



A R O U N D Africa

End of Year 2014

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Enjoy this year-end Around Africa Newsletter with a few of AFJN's many activities.

Please consider **including AFJN in your holiday giving with a \$50 membership**, or a donation of another amount either through our website www.afjn.org or mailed to our office:

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Washington, DC 20017

Thank you!



Fall 2014 AFJN office Team, born and raised in seven different countries

We have been especially blessed this year at the Africa Faith & Justice Network with many exciting activities like never before.

With your prayers and generous support we look forward to even more exciting activities in 2015.

Thank you for reaching out to our African sisters and brothers through the ministry of AFJN.

Merry Christmas!

May God shower abundant blessings on you in the coming year.

From the Team at AFJN Office

AFJN CHAPTER ESTABLISHED IN GHANA

From October 8-10, 2014, AFJN began its Empowerment Project with a high profile-three day residential workshop in the Archdiocese of Accra. 64 young people, representing of Catholic Professionals - Lawyers Guild, Health Professionals, Association of Social Scientists, Media Practitioners, participated in the workshop. Focused on “Catholic



Social Teaching, advocacy and community empowerment for just governance,” the workshop, made possible by grants from the Raskob Foundation, Catholic University’s Institute for Policy Research (IPR), and Be the Change, was co-sponsored by the *Archdiocesan Office for Justice and Peace and Development Commission*, the *Business and Faith Development Centre (BFDC)* of the Catholic Institute of Business and Technology (CIBT), Accra, *The National Catholic Secretariat of the Ghana Bishops Conference*, and the *Symposium of the Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM)*. A final communiqué, “*The Abokobi Resolution*” was issued and the first ever AFJN Chapter on the continent was established.

Have You Read AFJN’s Report on Land Grabbing in Ghana?



The right-wing chief of the Brewaniase Area at AFJN’s community meeting

AFJN traveled to the Volta Region of Ghana August 21-Septmeber 7, 2014, to investigate a potential land grab as part of our campaign to expose, and prevent the ongoing massive land grabbing in Africa, please visit our website to *learn more about a potential land grab deal by Herakles Farms (HF)*, a New York based agribusiness. HF has a history of corruption, bribery of government and local officials, intimidation of landowners, violence and legal action against local activists and community organizers who oppose its land grabbing efforts. Such was the case in Southwest Cameroon.

Our contacts informed us that HF had acquired a large tract of land in the Volta Region of Ghana. Less than a year ago the property was sold to a British company, Volta Red. What we found out confirmed our hypothesis and more. Land grabs large and small threaten Africa and must be stopped and reversed before it is too late. *This story from Brewaniase, a town in Ghana’s Volta Region, is a warning to landowners in Af-*

rica and irresponsible African leaders who are carelessly mortgaging future generations’ inheritance during this global rush for land in Africa. Visit our afjn.org website to read more!

Thanks to AFJN Organizational and Individual Members who make the daily administration of AFJN possible.

Special Thanks to the following whose generous grants supported AFJN's special projects in 2014:

Raskob Foundation for Catholic Activities, The Oblate Sharing Fund (OMI), Adorers of the Blood of Christ, Be the Change Foundation, The Missionaries of Africa, Institute for Policy Research (IPR-CUA)



Map of Burkina Faso in West Africa
Photo credit: tourist-destinations.com

The Citizens of Burkina Faso Impeached Their President

Shock waves are coming from Burkina Faso, a tiny landlocked country in West Africa. After his twenty seven years of dictatorial rule, President Blaise Compaoré attempted to forcefully amend the constitution to be president for life. A united front of opposition parties, civil society and human rights advocates staged a robust demonstration against the move. On November 30, close to 1 million people took to the streets and forced President Blaise Compaoré out of office on November 31, 2014. This victory under the sobriquet of “Black Spring” or “Yenenga Spring” has signaled the commencement of a wind of change in Sub-Saharan Africa. Who is next on the list? DR Congo, Burundi, Togo or Cameroon? Wait and see . . .



AFJN, General Board of Church and Society of the United Methodist Church, North Kivu Civil Society & DRC Government Representatives meeting with Grant Harris, (center left) Senior Director for African Affairs, at the White House

Advocating for the Democratic Republic of Congo

As AFJN continues its ongoing advocacy for the DRC we believe however that ultimately the solution to the challenges that face the DRC is the responsibility of the Congolese people. A close look at the situation identifies three looming threats to DRC’s stability. First, the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), a rebel group opposed to the Ugandan government but based in DRC where it has carried out mass killings. We recall that there have been previous incursions into the DRC under the pretext of “chasing” rebel groups. The second is the proposed and possible amendment of the constitution to enable the current president to run for a third term and more. Third, the need to rehabilitate former members of the Rwanda and Uganda supported rebel group M23 who, since their defeat by the Congolese army and UN peace keeping forces in November 2013, are living as free men in both countries with no process for redress. It is a known fact that injustice breeds violence.

Boko Haram in Nigeria a challenge to Current Regime

The Nigerian terrorist group, Boko Haram remains a serious to Nigerian security and beyond. In April 2014 Boko Haram abducted hundreds of school girls in Chibok, Nigeria. Also the group has carried out many more abductions on a smaller scale in the past. We unequivocally have called on Boko Haram stop the killings and to release unconditionally the people it kidnapped. Our public protest is one of many efforts we have taken to highlight the very fact that Boko Haram thrives in part due to corruption and the manipulation of religion, the lack of the rule of law and the impunity by politicians and law enforcement agency.

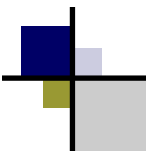


Fr. Aniedi Okure speaks to the press at a Bring Back Our Girls rally AFJN helped organize.

AFRICAN RELIGIOUS LEADERS HONORED AT SEARCH FOR COMMON GROUND AWARDS CEREMONY



On November 13, 2014, AFJN attended the 2014 Search for Common Ground Annual Awards ceremony for outstanding personalities or groups that make a difference in alleviating suffering, uplifting and promoting human dignity and building bridges across ethnic, racial and religious groups. This year, along with others, three religious leaders from the Central African Republic (CAR), Archbishop Dieudonné Nzapalainga of Bangui (second from left), Iman Oumar Kobine Layama (forth from right), and Rev. Nicolas Guérékoyamé-Gbangu, (third from left) were presented with the prestigious award for their tireless efforts to break the cycle of violence, promote religious co-existence and national reconciliation in the CAR. The Ambassador of CAR to the U.S., His Excellency Stanislas Moussa-Kembe (far left), was in attendance



THE DYER EVENT

On November 7, 2014 AFJN celebrated another evening looking at African issues through African eyes, featuring H. E. Liberata Rutageruka Mulamula, Ambassador of the United Republic of Tanzania to the United States. The event, held at *Busboys and Poets*, was well attended and the audience participated in discussion about the future of US-Africa (and Tanzania) policy in the wake of the US-Africa Leaders' Summit in August. *Thanks to the Xaverian Missionaries for sponsoring this event.*



Ambassador Mulamula, (left) takes questions from the audience.

CHALLENGES OF JUSTICE MINISTRY IN AFRICA

On October 28, AFJN welcomed Missionary of Africa Superior General, Very Reverend Richard Baawobr to deliver a lecture and engage participants on justice issues in Africa. With many members of the Catholic Task Force for Africa in attendance, Rev. Baawobr recalled the history of the Missionaries of Africa and their justice work, and called on present workers to strive farther. He further underlined one fundamental component of the Church's mission: namely, the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every kind of oppression. Justice ministry in Africa could be summarized in these three words: accompaniment, service and advocacy.



Missionary of Africa Superior General, Very Reverend Richard Baawobr, (right) makes a point during his presentation.

SELECTED GUESTS TO OUR AFJN OFFICE



Archbishop Michael Louis Fitzgerald, (center) a Missionary of Africa, previously the head of the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue, Nuncio Emeritus to Egypt and Papal Delegate to the Arab League was in the AFJN office on December 2, 2014. We discussed about ways we could benefit from his wealth of experience with Islam and the Islamic world especially at this critical time of international terrorism from sectarian Islamic groups.

His Grace Abune Berhaneyesus Souraphiel, (center) Metropolitan Archbishop of Addis-Ababa visited AFJN on October 12, 2013, and praised the staff for their commitment and contribution for better U.S policies toward Africa. He also informed the staff that SECAM bishops are taking a pro-active approach to the current changing politics on the continent. In addition, discussions are already underway for a possible observer seat for SECAM at the General Assembly of the African Union in Addis-Ababa.



Bishop Andrew Karneley (center) from Cape Palmas in Liberia, and the Secretary General (to the right of the Bishop) paid a courtesy visit to the AFJN staff on August 15, 2014. He discussed possible avenues of collaboration with AFJN, especially in the area of "Catholic Social Teaching, advocacy and community empowerment for just governance." He noted the shortcomings of the government and ways these feed into the scourge of Ebola in the country. AFJN shared with the prelate its experience of advocacy on Capitol Hill and the wider NGO world.



On February 27, 2014, **Tom Bamat**, (right) Senior Technical Advisor on Justice and Peacebuilding (CRS Headquarters Baltimore) and **Shamsia Ramadhani**, (center) Program Manager CRS Africa CIRCA program (Capacity for Inter-Religious Community Action) came to AFJN office to compare notes and explore possible ways to collaborate on a wide range of issues.



His Grace Archbishop Gabriel Abegurin of Ibadan (Nigeria) (second from right), Metropolitan bishop of Ibadan was an AFJN guest on August 19, 2014. Our exchange focused on the brutal killings orchestrated by Boko Haram in Northern Nigeria and on the Church's engagement on justice issues in Nigeria. On behalf of the AFJN family, our executive director Aniedi Okure expressed our deep sympathy to the families affected by the killings.



AFJN MEMBER'S MEETING

On November 8, 2014 AFJN welcomed its organizational and individual members to a Members' Meeting. In addition to a special presentation on AFJN's activities, the members approved changes to the organization's by-laws, and reviewed AFJN's finances.

After the Members' Meeting, the AFJN Board met and elected three new board members to the AFJN Board of Directors. We're thrilled to welcome Sr. Roberta Miller (Dominican Sisters of Peace), Sr. Maura Browne (Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur) and Fr. Charles Brown (Sacred Heart Fathers and Brothers).

FUTURE LEADERS: THANK YOU, 2014 AFJN INTERNS

**FALL
2014**



**SUMMER
2014**

Joseph Lyons (US)
and Nicole
Ngambwa (DRC)



The Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders 2014

Formerly known as the Young Africa Leadership Initiative (YALI), the Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders is an effort by the Obama administration to directly invest in Africa's future by empowering civil society. AFJN supports this effort to work with young Africans. The administration wants to give "young African leaders ...practical skills that can help them take their work to the next level in the fields of public service and business." AFJN wrote and spoke up during the briefings held at the White House and the Department of State about the need for the Obama administration to carry out due diligence to ensure companies financially supporting this initiative are not involved in corruption, land grabs or other human rights violations in Africa. The future of this initiative at the end of president Obama term in 2016 remains to be seen.

How Does Ebola Relate to Bad Governance and International Economic Justice?

The spread of the Ebola virus in West African nations of Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia must be a lesson to African leaders who engage in systemic theft of national resources and power instead of improving governance in the national interest. While we rejoice that some African nations have sent personnel, goods, and money to West Africa to help, this is not enough. After the accolades for sending assistance, what have they done to improve response systems for Ebola and other disasters in their home countries? It is also a tragedy that Africa is spending money on interest from old international debts (sometimes multiple times the initial principal) which could be spent on health care and infrastructure.

Yes, sometimes money in the government's hands isn't used properly. But what if African leaders and bureaucrats served the common good instead of depositing funds into private foreign accounts in the West? This is the basis of our newly launched Empowerment Project, which began with our pilot workshop in Ghana in October 2014 (see the top of page 2) to address problems at the root. It is imperative to include good governance in the narrative of the Ebola response in West Africa.



AFJN, in partnership with TASSC (Torture Abolition and Survivor Support Coalition), International and Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur Justice & Peace Office took to the DC streets in August 2014 to demand that governance and human rights be on U.S.-Africa Policy Agenda.

Presidential Term Limits in Africa Must be Respected

During the historic US- Africa summit held in Washington DC in August 2014, AFJN, in partnership with TASSC (Torture Abolition and Survivor Support Coalition), International and Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur Justice & Peace Office took to the streets to demand that governance and human rights be on U.S.-Africa Policy Agenda. We denounce torture, violation of presidential term limits, and the modification of the constitution to allow presidents to remain in power. We continue to call on all African leaders to respect the rule of law. People in nations where leaders remove presidential term limits from their constitution must demand its reinstatement and countries without constitutional term limits must claim them immediately.

Some of Africa's Self Perpetuating rulers

Teodoro Obiang Nguema of Equatorial Guinea, President since August 3, 1979

Jose Eduardo Dos Santos of Angola, President since September 1979

Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, President since February 1980

Paul Biya of Cameroon, President since November 1982

Yoweri Museveni of Uganda, President since January 1986

Omar Hassan al-Bashir of Sudan, President since June 1989

Idris Deby Itno of Chad, President since December 1990

Denis Sassou Nguesso of Congo, President since October 1997

Abdelaziz Boutefrika of Algeria, President since April 1999

Africa Faith & Justice Network, inspired by the Gospel and informed by Catholic Social Teaching, educates and advocates for just relations with Africa.

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Advocacy for justice and peace in Africa doesn't just happen. AFJN needs your help and participation! Thank you for your financial support.