

J/P Alert

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

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- *assists major superiors in their role as leaders;*
- *promotes dialogue and collaboration with the conference of bishops and other major groups in church and society;*
- *provides a corporate influence in church and society.*

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Few Fixes Found in Proposed Immigration Reform

Prior to his trip to Mexico President Bush announced a new immigration proposal that the Administration says is aimed at fixing a “broken” immigration policy. The proposed policy does nothing to address the major flaws of the immigration system that deny permanent status to undocumented immigrants or to address other major problem with in the system. The President’s primary reason for introducing this new proposal at this time is security on the U.S.-Mexico border. While it is presented as an immigration reform policy, it is little more than a temporary-worker program that offers little protection for immigrant workers. In his speech announcing the initiative, the President touched on a number of issues that immigration-reform and human rights organizations have been raising for many years, especially since September 11, 2001: deaths on the border, protection of workers’ rights, family reunification, inability of immigrants to attain legal status.

The White House proposal is a guest worker program. Workers who participate in the program may receive a three-year work visa. It is not clear if the visa is renewable. At the end of the life of the visa, those who participate will not have the option of applying for permanent residency. In fact, it appears that the only options people will have will be to return to their

home country or revert to an illegal status. What the program seems to be creating is a permanent underclass of workers, or a path to removal from the U.S.

The proposal is only about temporary workers. It may permit potentially millions to register for a temporary work permit. It won’t change the limited and already oversubscribed employment immigration categories. What this means is that participants in the program will not have a means to apply for permanent status at the program’s end.

While the White House claims it is offering a solution to our broken immigration system it fails update the immigration laws to accommodate the millions of workers who have been working in the U.S., contributing to our economy, and who desire to become fully and legally integrated into our society. It also fails to address the current border policies that force thousands of immigrants to cross the border at the most dangerous areas, risking their lives and leaving hundreds dead each year in the deserts of the border region.

The White House proposal does not address the backlogged family-based immigration categories that have cause family members to be separated for 5 to 10 years or longer. Immigrants and their family members who are separated because of our outdated immigration

system will remain separated or will be in the U.S. in illegal status.

There are many questions still unanswered, such as what happens to a worker's status if a job is terminated and what flexibility an individual will have to change jobs. CMSM will be working through the Border Working Group to address these and other issues and will be monitoring the legislation as it is being written and discussed. The *J/P Alert* will provide updates during the process. As a part of the Washington-based Border Working Group, CMSM will be part of a series of programs in Washington to discuss this and other immigration issues.

Guantanamo Bay Detainees face Uncertain Future

Detainees captured during the Afghanistan war have been held at Guantanamo Bay for two years without having seen lawyers, relatives, or to have access to any court. Human rights monitors have been allowed limited and restricted access. Discussion has started about the future of the detainees. If eventually released without being charged with any crime, some, according to human rights groups, may face further injustices: indefinite untried detention, torture or execution in their home country.

Many detainees in Guantanamo come from countries that the U.S. government has identified for serious human rights violations. There is concern that while some of the detainees will be able to return to their homes and attempt to rebuild their lives, others, because they have been labeled as terrorists or killers by the U.S. will face further detention and violation of their human rights in their home countries.

The ongoing detention of hundreds of individuals without charges and under threat of trial by military commissions violates the human rights of these individuals and does not meet acceptable international standards. Time has come to end the unlawful detentions and release the prisoners. However, those who face being returned to countries where they risk continued violations of their rights must be protected and the U.S. government, recognizing its responsibility for the current situation, must develop a plan to protect those individuals at risk so that no one is forcibly returned to a country where they would face serious human rights violations.

In January Human Rights Watch issued a report on the current situation of the detainees at Guantanamo and an analysis of legal situation and U.S. policy. A copy of the report is on their website at www.hrw.org.

Amnesty International suggests contacting the Administration and calling on the U.S. to release the detainees and to protect those who would be at risk if returned to their own countries. Letters can be sent to the President by email at president@whitehouse.gov. A letter regarding this on the CMSM website, www.cmsm.org.

CMSM JP Directors Gathering March 29-30

The second gathering of JP Directors will be held March 28 and 29 at the Washington Theological Union. This program, designed to bring JP Directors together for networking and to facilitate coordination between the national office and member institutes will be expanded this year to include representatives of partner organizations. The program will begin the evening of March 29 with a light dinner at WTU and followed by a panel presentation on Responses to the National Security Policy. The next day will be a meeting of JP Directors to discuss CMSM's national program and share information about JP programs in individual communities. More information will be available soon. The program is opened to all JP Directors, coordinators and representatives designated by the major superior. For more information contact Stan De Boe, OSST, JP Director at CMSM at sdeboe@cmsm.org or at 301-588-4030.

Ecumenical Advocacy Days for Global Peace with Justice: March 5-8, Washington, DC.

This is the second annual ecumenical gathering of organizations and individuals addressing urgent global issues. This year the program has been expanded to include Africa, Asia, Latin America, Middle East, Jubilee and Economic Justice, and Nuclear Disarmament. The event will offer challenging speakers, issue briefings, and advocacy training workshops. Comprehensive briefings will help prepare for effective visits with Senators and Representatives. There will also be time for networking and ecumenical worship. The U.S. national exhibition of the Interfaith AIDS Poster Campaign will take place during the Ecumenical Advocacy Days. For more information or to register see the website at

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