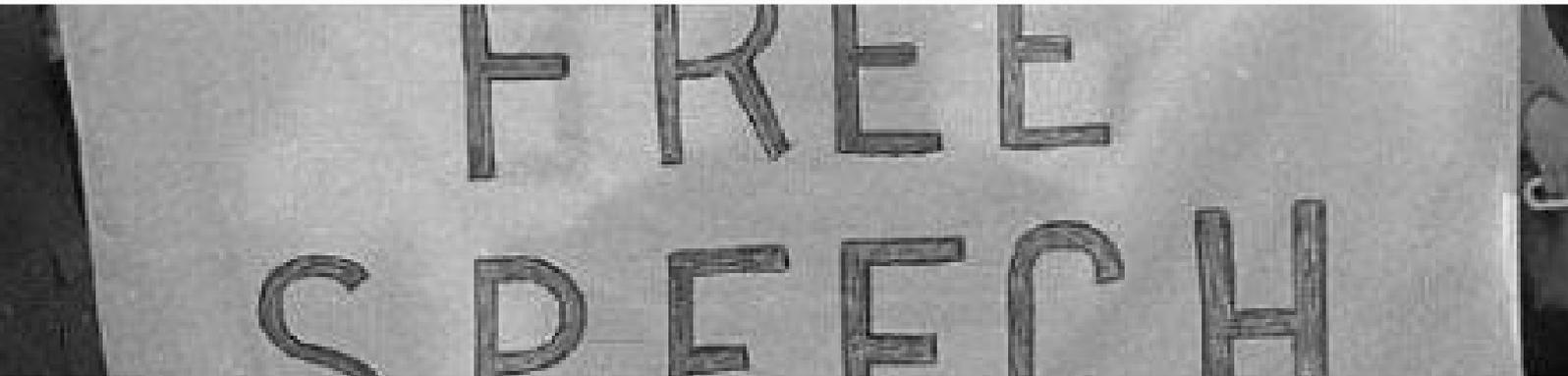


PAX CHRISTI AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

KIA TAU TE RANGIMARIE KI A TAATOU KATOAA/ WORKING FOR PEACE FOR ALL EVERYWHERE



Tēnā koutou katoa

In the last few weeks, within the New Zealand Media, the issue of freedom of speech has been debated. This has come from the action Auckland City Mayor, Phil Goff, took in preventing two well known far right speakers from using council venues as a platform for their political stance. The views of these particular people incite hatred of other and hatred leads to violence.

We cannot compare the views of these speakers, Lauren Southern and Stefan Molyneux, to well known figures who embody what freedom of speech represents namely Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela. Both these individuals stood up and spoke out about the injustices that their communities were receiving from the governments of the day. At no time, during their speeches did they incite or encourage hate of the other and violence.

As I write this, I remember my experiences in the Philippines at the end of last year, during the Pax Christi Asia Pacific Consultation. I remember the visit to the museum of martyrs killed during the Marcos regime...many examples of freedom of speech about injustice to their community but not once inciting violence.

The final word I leave to Moana Jackson:

“No one’s exercise of free speech should make another feel less free.”

THIS MONTH'S NEWS

FREEDOM OF SPEECH IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

NEW ZEALAND'S STRATEGIC DEFENCE POLICY

FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND AN INCREASE IN VIOLENCE IN NICARAGUA

Freedom of Speech in Aotearoa New Zealand

by Kevin McBride and Bridget Crisp rsm

A little over two months ago, issues surrounding freedom of speech as opposed to hate speech were dominating the media landscape following an Australian sports star making a homophobic slur.

Debate was raised as to what comprises hate speech, hate crime and freedom of speech.

New Zealand does not have hate crime laws. We have the Bill of Rights Act, the Human Rights Act and the Harmful Digital Communications Act. New Zealand upholds the right to freedom of speech, even when the speech is challenging and contentious. The problem lies with what happens as a result of speaking from a particular point of view...if the speech encourages listeners to acts of violence and aggression then the speech very quickly becomes a 'hate speech'.

Presently the Human Rights Act does not include within its statutes, coverage of sexual orientation and religion. The current Government has indicated a possible review of the Human Rights Act. It will be important to monitor this review to see what changes and additions are made to the Act. Pax Christi has always been passionate about Human Rights and the importance of upholding them.

Central to all Human Rights is human dignity.

Everyone has the right to freedom of speech, but at the same time we must remember to preserve human dignity. If the target of one's speech harms or demeans the dignity of another then Human Rights have been violated.

Within our social media platforms, we need to regularly hear and recognise the tensions surrounding freedom of speech. Such tensions and views help remind us of our responsibilities to own our actions and words as well as highlighting the injustices. Political views, on a global scale,

are currently raising tensions between many groups and we are seeing a rise in the violation of Human Rights. It thereby becomes more important to hold firm on positions and act to protect the rights of those people who's dignity has been violated.

Benedictine Sr Joan Chittister, writing in the National Catholic Reporter in 2016, reflected on the abuse of freedom of speech associated with that year's presidential campaign. "Where did we lose the idea that freedom of speech is the right to have our speech protected, no matter what our opinion might be? That does not, however, include the right to libel, slander, and now bully people into submission. It does not include a license to abuse someone — meaning to call names or threaten harm or talk or harass those who are different than we are." Going on, she puts the change in attitude down to a growing lack of compassion in our increasingly individualistic society, defining compassion as "the ability to really feel for the other, to care for the other as well as ourselves, to be different than others but never destructive of others." She quotes the Dalai Lama in support of her contention that caring for others is of critical importance in a caring society: "If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion." So, after all, the solution to hate speech lies with each of us: "...compassion here and now calls for us to quench this fire at its lowest level — on our comment boards, in our blogs, in our texts, in our chat rooms. To refuse to read them. To "unlike" all of them. Then, eventually, it can become unacceptable again to use that kind of language anywhere."

Rohingya Refugee Crisis... an update.

by *Bridget Crisp*

Nearly one million Rohingya refugees continue to live in camps, under constant threat of flash floods and landslides, in Southern Bangladesh.

The United Nations Human Rights Chief Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, in his final address as Chief, is urging the United Nations Security Council to refer Myanmar immediately to the International Criminal Court. The reasoning behind this is that regardless of the repatriation deal signed with Bangladesh earlier in the year no Rohingya refugee has returned under the formal framework, whereas others who have risked return have been detained.

Only in the last couple of days has the United Nations managed to get access to the Northern Rakhine province of Myanmar.

The United Nations continues to insist the voluntary "right of return" of the Rohingya to Myanmar but only when conditions are there for them to live in full dignity. To give some recognition and security to the Rohingya refugees, the office of the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees) and the Bangladesh Government have begun to issue highly secure identity cards to each refugee to give them added protection as well as recognition of their status. If the formal framework for repatriation is worked out in a way that respects the

rights and dignity of those who return then repatriation will become a success.

The situation continues to be volatile. Monsoon rains are soon due in the region, making living in these camps more precarious.

2018

David Wakim Lecture

A reminder that the annual David Wakim Lecture is coming up...The guest lecturer for 2018 is Deborah Manning.

Deborah is a well known lawyer and barrister in New Zealand, Deborah specialises in Human Rights, refugee and immigration law.

The lecture will be held at St Columba Centre, Ponsonby, Auckland on

Thursday 27th September...so mark your diaries!

New Zealand Strategic Defence Policy Statement 2018

by Bridget Crisp rsm

On Friday 6th July, the NZ Defence Minister, the Honourable Ron Mark released the New Zealand Strategic Defence Policy Statement 2018. The policy statement introduces a new set of Defence Policy Principles as well as a 'Community, Nation and World Framework'.

Of significant mention is:

I. Recognition of environmental wellbeing and the impact climate change will have on our nation as well as region;

II. Our responsibility to the Pacific

III. The erosion of global rules-based order – particularly in the South-East Asian Region and with mention also of bigger global powers of China and Russia.

Of concern, when looking more closely at the defence policy principles within the statement, is that a focus for peace comes in somewhat down the list of 10 principles. The principle of New Zealand's commitment to it's allies, and partners is higher (i.e. No. 3) than that of regional peace in the South Pacific.

To read New Zealand's Strategic Defence Policy Statement go to <https://defence.govt.nz/publications/publication/strategic-defence-policy-statement-2018>



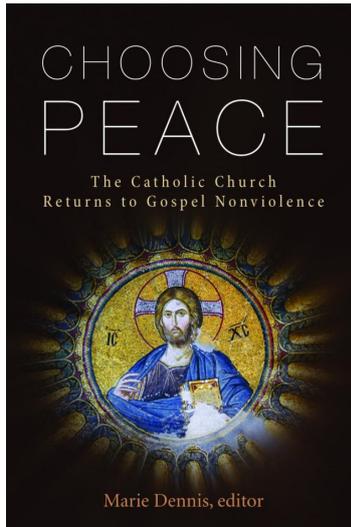
Worth Reading

Pax Christi continues to endorse ...

Choosing Peace: The Catholic Church Returns to Gospel Nonviolence.

Editor: Marie Dennis

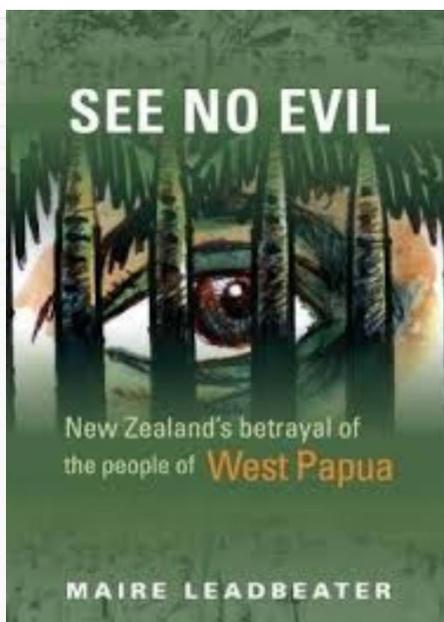
Published May 2018 by Orbis Books.



See No Evil: New Zealand's betrayal of the people of West Papua by Maire Leadbetter.

Published by Otago University Press, June 2018

www.otago.ac.nz/press/books/otago690040.html



Freedom of Speech and an Increase in Violence in Nicaragua

‘Roughly 300 people, mainly unarmed protestors have been killed in Nicaragua, in the last 3 months. The youngest reportedly a 10-year-old girl.

Nicaragua’s President Daniel Ortega is tightening his grip on power as paramilitary groups, loyal to him, attack anti-government protestors during three months of opposition protests.

Mr Ortega has been in power since 2007 (he has previously been in power during the 1980’s); his term finishes in 2022.

Mr Ortega’s government has labelled the opposition protests as undemocratic.

Nicaraguan Catholic Bishop Juan Abelardo Mata, in his vehicle, was reportedly shot at by armed men. Two ambulances were prevented for at least a day, by armed attackers, from going to a Church where many wounded were trapped.

Violence continues to grow from Pro-government forces against those protesting about the government.

source material: Wall Street Journal, July 15 2018

Pax Christi

Aotearoa New Zealand

Pax Christi is an independent Catholic social justice organisation. We work hard to address issues of peace and justice at a local, regional and global level.

If you want to know more about Pax Christi, to join meetings, or to set up group meetings in your area, please contact paxnz@xtra.co.nz or ring 09 377 5541.

Pax Christi relies on volunteers & donations to enable the work to continue.

To make an online donation our a/c name and number is:

Pax Christi Aotearoa New Zealand

03-01730353-867-00

(contact us for a receipt for tax purposes)

Your support is greatly appreciated.

Diary Dates

18th July Nelson Mandela /Freedom of Speech

30th July World Day against Trafficking of in Persons.

6th August Hiroshima Remembrance

19th August International Day of World's Indigenous Peoples

Next Month's newsletter will look at the theme on non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as we remember Hiroshima. Any contributions to the newsletter are welcome. Please email paxnz@xtra.co.nz.

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