



Edmund Rice Centre
Awareness. Advocacy. Action

ERC JUSTICE UPDATES

April 2022 No.67

Dear Friends,

This 67th Edition of ERC Justice Updates, our regular newsletter from the Edmund Rice Centre, on matters relating to human rights, first nations and environmental justice.

Every day one wakes up to face the world and wonders what more can one do to bring about more justice and peace, love and compassion into everybody's lives. So in Anne Frank's words:

"In the long run, the sharpest weapon of all is a kind and gentle spirit."

Anne Frank

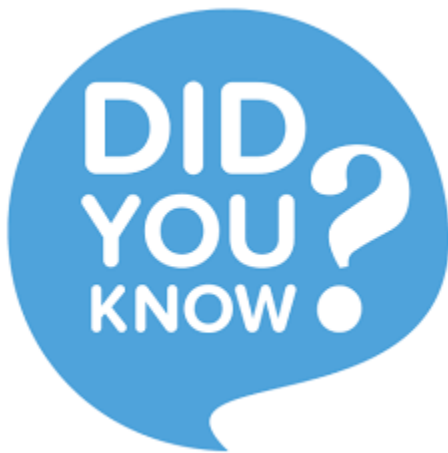
Please note that if you come up against a paywall in any of the articles below - please contact me at: mmcinerney@edmundrice.org and I will send you the full article.

Previous editions are available at <https://www.erc.org.au/newsletters>

Peace & Blessings

Marita
Communications Project Officer,
Marita McInerney

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised that there may be articles in this publication with names and images of deceased people.



A recent study by the International Justice Mission (IJM) Australia entitled: 'Spot Fires in Supply Chains' analysed Australian corporate modern slavery statements and recommendations for extinguishing risk through protecting workers in South Asia. Some key findings:

- **South Asia has the largest number of people in bonded labour - an estimated 15.5 Million.**
- **In 2020-2021, Australia is estimated to have imported up to \$2.1 billion worth of commodities (out of \$5.5 billion in total) from India that is potentially at high-risk of being a product of bonded labour.**
- **Data from India's National Crime records Bureau indicate that 23,117 people were rescued in India from human trafficking in 2016 - with the majority (10,509) people having been trafficked for the purposes of forced labour.**
- **The study indicated that more than 91% of corporations had identified potential modern slavery risks in company supply chains.**
- **In the current study 7 out of 10 companies did not provide any details on modern slavery risks beyond the first tier of their supply chain. However earlier IJM research in two states in southern India found the potential incidence of slavery in supply chains to be extensive. On average 30% of agricultural, brick, construction, and textile workers were victims of bonded labour.**
- **84.7% of company statements did not indicate a single instance where a company responded to instances or allegations of modern slavery in their operations or supply chains.**
- **Only 18.8% or less than 1 in 5 corporations consulted at least one potentially affected group or stakeholder as part of their modern**

slavery risk assessment.

- 40.6% of corporations in this study have no formal process to integrate findings from completed risk assessments and almost half (47.3%) did not indicate who is responsible within the company governance for addressing modern slavery risks.



ALFRED 'POP' NEAL OAM
POP NEAL WITH PAT ANDERSON AO,
NIGEL PEARSON AND PROFESSOR
MEGAN DAVIS, YARRABAH 2022

DEAR FRIENDS

Last weekend, the largest gathering of First Nations leaders since the Uluru Statement from the Heart was issued to the Australian people, came together in Cairns.

This meeting, hosted by the Uluru Dialogue, was an opportunity for the cultural authority and senior cultural leadership from across Australia to come together and reflect on the past five years of hard work advocating for a First Nations Voice to Parliament protected by the Constitution.

To end the weekend, the Dialogue leaders returned to Yarrabah on Sunday to visit with Alfred "Pop" Neal OAM. Pop Neal is the last surviving member of the "Lantern Movement" and was integral to the local Aboriginal Advancement League movement in its struggle towards a successful 1967 referendum.

Together we issued the Yarrabah Affirmation inspired by the favourable timings in the next term of Parliament for a referendum. These propitious dates include two 1967 anniversaries falling on a

Read Full Message

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?tab=wm&ogbl#all/FMfcgzGpFWPjjXznMwPGZHKjkDHNCGKk>



'When you look at Australia's standardised commitment to reconciliation, you can see how RAPs give their holders licence to inflict more harm.' Photograph: s-c-s/Getty Images/iStockphoto

Reconciliation action plans let settlers take up more space, not relinquish it

Ben Abbatangelo, *The Guardian*, 12th April 2022

A money-hungry and growth-at-all-costs society is entirely incompatible with the sovereignty of Indigenous peoples

Within the ruins of time, as the avalanche of blows continue to pound our bodies and spirits, I have found myself ruminating on the violence that is at the heart of Australia's reconciliation process.

History is alive, and for the best part of the last two decades, Australia's reconciliation process has been cleverly wielded to thwart off the threat of a Black-led uprising from bursting out of the empire's belly.

Instead of an audacious experiment that reparatively runs against the tide of history, Australia has carefully opted for what Prof Megan Davis describes as "a manifesto for maintaining the status quo".

Davis's summation is backed by Charlotte Lloyd, a Harvard sociologist who studied Australia's reconciliation process because she found it to be globally unique. While almost all reconciliation processes derive from the foundations of truth and justice, conveniently, Australia's did not.

Despite generations of state-sanctioned savagery, when the Council for

Aboriginal Reconciliation folded in 2001, prime minister John Howard ensured that Australia removed itself from the truth and justice components that underpinned the theory and practice of reconciliation globally.

Australia avoided the establishment of a formal truth-telling process to bring the settlers' atrocities to the surface and a mechanism of justice to hold the perpetrators to account. This ensured, among many things, that the original lie of terra nullius remained, Indigenous people were deprived of reparations for the gross and systematic human rights violations that we faced, and that open season would continue.

The Howard government's decision to absolve itself from the truth and justice components was an attempt to exonerate white Australia of accountability.

In 2006, Reconciliation Australia launched a uniquely Australian initiative, Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs), a framework that is said to enable organisations to take meaningful action to advance reconciliation – with procurement and employment being the major benchmarks of progress.

In June of the following year, barely 12 months after the launch of RAPs, the Howard government, with enthusiastic support from its Labor opposition, suspended the Racial Discrimination Act to implement the Northern Territory Intervention – allowing martial law to be invoked upon 65 Aboriginal communities until they were acquired by the government.

The NT Intervention (which was then extended by successive governments until 2022) has supercharged the devastating socio-economic outcomes for Indigenous communities. Conveniently, it has also opened up huge swathes of land for extractive companies to pillage and plunder.

Speaking with me recently, Senator Patrick Dodson described the NT Intervention as “the darkest day in Australia's political history”; a serious feat considering the depth and scale of malice that Canberra has conjured over the years.

A few months later, 144 countries voted in favour of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), at the UN general assembly in New York. Shamelessly, Australia, alongside New Zealand, Canada and the US were the only countries to vote against it.

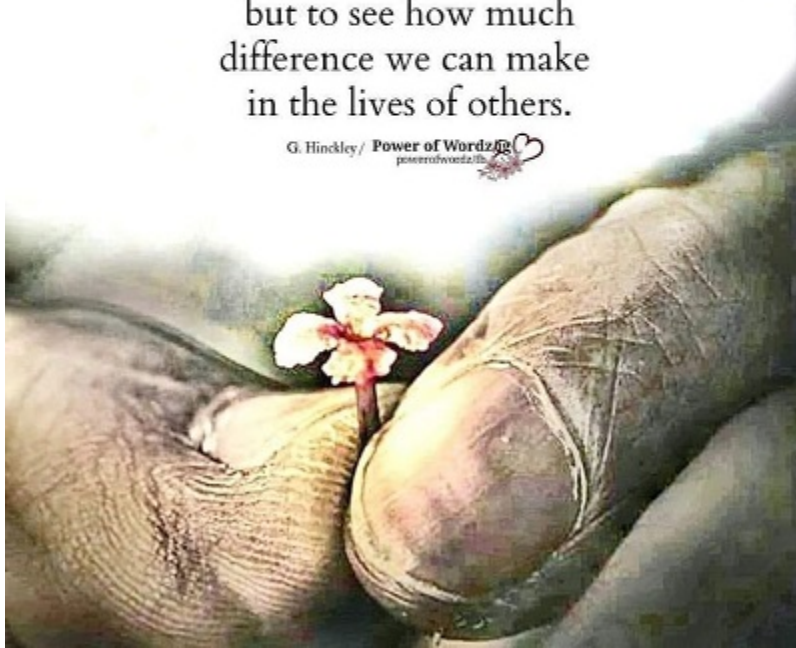
Read Full Story

https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/apr/12/reconciliation-action-plans-let-settlers-take-up-more-space-not-relinquish-it?utm_term=62562ea543beccd9fa7c6925aaaa72b4&utm_campaign=GuardianTodayAUS&utm_source=esp&utm_medium=Email&CMP=GTAU_email

Being humble

means recognizing that we are
not on earth to see how
important we can become,
but to see how much
difference we can make
in the lives of others.

G. Hinckley / Power of Words
powerofwords.org



Medical staff move an injured person on a stretcher inside a hospital after two bomb blasts at a boys' school in a Shia Hazara neighbourhood in Kabul. Photograph: Wakil Kohsar/AFP/Getty Images

Six killed in bomb blasts at Shia school in Afghan capital **Agence France-Presse, The Guardian, April 19th 2022**

At least six people have been killed and 11 wounded in two bomb blasts at a

boys' school in a Hazara Shia neighbourhood of the Afghan capital, Kabul.

The frequency of bomb blasts in the country has declined significantly since the Taliban ousted the US-backed Afghan government in August last year, but Islamic State has claimed several attacks.

A Kabul police spokesperson, Khalid Zadran, said Tuesday's blasts at the Abdul Rahim Shahid school were caused by improvised explosive devices. He said there was a third blast at an English-language centre in the same area, but did not specify whether it was caused by an explosive.

The school is in an area inhabited mainly by the Hazara community, and has been previously targeted by IS.

Read Full article

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/19/bomb-blasts-at-shia-school-in-afghan-capital>



MEDIA RELEASE

21ST April 2022

Candlelight Vigil and memorial for the recent attack on the Hazara school children in Kabul, Afghanistan.

On Tuesday, 19 April 2022, once more two educational centres; Abdul Rahim Shahid High School and Mumtaz Educational Center in western Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan came under coordinated attacks. The two centres are in the Hazara ethnic neighbourhood of Dashti Barchi, the disadvantaged area like western part of Kabul.

In the coordinated attacks over 100 children were killed and injured. No one knows of the exact number of victims because the Taliban, a terrorist organisation, that are controlling the country have banned the media.

Reports by the local people and witnesses suggest a very high number of casualties. In one hospital alone, Jinnah Hospital, over 30 dead and injured had been transferred.

Abdul Rahim Shahid High School was the largest high school in the country and some would say in the world as it housed 30,000 students and over 400 teachers in three daily shifts. It was also one of the most successful high schools because its graduates passed the university entry examinations with very high success rates.

The impact of this horrible incident has been immense on the Hazara community in Australia, including the prominent Hazara communities living in the Cumberland Council area as well as across Sydney, whose families and close relatives reside in the

same area of Kabul where the continuous attacks on the Hazaras has been taking place.

Through this event we hope to raise awareness about the injustice and severity of Hazara genocide in Afghanistan and demand that the Australian and international community take accountability for this outrageous human rights violation.

For more information or to arrange an interview, please contact Zaki Haidari on 0405 968 455 or zaki.haidari@jrs.org.au and Soghra Sayyadi on 0470 660 522 or soghra.sayyadi@gmail.com

If you have any further questions please feel free to contact me

Zaki Haidari

Leadership Coordinator

Jesuit Refugee Service - Australia



It will be the ongoing task of ordinary citizens to try and convince their fellow citizens that we can do better. Image: Wikimedia

Commons

The cry of refugees

Frank Brennan, Pearls & Irritations, April 11th 2022

The Coalition remains committed to detaining asylum seekers in Australia if they have arrived by boat without a visa. The Labor Party has not made any commitment to cease such detention.

On Palm Sunday, we recalled that as Jesus was drawing near to Jerusalem, 'the whole multitude of disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen'. Some of the Pharisees were disturbed by the scene and demanded that Jesus rebuke his disciples. He answered, 'I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out.'

Once again, I, like many of you, will be marching in the annual Palm Sunday procession in support of refugees and asylum seekers this year. The theme for this year's march is End the cruelty; freedom; safe and secure futures. After all these years I sometimes wonder, what's the point. I retain the hope that even if we were to remain silent, the very stones would cry out. The land of the dispossessed would cry out. The country that has been home to the world's longest living cultures would cry out.

Why am I marching? Because I still think the three major political parties (Labor, Liberal and National), one or two of which will form government again after the election next month, have policies in relation to refugees and asylum seekers which are wrong, which have been wrong for a long time, and which are likely to remain wrong for quite some time to come, no matter who is in government. The major parties obviously retain such policies thinking or knowing from the polling that such policies will continue to win the broadest public support.

Undoubtedly we are all in favour of secure borders and an ordered migration program. We all think that refugees and asylum seekers should be treated humanely. We all think that Australia should do its fair share in providing durable solutions for some of the world's millions of refugees. We would expect spirited disagreement on what constitutes a fair share. Even being a nett migration country, we have to restrict refugee numbers so that we can provide places for people migrating for family reasons, other humanitarian reasons, or even business reasons.

Many of us continue to be troubled by the Australian government's treatment of asylum seekers, especially those who come by boat. We are aware of the fine sentiments expressed by church leaders including Pope Francis. And we find ourselves responding, 'Yes, but...' We, like Pope Francis and the church leaders, don't have to face election at the polling booths next month.....

I am one advocate who these last six years has sought a compromise. John Menadue, Robert Manne, Tim Costello and I wrote four articles in 2016 and 2017 suggesting that government 'maintain close intelligence co-operation with Indonesian authorities, and maintain the turn-back policy, while emptying the offshore processing centres and restoring the chance of a future to those we sent to Nauru or Manus Island by settling them either in Australia or, if any are willing, in other developed countries'[2]. None of the major political parties adopted the compromise. Neither did the key refugee advocates and their networks. Some of them thought we were being unprincipled and too pragmatic. And just this week, we had some asylum seekers who had been detained for 9 years being released, not for any revised policy reason, but

simply to ensure that the issue does not become enlivened at the election. If only they had been released six years ago!.....

Rational debate about finding the right balance between securing the house and placing out the welcome mat in a troubled world will always be difficult. Even when the debate cannot be resolved, it is necessary that we take a stand despite our differences, expressing the hope that one day we will find a better way.

Read full article:

https://johnmenadue.com/the-cry-of-refugees-to-be-heard-end-the-cruelty/?fbclid=IwAR37_kYKMEexXAmeltyrW-cxf08j3CPtV0OB46Z9YT16VMsgovZT2a1VDY4



Image: Pixabay

Easter celebrates life – and peace

Stephanie Dowrick, *Pearls & Irritations*, April 17th 2022

One of the most beautiful names given to Jesus is “Prince of Peace”. So why do Christian churches support conflict so enthusiastically – including bitter conflict between denominations and sects, and armed conflict between nations?

It is not Christmas but Easter that is the “holiest” season in the Christian calendar. Christians disagree about many things, but most believe that over a period shorter than a week a passionate young Jewish teacher, Jesus of Nazareth, was tortured, crucified on a cross he had been forced to carry, taken down from the cross and put into a sealed tomb, then – astonishingly – in some form “rose from the dead”, demonstrating his central teaching that life is more powerful than death. And that despite the violence of his time and death, he had come to bring peace.

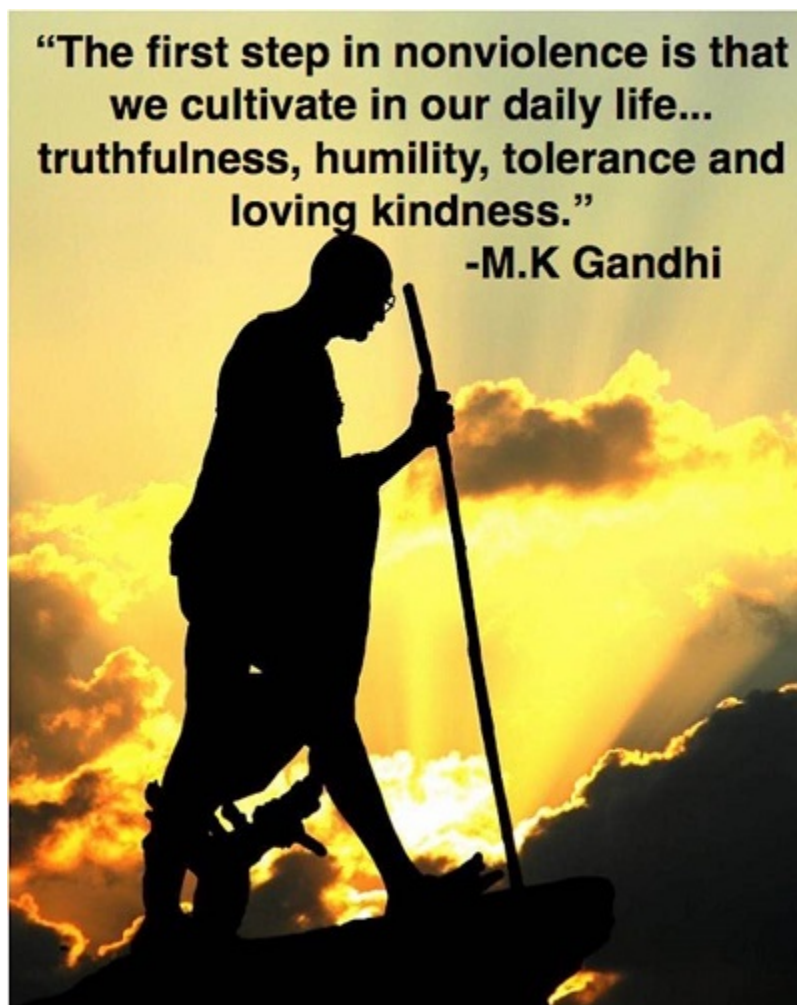
Whether Jesus suffered this dreadful fate to “atone” to God for the sins of humankind is far more contentious. Certainly, the notion that “Jesus died for my sins” comforts those who believe this gives them a kind of premium pass to a

heavenly reward unavailable to those with a different view. It has also, though, led to a tragic view of a Heavenly Father who plays favourites on an extreme scale, with “losers” not just missing out but suffering unimaginably for all eternity.

What began as a liberating call to an action path of inclusivity, love, hope and forgiveness – rather than the minutiae of obsessively controlling laws – now props up too many Christian denominations and sects exhibiting “values” that are power-hungry, divisive, racist, misogynistic, and homophobic and, yes, controlling. These groups – some globally vast – offer exclusively male “leadership” as “God’s intention” for his human family. They also routinely support state-sanctioned violence that includes the impoverishment of millions to benefit a few, an abandonment of care for the planet, and an enthusiasm for war – not peace.

Read full article

<https://johnmenadue.com/easter-celebrates-life-and-peace/>





Something needs to happen to change the language. Image: Pixabay

Reporting about Ukraine: peace difficult, war easy

Stuart Rees, Pearls & Irritations, 20th April 2022

In the grinding weeks of an Australian Federal election, something needs to happen to change the language, to prompt debate, to craft vision, and even generate excitement. That something could be the goal of peace with justice.

Fed on news of carnage in Ukraine and continued Russian brutality, western media is preoccupied with the renewal of NATO and supposed EU unity. The possibility of Ukraine as victors excites the war commentators. The plight of millions of victims looks like an after thought. Advocacy of peace merits no headlines.

Fascination with war is nurtured by political cultures which foster the idea that security depends on force of arms, that alliances to defend a world order depend on militarism, on worship of materialism and on assumptions about western moral superiority. That culture is always prepared for war but comes late in the day to peace. That culture takes violence for granted but maintains a massive illiteracy about non-violence.

Politicians in the US, UK, Australia and across Europe, compete to send arms to Ukraine. Caught among governments' claims that arms supply will turn the tide in Ukrainians' favour, or that an end to brutalities will only come with defeat or victory, the in between of peace appears difficult to imagine and not worth writing about. This development reminds me of an incident in March 2003 on Sydney's ABC Radio's 2BL on which I had a regular slot to talk about peace. When the invasion of Iraq occurred, the programme producer declared my commentary no longer needed. 'No-one is interested in peace when a war is taking place!'

In the first decades of the 21st century, experience of other wars could have sharpened journalists' analysis of peace and encouraged thoughts on how to

end the misery of millions. In Yemen, Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine, Sri Lanka and Myanmar, reports of starvation, bombardment, slaughter with no accountability gave western media their messages and filled newspaper columns. The alternative, described by my colleagues Jake Lynch and Annabel McGoldrick as 'Peace Journalism' (2005), could have told the world of brave, non violent initiatives for peace by citizens of those countries. With few exceptions, such reporting did not happen.

In far away countries where wretchedly poor citizens do not resemble Anglo Saxon Protestants, Catholics or Evangelicals, even wars which result in misery, death and destruction have not received much attention. In Yemen, Palestine or Sri Lanka, the west's militaristic dominated cultures seemed to value reporting on violence but have had little to say about peace, let alone a conception of peace with justice.

In these nationally self destructive developments – war easy, peace too difficult – the political left, if you can find it, has gone awol. Yet they have a responsibility and an opportunity.

Read full article

<https://johnmenadue.com/reporting-about-ukraine-peace-difficult-war-easy/>

'Climate laggards': Australian isolationism puts us on par with Saudi Arabia

Nick O'Malley, Sydney Morning Herald, 19th April 2022

Australia's "climate change isolationism" has driven a fall from 35th to 52nd in a global ranking of how different nations are responding to the global warming crisis, one rank behind the oil giant Saudi Arabia in a group of nations described as "climate laggards".

The report by the world-leading United States university MIT notes that Australia declined to sign a pledge to end coal use at world climate talks in Glasgow in November last year, a decision it said was "in large part rooted in the country's economic dependency on carbon intensive exports."

This week Labor leader Anthony Albanese committed to supporting new fossil fuel projects as long as there is international demand for exports, keeping it in line with the government, which is campaigning on its support for a gas-fired recovery.

The Coalition has committed to reducing Australian emissions by between 26 and 28 per cent by 2030 and Labor by 43 per cent. Climate Council's chief researcher Dr Martin Rice said neither party's commitment matched the global effort to cut emissions by 50 per cent by that date. Both fall far short of the Council's recommendation that due to Australia's economic strength and wealth in renewable

resources it should be aiming for a 75 per cent reduction.

He said any commitment to support new fossil-fuel infrastructure by any party was out of step with net zero pathways charted by the International Energy Agency and with Australia's global climate commitments.

Neither major party responded to a request for comment.

The highest rankings on the MIT list, known as the Green Future Index, which began last year and will now run annually, were dominated by European nations, with Iceland, Denmark and the Netherlands coming in first to third.

The leading major economic power was the United Kingdom, which has cut its reliance on coal over the past decade from 40 per cent of energy generation to 2 per cent, and plans to completely end its use by 2024.

Read more:

<https://www.smh.com.au/environment/climate-change/australian-climate-change-isolationism-sees-it-fall-behind-the-world-20220419-p5aect.html>

REFLECTIONS

The spirit of Ramadan

Ramadan is the holiest month of the year in Islamic calendar. The Holy Qur'an was orally revealed by God to prophet Muhammad through Gabriel incrementally over a period of 23 years, beginning in the month of Ramadan, when Muhammad was 40; and concluding in 632AD, the year of his death.

During Ramadan, Muslims around the world observe fasting from sunrise to sunset by abstaining from eating and drinking and participate on special prayer called Taraweeh on every night. Taraweeh, is derived from the Arabic word meaning "to rest and relax". These special prayers involve reading long portions of the Holy Qur'an, as well as performing many rakahs (cycles of movement involved in Islamic prayer). For Muslims, Ramadan is one of the finest and most beautiful schools of life. The fasting month is a school of faith, spirituality, awareness, giving, solidarity, justice, dignity, and unity.

Interestingly, fasting is not a novel practice introduced by Islam. In fact, the Holy Qur'an acknowledges this and declares 'O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may become righteous.' Thus, the practice of fasting in Islam is an extension of the practice found in earlier religions.

During the fasting days, Muslims are called upon to abstain from eating, drinking, and responding to our instincts, to help us turn inward to our heart and the meaning of our lives. To fast means to experience sincerity, to observe our shortcomings, contradictions, and failings - no longer to attempt to hide or to lie and instead to

focus our efforts on the search for ourselves and for the meaning and priorities of our lives.

Seen in this light, the month of Ramadan is the best possible expression of anti-consumerism: to free ourselves of the dependencies that our consumption-based societies not only stimulate but magnify.

Prophet Muhammad advised his followers: "There is not a Muslim who plants trees or cultivate land of which a bird, human, or beast eats thereof except that is a charity on his or her behalf."

The prophet's advice is not to be hard-hearted. We should not begrudge those who benefit from the fruits of our labour – it is a form of charity to allow others to share in what we have. Even animals should be allowed to share.

Living in an affluent country like Australia, it is hard to understand what hunger really means. According to World Vision, globally, about 8.9% of the world's population — 690 million people — go to bed on an empty stomach each night. Since 2014, the number of people affected by hunger has been slowly on the rise.

Ramadan is a month when charity is encouraged, and people donate to several local and international charitable organisations, who help feed the poor. To be deeply connected with God opens us to a deep sense of compassion, especially for those in need. The very real burn of hunger and thirst adds to our gratitude for all we have.

Prepared by **AZM Jafar**

Employee of Edmund Rice Centre for Justice and Community Education

April 2022

[This article is for private circulation only and not for publication]

Pace - e - Bene Nonviolence Inspirations

"Self-respect is the fruit of discipline, the sense of dignity grows with the ability to say no to oneself." Abraham Joshua Heschel

"We don't need bigger cars or fancier clothes. We need self-respect, identity, community, love, variety, beauty, challenge, and a purpose in living that is greater than material accumulation." Donella Meadows

"It is a delusion that the self is so separate and fragile that we must delineate and defend its boundaries, that it is so small and so needy that we must endlessly acquire and endlessly consume, and that it is so aloof that as individuals, corporations, nation states, or species, we can be immune to what we do to other beings." Joanna Macy

“There are 62 million people that make less than a living wage. But there are 400 people that make \$97,000 an hour.”

Rev. Liz Theoharis, Co-chair of the Poor People's Campaign



We acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples of Australia as the traditional owners and custodians of the land. We commit ourselves to actively work alongside them for reconciliation and justice. We pay our respects to the Elders; past, present and future. As we take our next step we remember the first footsteps taken on this sacred land.

The Edmund Rice Centre wholeheartedly supports and endorses the
ULURU STATEMENT FROM THE HEART
and urges all Australians to get behind this wonderful statement.

Our mailing address is:

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