Nations Commission for Social Development (CSocD) will meet to address "Affordable housing and social protection systems for all to address homelessness". This is very significant, as homelessness has never been a priority theme at any of the United Nations Commissions. The Mercy Global Action Office along with other NGO's and allies, will be advocating for housing to be recognised as a human right. Along with other issues, we will argue that affordable housing must be on country agendas. Throughout the Mercy World many sisters and associates minister to those rendered homeless, especially women and children.

MIA through the Mercy International Reflection Process (MIRP), identified homelessness as a key issue of concern for the Mercy World. MGA will co-sponsor numerous side events at this gathering and hopes to have the opportunity to deliver an oral statement on housing to this UN Commission. Further information about the oral statement can be found later in this publication. Throughout 2020, the MGA Office will feature resources, information and actions to help all of us act to prevent and ultimately, eliminate homelessness.





THEMATIC AREAS

DEGRADATION OF EARTH

- *Mercy Global Action Addressing Links Between Homelessness and Extractivism*

MGA, along with partner organisations, will deliver an oral statement on homelessness and the link to extractivism to the UN 2020 Commission for Social Development. In this statement, MGA affirms the intentionally inclusive and universally applicable definition of homelessness proposed by the UN Expert Working Group in Nairobi. The Expert Working Group defined homelessness as “a condition where a person or household lacks habitable space with security of tenure, rights and ability to enjoy social relations, including safety. Homelessness is a manifestation of extreme poverty and a failure of multiple systems and human rights.”

Today, in the absence of a globally applicable definition, very little data exists on people experiencing homelessness and the causes of this crisis. Without data, it is difficult to engage United Nations Member States and call upon international law because there is a lack of effective tools needed to measure and track homelessness. Establishing a universal definition for homelessness is imperative, as it will promote effective research internationally and provide the framework appropriate for holding States accountable for human rights obligations.

MGA’s statement highlights one particular cause of homelessness: the link between extractive industries and homelessness. Extractivism is a key contributor to the destruction of land and communities as well as pollution that drives people away and destroys their livelihoods. This link can often be an overlooked factor in violations of the human right to adequate housing. Mining and other extractive industries, such as oil and gas drilling, pipelines, large scale corporate agriculture, lumber, dams, and more can contribute to homelessness. Many businesses often operate internationally and evade legal ramifications and taxes that could support and restore communities and homes.

In our oral statement, we call upon Members States to address homelessness in four ways:

- Adopt the universal and inclusive definition of homelessness proposed by the Expert Working Group.
- Implement and design policies that ensure the meaningful engagement of local communities including: free, prior, and informed consent of indigenous peoples, due diligence on human rights- including the right to housing- especially regarding the impact of extractive industries.
- Implement social protections, including floors to ensure no one is left behind.
- Hold corporations accountable for the damage they cause and require appropriate remediation to rebuild vibrant communities.

Mercy Global Action will continue to shift the housing paradigm from one where housing is viewed as a commodity towards accepting housing as a human right and holding both States and extractive industries accountable for degradation and displacement.



THEMATIC AREAS

DISPLACEMENT OF PERSONS

- *Hate Speech: Holocaust Era Antisemitism Parallels Current Discrimination Crisis*

The year 2020 “marks the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, the ending of the Second World War, and the ending of the Holocaust.” On January 27th, the United Nations hosted its annual memorial on the International Day for the Remembrance of the Holocaust. The theme for the memorial this year was “75 years after Auschwitz - Holocaust Education and Remembrance for Global Justice” gathering survivors to share their stories and, with ambassadors and experts, implore people to remember the lessons of the Holocaust so we can truly say, “never again.”

Opening the memorial ceremony, António Guterres, Secretary General of the United Nations, highlighted the importance of standing together against hate in our world today. He pointed to the recent rise of antisemitism, xenophobia, homophobia, and discrimination (of migrants, minorities, races, and sexual orientation) as warning signs. The same signs preceded the Holocaust, which Guterres stated began with social exclusion, not unlike the current political climate of our world.

There were various events throughout the week with similar warnings. At the Civil Society Briefing, “Hate Speech, Holocaust Denial and Distortion,” the historian Dr. Rozet also drew parallels between the atrocities of the Holocaust and present-day attitudes regarding diversity and migration. In our remembrance of the Holocaust, we highlight the stories of

resistance and rescuers while we diminish the complicity and cooperation of citizens and police. “Stories of individuals who bravely stood up for, and hid, Jewish neighbors are presented in museums as mainstream sentiment,” stated Dr. Rozet. However, this was not frequently the case during WWII and, in forgetting this, we lose an important lesson that can illuminate our current work towards an inclusive society. As antisemitism makes a resurgence the connection between WWII era discrimination and current sentiments around issues of race, immigration status, and more are painfully apparent. Tad Stahnke, director of the Holocaust Memorial Museum, pointed to the political turmoil surrounding migration, Islamophobia, and xenophobia across the globe as proof that people are forgetting the horrors of WWII. “Never again means teaching history again and again,” says Stahnke. Unlike the struggles of our past, technology, especially social media, can complicate our fight against hate. Now, it is far easier for individuals to share discriminatory attitudes and gather digitally both online and on the dark web.



From the United Nations Exhibition on 'Onlookers'

• *Hate Speech, Continued*

The campaign of propaganda coupled with the indifference of onlookers was a key factor that allowed the Holocaust to take place. The complicit action and silence of onlookers was the theme of the exhibit, “Some Were Neighbors,” that was launched in honor of the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. The exhibit examined the records of programs against Jews during WWII in various regions of Europe to show how the indifference of ordinary people enabled genocide. Antisemitism played a large part in the silence of onlookers, but greed, career advancement, and peer pressure were also important factors. To prevent another atrocity like the Holocaust, we must put values in our society that promote action and undermine indifference. Cherith Norman, Acting Deputy Ambassador for the United States, closed her speech at the art exhibit by reminding all gathered there that “silence speaks volumes.” As we continue our struggle to protect inclusion, and mercy, the lessons of the past can guide our words and our actions.

For the Mercy World, it is more important than ever to not be onlookers. We must contrast the growing attitudes of indifference and hate with the accounts and experiences of people who lived through WWII and the Holocaust. This will be one way to combat the growth of exclusion and hate. We are the last generation who will hear the firsthand account of survivors. Firsthand accounts and evidence saved at the end of WWII will continue to be foundational for the education that is as relevant today as it has been for the past seventy-five years. Education is key to preventing discrimination and hate but must also go beyond accurate historical facts and include compassion and human dignity. This is Mercy; and this is Mercy Global Justice. Without these heroic human values, education alone will not prevent future generations from repeating history. In January 2020, the Mercy Global Action Fellows were privileged to hear Sr Mary O'Sullivan RSM speak about her experience of being in ministry at Auschwitz. It was a very challenging and moving webinar.

ASPIRE

We will be watching for signs of genocide in our time. And we will always be ever at the forefront of the fight against antisemitism and hatred, and to strengthen all we do to uphold human dignity for all.

— António Guterres
United Nations Secretary-General



From the United Nations Exhibition on 'Onlookers'

At the United Nations

THROUGH OUR ECOSOC EYES...

- *Hopes for Restoring Ocean Health*

Mercy Global Action attended the Preparatory Meeting for the second UN Ocean Conference held on February 4th and 5th 2020. This two-day meeting was a time for United Nations Member States and stakeholders to gather and discuss the goals and concerns most in need of a global focus at the upcoming Ocean Conference, which will be held this June in Lisbon Portugal. Issues including plastics, economics, and ocean management emerged during the meeting, and will continue to be influential elements in upcoming deliberations.



The Secretary General named eight 'dialogues' that will be the center of the upcoming Ocean Conference: Pollution, conserving biodiversity, minimizing ocean acidification, making fisheries sustainable, promoting sustainable ocean economies, scientific advancement, enhancing conservation and sustainable use through international law, and leveraging the inter-linkage between Goal 14 (life below water) and other Sustainable Development Goals. It is in the hopes that naming these specific challenges looming over the health and survival of our oceans, that fruitful conversations and actions will emerge from the Ocean Conference in June.

The human impact on the ocean has already caused a great deal of damage, and the need for restoration projects is apparent. The ocean, our life support system, is intrinsically linked with social justice and economics around the world and we rely on it in a variety of ways. Many coastal communities and countries, including those around the Mercy World, depend on the resources of the ocean for their livelihoods and for food. Dependency upon the ocean is as true for coastal communities as it is for major world economies. Economically, countless jobs from fishing to tourism depend on healthy oceans. Ecologically, we need a healthy ocean to slow global warming; and the ocean provides about half of the world's oxygen. Without healthy oceans, it is hard to see how humans could continue meeting our basic needs; yet, oceans remain a dumping ground for trash and sewage, and suffers from the effects of climate change (deoxygenation, acidification, and biodiversity loss).

No real action can take place without a fundamental cultural shift. Our culture must move towards one concerned for the health of our oceans and climate change, and demand the necessary changes from industries and governments around the world.

Mercy Global Action, Mercy International Association has signed onto the 'RISE UP -Blue Call to Action'; a joint call by civil society, fisherfolk, Indigenous peoples and philanthropic organisations, calling upon governments and corporations to raise ambition and create bold actions to safeguard the ocean.



Read the call to action [here!](#)

REFLECTIONS ON THE MERCY GLOBAL ACTION EMERGING LEADERS FELLOWSHIP (MELF)

BY TYLIA BARNES (MELF 2019-2020)

As a little girl, I never imagined becoming a part of a program like the Mercy Emerging Leaders Fellowship. My life was full of oppression racially, systemically and socially. That environment created doubt and uncertainty about who I could grow up and become as a black woman in our world. Luckily for me, I had a mother, though not educated, instill in me a phrase that kept me in the race to be my best self. She always told me, “Go for great”! My Mom fostered a spirit to do and be more than what the world expected of me.



When the fellowship opportunity came to my attention, I was intimidated by the requirements for application. With encouragement from loved ones and colleagues, I decided to “Go for great” and was accepted as a member of the program. Thus far, the experience has been nothing short of amazing. MELF has cultivated my confidence in ways that are life changing. It provides educational resources that empower me to lead amongst leaders. MELF cultivates the heart of Mercy charism by affirming and encouraging female leadership. As we ponder who Mercy is to our suffering world, this platform offers many possibilities for the charism to broaden Christ love through out the world.

Today, because of this program, I partner with nine brilliant women from around the world who want to champion for justice through a lens of Mercy. After meeting them in Siam Reap, Cambodia, I knew that these women would become lifelong friends and professional collaborators. International immersion is a teacher that can’t be learned through books or documentaries. Being with and hearing the stories of the people of Cambodia was the best instructor of the generational impact of oppression. It was my first-time understanding oppression systemically from an international perspective. The immersion also helped me dig deeper for greater understanding of how to be an agent of change with a broader world view. As a spoiled American, I saw world affairs through a singular lens. Being engrossed in this program has created a desire to learn more about world view perspectives and how they connect with local realities.

Believe it or not, my experience thus far is only 1/3 of the fellowship offering. Next month, participants are preparing to spend two weeks in New York to attend the United Nations 2020 Commission on the Status of Women. I have a feeling that being surrounded by 9,000 women at the conference will cultivate my confidence, establish more connections and promulgate grassroots justice engagement.

This opportunity has been a blessing in my life, upholding my desire to be more than society expected of me by extending my sphere of influence as a young woman in Mercy.



“USEFUL RESOURCES

Faith Climate Action Toolkit

Faith Climate Action Week

Order a Kit!

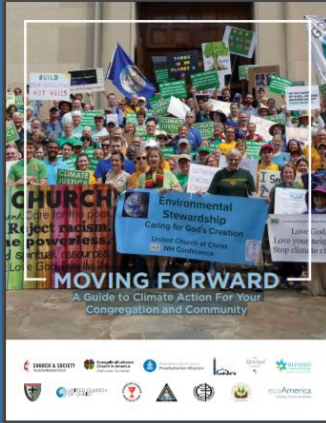
April 17 - 26, 2020

UN Ocean Action Website




MOVING FORWARD

A Guide to Climate Action For Your
Congregation and Community



Day of Prayer and Awareness against
Human Trafficking

 The International Day of Prayer and
Awareness Against Human Trafficking
A light against Trafficking



UPCOMING EVENTS AND INTERNATIONAL DAYS

- 10-19 February - Commission on Social Development
- 11 February - MGA Co-Sponsored Event "The Hidden Faces of Family Homelessness" with Former President of Ireland Mary McAleese
- 11 February - International Day of Women and Girls in Science
- 20 February - World Day of Social Justice
- 21 February - International Mother Language Day
- 1 March - Zero Discrimination Day
- 3 March - World Wildlife Day

Mercy International Association (MIA) maintains a comprehensive and up to date website and produces an informative weekly e-newsletter (MercyNews).

Visit our website to discover more about MIA and our global activities: www.mercyworld.org

Subscribe to our e-newsletter to learn about our vision in action and the ministries carried out by our member congregations: www.mercyworld.org/subscribe