



Edmund Rice Centre

Awareness. Advocacy. Action

ERC JUSTICE UPDATES

October 2023 No.97

Dear Friends,

This 97 Edition of ERCJCE Justice Updates, our regular newsletter from the Edmund Rice Centre, on matters relating to human rights, first nations, refugees and people seeking asylum and environmental justice.

As one faces this ever changing, complex, unjust and unequal world let us always remember Blessed Edmund Rice's three main tenets:

COMPASSION LIBERATION & PRESENCE

Our journeys may challenge us to the core, revealing the nugget of gold right at the heart of our being, where God is waiting. Margaret Silf

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.



EDMUND RICE CENTRE ON VOICE REFERENDUM

After the Referendum's outcome over last weekend, we acknowledge and respect the request by Indigenous leaders for a week of silence to lament and reflect. Please read the Statement below.

https://ulurustatement.org/a-statement-from-indigenous-australians-who-supported-the-voice-referendum/?fbclid=IwAR16v_anCvCCVbd7Oi8OWL1bFdUqG2v-aTUP3aslVSjiThOlzQDdoMZ36VU



The time for debates about the impact of humans on the planet is over. Image: Wikimedia.

Finding my voice

John Haren, The Good Oil, September 2023

Our world depends on all people having the opportunity and the courage to use our collective voices to discover our common humanity, writes John Haren, winner of The Good Oil 2023 Writers' Award.

Finding my voice is a lifelong search. Not just for me, but for all of us. And yet the state of the world demands that I find it and do so quickly. Enough research. Enough rumination. Enough contemplation.

Climate change. Poverty and inequality. Human rights. Racism. Indigenous

peoples' displacement. Homelessness. Rampant neoclassical economics. Artificial intelligence. The Ukrainian war. These issues and more are the product of human activity.

Finding my voice, finding your voice. These are imperatives of the Gospel. Jesus did not desist from using his voice. He used it to teach about love. He used it to dismiss the merchants in the temple. He used it to support the Samaritan woman. He used his voice from the cross to forgive.

These are messages for all of us. They are an inescapable call to our humanity. To resist this call and be silent is to acquiesce to the forces that put the power of a few before the human dignity of all, economic development before the environment, corporate profits before people.

I can no longer stand on the sidelines as if watching a sporting contest. I am a participant not an observer. My place is on the playing field and not in the stands. Democracy is an open invitation, indeed an obligation, to find our voice and use it. Accountability is the antidote to corruption. Unfettered activity in government or private enterprise is the Petri dish for corruption. The PwC scandal concerns us all as a stark example of the inherent wrong that can be inflicted when status and power are misused and profit overtakes ethics.

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I can find my voice in a supermarket when a customer in front of me speaks abusively to check out staff. I can find my voice by acknowledging a person with a disability with a smile. I can find my voice by writing to my Member of Parliament about the rights of refugees. I can find my voice by joining a social justice group that advocates for the rights of people suffering mental illness. I can find my voice by banding together with people in my street to help those who might be lonely.

Importantly, I can find my voice using it to give voice to others. Our world depends on all people having the opportunity and the courage to use our collective voices to discover our common humanity. Giving voice to the voiceless is a human project for all of us to be engaged in.

Read full story:

https://www.goodsams.org.au/article/finding-my-voice/?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=TGO%20September%202023&utm_content=TGO%20September%202023+CID_68c048cdf8d11ef64591b1be2efbd1c9&utm_source=Email%20marketing%20software&utm_term=READ%20MORE



Karina Lester at the Walatina Camp in South Australia (Image: supplied)

Emu Fields Atomic Bomb 70th Anniversary shines spotlight on Nuclear Weapons Treaty

Jess Whaler, National Indigenous Times, October 15 2023

Sunday, 15 October marks the 70th Anniversary of the first nuclear weapons test on Australian soil at Emu Field, South Australia, the lands of the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) people.

The testing left an aftermath of environmental, health and social outcomes that persist in the community today. Communities and groups have urged Australia to sign the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

Conducted under the name Operation Totem, no consent was sought or given by the Anangu when a 10kt atomic bomb elicited two explosions with force similar to that at Hiroshima, raining Black Mist and a toxic smell over sacred country, poisoning the ground, animals and people.

Yankunytjatjara Anangu woman Karina Lester, Chairperson-Yankunytjatjara Native Title Aboriginal Corporation, said the testing impacted her grandmother and left her late father, Yami Lester, blind.

"Today is a very emotional day for my family. We carry the pain of what happened to my family and community as a result of those tests. Our communities are still suffering the health impacts from radiation poisoning," she told National Indigenous Times.

"This has been a generational journey for us, and a generational story of talking about the traumas and the suffering and the scars that have been left not only on our traditional lands, on Yankunytjatjara and Pitjantjatjara country, but also in Western Australia as well. Our stories are stories that have been

passed on from generation to generation. They're sad stories, but they're true stories. This is about truth-telling, and this is our story.

"This is why I am urging the Australian government to sign and ratify the TPNW, as Prime Minister Anthony Albanese promised to do when in government. They must listen to First Nations voices who never want to see these most destructive, indiscriminate weapons ever be used again."

In an effort to prevent this happening to communities again Ms Lester and the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons Australia (ICAN), with support from more than 130 civil society organisations, including the Australian Red Cross, Public Health Association of Australia, Health Services Union, Oxfam and Catholic Religious Australia, has called for Prime Minister Anthony Albanese to sign the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

Read full story

<https://nit.com.au/15-10-2023/8140/emu-fields-atomic-bomb-70th-anniversary-calls-attention-to-nuclear-weapons-treaty>





About 70 refugees remain in PNG, with many facing eviction because housing bills have gone unpaid by the Australian government. Photograph: Adek Berry/AFP/Getty Images

PNG threatens to send refugees back to Australia unless it keeps funding humanitarian program

Rebecca Kuku, Ben Doherty and Paul Karp, The Guardian, 7th October 2023

Exclusive: Papua New Guinea official accuses Australia of abandoning 70 men but government maintains it has no responsibility for them

Refugees exiled to Papua New Guinea a decade ago will be sent back to Australia if the Australian government fails to continue funding PNG's humanitarian program, Port Moresby's most senior migration official has warned.

PNG's chief migration officer, Stanis Hulahau, said the refugees had been abandoned by Australia and the PNG businesses that had been housing and caring for the men were owed tens of millions of dollars.

"If Australia wants the refugees to continue to remain in Papua New Guinea then they have to fund the program, or we will shut the program and send the refugees back to Australia," Hulahau said.

Port Moresby's Pacific international hospital claims it is owed nearly \$40m, while a number of other service providers, including security firms and motels across the capital, are owed between \$6m and \$8m each.

About 70 refugees and asylum seekers forcibly sent by Australia to PNG remain held in the country: many have been told they face eviction because the bills at their places of accommodation have not been paid for a year.

The Australian government maintains it has no responsibility for the welfare of the refugees it sent to PNG, most in 2013 and 2014.

The refugees and asylum seekers were formerly detained within Australia's detention centre on Manus Island before it was ruled unlawful by PNG's supreme court in 2016, which ordered the centre to close.

At the end of December 2021, Australia and PNG ostensibly ended their regional resettlement arrangement. But about 140 refugees and 10 asylum seekers remained in PNG.

Read full story:

https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/oct/07/png-threatens-to-send-refugees-back-to-australia-unless-it-pays-up-to-48m-in-expenses?utm_term=6520adb8ba18b9bd1d571f79f112516d&utm_campaign=GuardianTodayAUS&utm_source=esp&utm_medium=Email&CMP=GTAU_email



Refugee Danyal Shafiq in 2017.

Trauma of the Howard-era refugees

Mary Allstrom, *The Saturday Paper*, October 14 – 20, 2023, No.471

Warning: This piece contains descriptions of self-harm.

Let's call him Imran. More than a decade ago, Imran logged a compensation

claim against the Australian government. His claim joined at least 53 others from refugees who have been in Australia since the Howard era, initially held in detention centres at Curtin, Port Hedland, Woomera and Baxter. At least four of these refugees died waiting for their cases to be heard.

This month, on October 3, Imran's case came up for a directions hearing in the South Australian District Court. The date followed years of delays. His first claim had been listed in 2011.

Prior to entering the court, Imran asked his lawyer if he could read out a short piece describing how he felt about the delays and broken promises, to impress upon the court the terrible impact on his mental health. The lawyers for the Commonwealth opposed the request and the judge stated a future statement would need to be provided to all parties before the trial was listed, possibly in 2026.

Hearing about the further two-year delay, and having had his ability to speak denied, Imran took a small razor and cut his left forearm. He said he had no reason to live anymore. I was sitting next to Imran, there as his advocate. Shocked, I compressed the cut, calling for bandages. With the help of security and his lawyers, Imran was taken from the courtroom.

Imran's intention was never to hurt anyone, only himself. It is the first time he has self-harmed since his time in detention, from 2000 to 2005. With his friend and another supporter, we drove him to the Royal Adelaide Hospital, where he received kind and respectful care from the medical staff.

The day after the hearing, detained under the Mental Health Act of South Australia, he went on hunger strike. "They are killing me," he said, "and I want to end this. Either now they hear the case or I will die waiting anyway. So I will do it my way not their way. They torture us."

"When will compensation be offered to these people, acknowledging them as the good people they are, who legitimately sought asylum all those years ago but who were treated so poorly?"

Some details are known of the men who have died while waiting for these cases to be heard. Possibly the most recent death is of a man named Babak, who experienced significant injury while in detention. Three months ago, he died of a heart attack alone in his home. He was aged in his late 40s.

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One might ask why these claims languish while the Manus Island claims, raised almost a decade later, were brought to trial so quickly and resolved.

When will compensation be offered to these people, acknowledging them as the good people they are, who legitimately sought asylum all those years ago but who were treated so poorly? When will an apology take place? How many more will die too young?

Full article for subscribers

<https://www.thesaturdaypaper.com.au/news/immigration/2023/10/14/trauma-the-howard-era-refugees>

**Non-subscribers wishing to read full article please contact me
mmcinerney@edmundrice.org**

UNIVERSAL PRAYER FOR PEACE

(FROM THE IONA COMMUNITY)

LEAD US FROM DEATH TO LIFE,
FROM FALSEHOOD TO TRUTH.
LEAD US FROM DESPAIR TO HOPE,
FROM FEAR TO TRUST.
LEAD US FROM HATE TO LOVE,
FROM WAR TO PEACE.
LET PEACE FILL OUR LIVES,
OUR WORLD, OUR UNIVERSE.
PEACE, PEACE, PEACE.



Pope Francis announces prayer vigil, day of fasting for peace in Israel-Hamas war

Matthew Santucci, Catholic News Agency, October 18 2023.

Pope Francis at the end of his general audience on Wednesday morning announced another day of prayer and fasting for an end to the Israel-Hamas war. “I have decided to call for a day of fasting and prayer on Friday, Oct. 27,” the pope said.

It will be “a day of penance to which I invite sisters and brothers of the various Christian denominations, those belonging to other religions, and all those who have at heart the cause of peace in the world, to join in as they see fit,” the Holy Father continued.

The vigil will take place at 6 p.m. in St. Peter’s Square, where the faithful will join the pope to participate in “an hour of prayer in a spirit of penance to implore peace in our time, peace in this world. I ask all the particular Churches to participate by arranging similar activities involving the people of God,” the pope said.

“Our thoughts turn to Palestine and Israel,” the pope said. “The number of victims is rising and the situation in Gaza is desperate. Please, let everything possible be done to avoid a humanitarian disaster. The possible widening of the conflict is disturbing, while so many war fronts are already open in the world. May weapons be silenced, and let us heed the cry for peace of the poor, the people, the children.”

“Brothers and sisters, war does not solve any problem: It sows only death and destruction, foments hate, proliferates revenge. War cancels out the future, it cancels out the future. I urge believers to take just one side in this conflict: that of peace. But not in words — in prayer, with total dedication,” he concluded.

The Holy Father’s comments come as the death toll continues to rise in the conflict-ridden area. The United Nations issued a press release on Tuesday evening stating that “a staggering” 4,200 people have been killed and “over 1 million people [have been] displaced in just 10 days.”

Israel was blamed by Hamas after a Tuesday evening blast at the Al-Ahli Baptist Hospital in Gaza City left an estimated death toll of nearly 500, according to the Palestinian health ministry. The Israeli government has denied these allegations, blaming it instead on Hamas. Several Arab states have joined Hamas in condemning Israel.

Read full story

<https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/255729/pope-francis-announces-prayer-vigil-day-of-fasting-for-peace-in-israel-hamas-war>



Land devastated by drought

“Laudate Deum”: the Pope’s cry for a response to the climate crisis

Vatican News, 4th October 2023

“Praise God’ is the title of this letter. For when human beings claim to take God’s place, they become their own worst enemies.”

That’s how Pope Francis ends his new [Apostolic Exhortation](#) published on 4th October, the Feast of St Francis of Assisi.

It’s a text in continuity with his 2015 encyclical *Laudato si’*, which is broader in scope. In six chapters and 73 paragraphs, the Successor of Peter tries to clarify and bring to completion that previous text on integral ecology, while at the same time sounding an alarm, and a call for co-responsibility, in the face of the climate emergency.

In particular, the Exhortation looks ahead to COP28, which will be held in Dubai between the end of November and beginning of December.

The Holy Father writes: “With the passage of time, I have realized that our responses have not been adequate, while the world in which we live is collapsing and may be nearing the breaking point. In addition to this possibility, it is indubitable that the impact of climate change will increasingly prejudice the lives and families of many persons” (2).

It’s “one of the principal challenges facing society and the global community” and “the effects of climate change are borne by the most vulnerable people, whether at home or around the world” (3).

The Exhortation is divided into six Chapters:

1. The Global Climate Crisis
2. A Growing Technocratic Paradigm
3. The Weakness of International Politics
4. Climate Conferences: Progress and Failures
5. What to Expect from COP28 in Dubai?
6. Spiritual Motivations

Read full article:

<https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2023-10/laudate-deum-pope-francis-climate-crisis-laudato-si.html>



'Our Father' by Jen Norton. Image: www.jennortonartstudio.com

Hope

Dr Michele A Connolly RSJ, Catholic Outlook, 2nd October 2023

Hope is what gets us out of bed every day. It is because we hope that each new day brings us life, possibilities, challenges of course, but also joy and pleasure through the people we meet, especially those we love, that we are able to go into each day looking forward to what it will bring.

Some of us are helped in this by being an upbeat, cheerful kind of person. These are great gifts of personality which can make life easier, at least on the surface of things.

However, the hope I am talking about here is not just the product of a sunny personality. Christian hope is something that still functions even when trouble brews on the horizon and our emotional prospects are not so warm and shiny.

Hope – Christian hope – is a gift of God. Both faith and hope are gifts. God enables us to believe and to trust to God's goodness and love for us. Really, what we hope is that God is at work to bring all things to a good purpose. It may be that we cannot see how God can achieve good in a particular situation; hope trusts that despite our limited vision, God can and will bring life to whatever

situation of death we may be experiencing.

Hope is wide awake about the past and the present but has an eye to the future that God wills for God's creation. This is so, even though we human beings cause hurt to one another and to this Earth that God has entrusted to us.

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But the absolute basis for our hope is Jesus himself, in his resurrection from the dead. This act of God changes everything. It shows us God's ultimate, loving intention – that in some way that is real for the kind of body-persons that we are, God intends to bring us beyond death to a life free from mortality, free to be in ease-full, sublime union with God's own self.

The great US biblical scholar, Walter Brueggemann, sums up Christian hope when he writes:

“Hope in Gospel faith is not just a vague feeling that things will work out, for it is evident that things will not just work out. Rather, hope is the conviction, against a great deal of data, that God is tenacious and persistent in overcoming the deathliness of the world, that God intends peace and joy. Christians find compelling evidence, in the story of Jesus, that Jesus, with great persistence and great vulnerability, everywhere he went, turned the enmity of society toward a new possibility, turned the sadness of the world toward joy, introduced a new regime where the dead are raised, the lost are found, and the displaced are brought home again. We draw our hope from the breath-taking memory of this Jesus!”[1]

Read full article:


<https://catholicoutlook.org/hope/>

REFLECTIONS



Peace is the only battle worth
waging.

— *Albert Camus* —

there is justice, restoration,
forgiveness. Peacemaking
doesn't mean passivity. It is
the act of interrupting
injustice without mirroring
injustice, the act of disarming
evil without destroying the
evildoer, the act of finding a
third way that is neither fight
nor flight but the careful,
arduous pursuit of
reconciliation and justice. It is
about a revolution of love 
that is big enough to set both
the oppressed and the
oppressors free.

"Let us develop respect for all living things. Let us try to replace violence



and intolerance with understanding and compassion. And love." - Jane Goodall

Pace - e - Bene Nonviolence Inspirations

"A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death."

Martin Luther King

"I will not tire of declaring that if we really want an effective end to violence we must remove the violence that lies at the root of all violence: structural violence, social injustice, exclusion of citizens from the management of the country, repression. All this is what constitutes the primal cause, from which the rest flows naturally." Oscar Romero

"We need joy as we need air.

We need love as we need water.

We need each other as we need the earth we share."

Dr. Maya Angelou

The way to right wrongs is to turn the light of truth upon them.” Ida B. Wells

“So, when people say that nonviolence is not relevant today, what they’re basically saying is that love and respect and understanding and compassion are not relevant today. And if that could be true, then we are doomed.” Arun Gandhi



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