



**Franciscans International**  
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# NewsBriefs

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## Human Rights Council a go!

16 Mar 2006

NEW YORK

Franciscans International welcomes the 15 March adoption of resolution A/60/L.48 creating the Human Rights Council. This body, which will be subsidiary only to the General Assembly, is a clear recognition of the importance the international community places on promoting and protecting human rights worldwide.



The Council is not a mere replacement of its predecessor, the Commission on Human Rights. Council members will be elected by an absolute majority on the basis of their human rights commitment, further, they cannot serve more than two consecutive terms.

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## Violent protests erupt in West Papua

17 Mar 2006

INDONESIA

Franciscans International and the Office for Justice and Peace of the Catholic Diocese of Jayapura are monitoring the tense situation in Abepura, West Papua (easternmost province of Indonesia) in the aftermath of large-scale protests, which have turned violent. Student protestors demonstrated Thursday for the closure of the Freeport McMoRan gold and copper mine. Indonesian security services and students clashed, resulting in scores of casualties, both civilian students and Indonesian police and military. Three Indonesian police officers and one member of the Air Force are confirmed dead.



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## FI mourns the passing of Br Joseph

21 Mar 2006

TOGO



Always involved for, and committed to the Togolese people, an untiring human rights defender, a great friend: Br Joseph Legonou, OFM will remain forever in the hearts of all those who knew him here

at Franciscans International. Joseph today joined the Father whom he loved so much. In our sadness, we are comforted knowing that Joseph has entered the true life, the eternal life. Joseph was a simple man, determined, courageous, devoted to all his brothers and sisters, and to the noblest of causes. Joseph walked with truth and faith, preaching above all by example. He taught us so much. Here at Franciscans International we are committed to continuing on his path. We share the grief of his family, and of the Franciscan family in Togo.

Joseph Legonou was born in Lomé on 10 July, 1959. He entered the Order of Friars Minor in 1982, and was later made vicar of the Verbe Incarné vice province and Justice and Peace Commission Coordinator for the OFMs in sub-Saharan Africa. Joseph strived for humans rights to triumph in his country. To accomplish this, he worked closely with Franciscans International at the United Nations, and represented the voice of the Catholic Church and civil society in discussions with authorities from Togo and the European Union. Joseph also contributed to the creation of the Mère Alfonsa Cavin Center, working for the most vulnerable on health, literacy and sewing.

*This news collection was printed from [www.FranciscansInternational.org](http://www.FranciscansInternational.org); if you have any suggestions or questions please feel free to contact us.*

<b>Geneva</b>	37- 39 rue de Vermont	P.O. Box 104	1211 Geneva 20	Switzerland	T +41. 22. 919. 4010	<a href="mailto:geneve@fiop.org">geneve@fiop.org</a>
<b>New York</b>	211 East 43rd Street	Room #1100	New York, NY 10017-4707	U.S.A.	T +1. 212. 490. 4624	<a href="mailto:newyork@fiop.org">newyork@fiop.org</a>

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## Western Connecticut students welcomed



21 Mar 2006

NEW YORK

Nine students from Western Connecticut State University came together last week to participate in an experiential learning program organized by Franciscans International. The three-day intensive program, titled “Step into the World” and held in New York, focused on global issues, particularly poverty, women’s rights and immigration.

Students took a hands-on approach to global issues by participating in direct service projects and a series of informational workshops. The students spent one morning serving meals at Holy Apostles Soup Kitchen in downtown Manhattan and also spent a day assisting program organizers at the Henry Street Settlement, a 110-year-old social services organization that tackles urban poverty. They were accompanied by Campus Ministry Director Friar Mike Lasky, OFM Conv, and Dr Walter Bernstein, Vice President of Student Affairs.

The program coincided with the final days of the United Nation’s Commission on the Status of Women and the students had the opportunity to meet with Patricia Brister, the United States’ chief delegate to the CSW to discuss issues related to women’s rights.

In addition to learning about a variety of international issues and witnessing first-hand the effects of poverty, the students were also exposed to the tenants of Franciscan spirituality and Catholic Social Teaching and were able to hear about the work of both FI and grassroots Franciscans. Fr Michael Perry, FI Africa Region Coordinator, gave a presentation on the role of spirituality in confronting global issues. The students also met with Sr Liliane Alam, FMM, the Executive Director of Las Americas, an organization working with detained children on the border between El Paso, Texas and Juarez, Mexico.

## Human Rights Council a go!

*(continued from page 1)*

The Human Rights Council will be better equipped to address urgent, serious and long-running human rights situations wherever they occur. It will meet regularly throughout the year and for a total duration of no less than 10 weeks, with the ability to hold special sessions upon request of a Council member and with the support of just one-third of the Council.

A universal periodic review of all UN member States will subject all countries to guaranteed scrutiny. In addition, those committing gross violations can be suspended from the body by the General Assembly through a 2/3 majority vote.

Franciscans International also appreciates that the role of Special Procedures has been preserved and that NGO participation is fully retained in the new Council. “This is a historic step,” FI International Advocacy Coordinator Alessandra Aula said.

“The work we carried out these past months with other NGOs has been successful. The victims of human rights violations and their defenders will certainly benefit from this decision. Nevertheless, we need to remain very vigilant on the election of candidates to the Council and to how the new body will structure itself,” Aula said.



*from left: Melisa Reid, Sr Liliane Alam FMM, Friar Mike Lasky OFM*

Alison Jones, Advocacy Officer on Africa, gave presentations on the genocide in Darfur and the 20-year-old conflict in northern Uganda. She says she was encouraged by the students’ enthusiasm and willingness to take what they had discovered in the program back to their campus.

“The students already have an Africa-related event planned for April back at Western Connecticut State,” Jones said.

“They took very seriously what they learned and what they were exposed to during their time in the city.”



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A Franciscan, non-governmental organisation at the United Nations

# FI urges participation in week of action for Darfur

17 Mar 2006

NEW YORK



The Save Darfur Coalition is designating 2-9 April as a week of prayer and action for Darfur as part of the larger Million Voices Campaign. The Coalition, of which Franciscans International is a member, is an alliance of like-minded groups raising public awareness and mobilizing for an effective, unified response to the atrocities that threaten millions of lives in the Darfur region. At present, the Coalition is focused on expanding its contacts and activities throughout North America and Europe.

The conflict in Darfur has been unfolding for nearly three years and experts suggest over 400,000 people have died in the region as a result of fighting. Nearly 3.5 million people face an imminent threat of hunger, and another 2.5 million people have been displaced due to violence. The Sudanese government continues to support the 'Janjaweed' militias who are increasing their campaign of violence and destruction in Darfur and eastern Chad (where more than 200,000 Darfurians are living in refugee camps).

"The decision of whether or not to stop the genocide in Darfur may be one of the defining moral questions of our time," Fr Michael Perry, FI Africa coordinator said.

When the cost of failure is thousands of lives lost for every month the conflict continues, responsible nations of the world have a clear ethical and religious obligation to act," he said.

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## Violent protests erupts in West Papua *(continued from page 1)*

In the past, reprisals by the Indonesian security services have been exacted upon young university students in West Papua as collective punishment for individual acts of violence directed against security forces. In the aftermath of such violence, house-to-house searches are conducted and university dorms are raided. Grave abuses of human rights are committed.

These abuses include: torture, arbitrary detention and extrajudicial execution. Indigenous Papuan students have been tortured and killed. One such instance is the Abepura case (2000), where scores of university students were tortured and two were extrajudicially executed. In 2005, the accused (former Papua-based commanders of the Indonesian security services) were found innocent in the Indonesian Permanent Court of Human Rights in Makassar.

According to FI's grassroots sources, due to recent events, reinforcements of the BRIMOB (Mobile Brigade police forces) are moving from Java to West Papua; the Chief of the TNI (Indonesian Armed Forces), the National Chief of Police, the Coordinating Minister of Security and Political Affairs and the Head of the BIN (State Intelligence Services) are all travelling to West Papua.

As of yet, we have no information on the exact number of civilian/student casualties resulting from Thursday's violence, only that local hospitals are treating many wounded.

While FI and the Office for Justice and Peace of the Catholic Diocese of Jayapura regret the violence and loss of life that took place in Abepura (Jayapura) Thursday, we believe that this unfolding situation is due to long-standing root causes that, so far, the Central Government in Jakarta has not yet reconciled itself to deal with.



Those root causes include: the widespread environmental destruction due to the Freeport McMoRan "Grasberg" gold and copper mine's operations located near Timika (southern West Papua); ongoing and systematic human rights abuses committed against indigenous individuals, communities and peoples; and economic dispossession of Papuan peoples near the Grasberg mine.

The Office for Justice and Peace of the Catholic Diocese of Jayapura first publically condemned the practices of the Freeport McMoRan mine and related human rights abuses in 1995. Then-bishop Msg Hermann Münnighoff, OFM authored and published what is now known to long-time observers as the "Münnighoff Report," a primary source for those researching human rights abuses associated with the Freeport McMoRan mine in West Papua.

FI and the Office for Justice and Peace of the Catholic Diocese of Jayapura will continue to provide updates on this situation as events unfold.

## FI urges participation in week of action for Darfur *(continued from page 3)*

Alison Jones, Advocacy Officer on Africa, gave presentations on the genocide in Darfur and the 20-year-old conflict in northern Uganda. She says she was encouraged by the students' enthusiasm and willingness to take what they had discovered in the program back to their campus.

"The students already have an Africa-related event planned for April back at Western Connecticut State," Jones said.

As the targeting of innocent civilians continues to unfold in the region, FI urges all Franciscans to keep the people of Darfur in their thoughts and prayers. The Million Voices for Darfur campaign has compiled suggestions for incorporating Darfur into a sermon or homily, sample prayers, and bulletin inserts for the Christian, Jewish, Muslim and interfaith traditions.



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211 EAST 43<sup>RD</sup> ST.  
ROOM 1100  
NEW YORK, NY 10017-4707  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

T +1. 212. 490. 46. 24  
F +1. 866. 283. 01. 34

NEWYORK@FIOP.ORG

37-39 RUE DE VERMONT  
P.O. Box 104  
1211 GENEVA 20  
SWITZERLAND

T+41. 22. 919. 40. 10  
F+41. 22. 740. 24. 33

GENEVA@FIOP.ORG

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