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# AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC MIGRANT & REFUGEE OFFICE

## News

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**Monsignor John J. Murphy, former Director of the Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office concluded his journey here on earth, Monday, November 14, 2011.**

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

John Murphy was a remarkable priest who simply wore himself out doing good for other people. His legendary service over forty-eight and a half years is an ornament to the priesthood in the Archdiocese and in the Church. John was never known to refuse any good that he could do for people. He was totally oriented to their wellbeing and tireless in the use of his gifts.

John grew up in Thornbury parish, where he attended Saint Joseph's School, Northcote, Saint Colman's, Fitzroy, and C.B.C. Victoria Parade. In his last year at school he was a Prefect and Brother Carey wrote in his report: "Few boys were held in higher respect at Parade."

AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE





After his Ordination he worked as Assistant in West Melbourne and subsequently at Alphington. When he was transferred from Alphington the altar servers at the parish wrote a combined letter to Cardinal Knox asking him to reconsider it.

***Everywhere he went John was there for people; tireless, energetic, he did the very best he could. Saying 'no' was not in his vocabulary.***

After 10 months at Coburg in 1968 he was appointed to the Catholic Immigration Office and at the beginning of 1969 he was made full-time Director for the Archdiocese of Melbourne, a work which he continued until appointed Dean of Mentone on 5th August 1992.

During his time at Oak Park John was beloved of the people. He was involved in liturgy, music, altar servers, supplying Masses in the parish, doing all the things that an Assistant would normally do on top of the demanding work for immigrants.

***Migrant families have spoken to me about his tireless work to get visas, even for disabled family members to come to Melbourne.***

The people never forgot his tireless work, his welcoming smile and all that he did to enable them to settle here.

After a full Sunday's work in the parish, I remember him going to the Freedom Hostel in Springvale to say Mass in Spanish in the evening because no-one else was available.

Quite early in his career his work was recognised when he was offered a free passage on Air India's inaugural 747 flight from Bombay to London in 1971.



As the years went on, the migrant contacts and his energetic support spread wider and wider. By 1992 he was Chairman of the Committee aiding Keston College in England, Chair also of the Catholic Co-ordination Committee for Refugees, the Settlement Committee for the Victorian Inter-Church Committee, Secretary of the Victorian Inter-Church Integration Committee and the Catholic representative on the Victorian Refugee Week Committee, as well as being Secretary of the Council of Priests.

***His wide-ranging ministry was recognised by the award of the medal of the Order of Australia in 1992.***

**"The souls of the virtuous are in  
the hands of God;  
no torment shall ever touch them,  
they are in peace."  
(Wisdom 3:1-2)**

For three years he was Dean of Mentone, where his pastoral skills were exercised with great generosity before a further appointment on 1 July 1995 as inaugural Director of the National Migrant and Refugee Office in Canberra, where he lived with the Society of Christ and later with the Archbishop, celebrated Mass for the retired Christian Brothers and immersed himself in the increasing problems of liaison with Government

over visas for Church workers. He was also Chaplain to Serra in Canberra. This appointment continued until his return to Melbourne in November 2009.

***He has been honoured by the Holy Father as Prelate of Honour on 14 May 2005 and on his retirement Pope Benedict awarded him the silver medal of the present Pontificate.***

For a short time he was Chaplain at Villa Maria, Bundoora, until illness intervened, followed by a time at Justin Villa, St Vincent's Hospital and St George's Hospital, Kew.

He was diocesan and later national Chaplain for the Guild of Saint Stephen for altar servers. I have a deep personal debt of gratitude for his role as second Master of Ceremonies for many years in the 70s and 80s.

He is remembered by the family as gentle, devoted, totally selfless, with an inability to say 'no'. He loved the simple things; listening to the old CDs before he died, loved his niece, Claire, and took her to movies. When I visited him on Friday evening the fierce determination to go on living was there, although he was obviously suffering. Later, aware that he had fought the good fight, he admitted 'I think I want to die'.

***As we farewell him we remember Monsignor John Murphy as a people's priest; tireless, generous to a fault, faith-filled and dedicated to the needs of people.***

May his expansive and generous soul, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.

+ Denis J. Hart,

ARCHBISHOP OF MELBOURNE.

HOMILY GIVEN AT THE FUNERAL MASS FOR MONSIGNOR JOHN JOSEPH MURPHY  
CELEBRATED BY ARCHBISHOP DENIS HART AT SAINT FRANCIS DE SALES'  
CHURCH, OAK PARK, ON FRIDAY, 18 NOVEMBER 2011 AT 12.30 PM



## **Plea for Australian Government and International Help to save Kachin ethnic minorities in Northern Burma**

While things in Burma have been difficult for several ethnic minorities for many years, the outbreak of civil war on the 9th June 2011, ending a 17 year ceasefire, has been marred with escalated violence.

As a result of the recent violence, the Burmese Kachin ethnic community and Kachin Association of Australia are appealing to the Australian Government, its diplomatic missions, Australian Catholic Organisations, other community leaders and international communities, to help in

- Urging the Burmese Government to find a peaceful resolution to end the conflicts and stop its troops committing serious human rights abuses that have been ongoing in Northern Burma since June 2011.
- Providing humanitarian assistance to those war-fled innocent civilians and displaced people who have lost their livelihoods, and have been trapped near the China border in Northern Burma.

A report released this week on war crimes in Northern Burma by Partners Relief & Development, documents many of the crimes. These include torture, extrajudicial killing, open fire on civilians, human shielding, unlawful arrest and detention, forced labor, forced relocation, displacement, property theft and property destruction by the Burma army.

The 59-page report documents first-hand testimony and frontline photographs of the increasingly brutal civil war in Burma's Kachin State.

In a recent interview with La Nan, Joint-secretary of the Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO) in Burma, the Irrawaddy news reports the Burmese army has deployed an additional 8,000 to 10,000 troops in their offensive against the Kachin rebels. The same

paper reports the total size of the Burmese army includes 400,000 troops while the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) has no more than 6,000 to 10,000 soldiers.

Despite the disparity in troop strength, clashes have continued since June, forcing some 30,000 local villages to flee their homes and take sanctuary elsewhere reports the Irrawaddy news.

Most of the recent clashes have occurred in the Man Wing Gyi region and west of the KIO/KIA headquarters in Laiza.

A written statement by Benedict Rogers delivered to the U.S. House of Representatives reports on the 6 November 2011 soldiers from the Burma Army's 88th Light Infantry Division shot at worshippers in a church in Muk Chyik village, Wai Maw Township. Rogers also reports on the 16th October 2011 Burmese soldiers from the Light Infantry Battalion 438 seized control of a Roman Catholic Church in Namsan Yang Village, Waimaw township, where 23 worshipers, mostly women and elderly people, had gathered for 8am Sunday Mass.

"The worshippers took refuge from the gunfire behind the Maria prayer sanctuary. When the troops saw them, they shot several rounds of bullets into the sanctuary. The Catholic assistant to the priest, 49 year-old father-of-four Jangma Awng Li, decided to speak to the troops as he is fluent in Burmese. He was beaten in his head with a rifle butt, and injured his forehead when he hit a concrete wall. He and four other men were handcuffed and detained by the soldiers" said Rogers.

In Burma, the ethnic Chin on the India-Burma border and Kachin on the China-Burma border are predominantly Christians. Other persecuted minorities include the predominantly Muslim Rohingyas on the Bangladesh-Burma Border and the Karen, Karenni, Shan and Mon, who include Christians, Buddhists, Animists and Muslims on the Thailand-Burma border, reports Rogers.

The Kachin Association of Australia have received reports that the Burmese army has relentlessly launched attacks against its unarmed/non-combatant civilians and captured young men to serve as porters while raping, enslaving, and executing young women with impunity.



Innocent ethnic villagers, church worshippers (including women) were arrested and mobilized to the front line to serve as human shields in battle fields. Arbitrary shootings and bombing, religious persecution, torture, bodily mutilations, burning to death and summary executions are prevalent atrocities perpetrated by the Burmese Army battalions throughout Kachin villages.

Since the 17th October, the Kachin Association of Australia has received reports of chemical weapons used by the Burmese Army in battles against the Kachin Army in three separate locations: Ntap Bum, Lung Zep kawng and Shwe Nyaung Pyin. After chemical weapon shells exploded in Kachin Army posts, people suffered symptoms include nausea, dehydration, vomiting, fainting, and the long term effects are still under investigation.

The Kachin Association of Australia plea to the Australian Government and international leaders to take urgent action to stop Burmese Government troops committing these serious human rights abuses towards Kachin Ethnic minorities and to provide humanitarian aid to war-fled refugees in Burma-China border.

**Joe Moloney**

**Research and Information Officer, ACMRO**

### Sources:

Kachin Association of Australia, Press Release November

Written Statement by Mr. Benedict Rogers, East Asia Team Leader, Christian Solidarity Worldwide to the U.S. House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Human Rights, November 2011.

Partners Relief & Development, Crimes in Northern Burma; Results from a fact -finding mission to Kachin State NOVEMBER 2011 Available at [http://partnersworld.org.au/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=169](http://partnersworld.org.au/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=169)

Sai Zom Hseng, Kachin Peace Talks Inflamed by War Rhetoric, The Irrawaddy 28 November 2011. [http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art\\_id=22550](http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=22550)

<http://asiancorrespondent.com/69304/to-prove-irreversible-reform-burma-must-end-war-in-kachin-state/>

<http://democracyforburma.wordpress.com/2011/11/04/kwatthe-burma-army-must-immediately-release-four-women-held-as-sex-slaves-near-kachin-china-border/>

<http://www.mizzima.com/special/kachin-battle-report/6233-burmese-government-and-kio-meet-in-china.html>

Palai Nan Naw was eight years old when he was killed. He was in fourth grade and lived with his family in Nam Lim Pa, Kachin State, Burma. He was ethnic Kachin and attended a Baptist church. He was outside of his house on the street on 8 October 2011 when Burma Army soldiers from battalions 74 and 276 opened fire among the civilian population. Palai Nan Naw was killed immediately when a bomb exploded next to him.

The following photo and eye witness account are from Palai's friend.

"I was getting ready to watch a movie at my grandmother's house when I heard shooting out in the street. It was loud and sounded like a lot of guns. I ran outside (approx. 11 a.m. on 8 October 2011) to see what was happening. Her house is across the street from the Roman Catholic church. I could see more than 100 Burmese soldiers in the street shooting and many more getting ready to shoot. I saw two villagers much farther down the street shooting back. Villagers were in the street running and screaming. I saw Burmese

soldiers fire a mortar that hit my friend Nan Naw. I didn't see any villagers with guns or KIA soldiers near him when he got hit. I saw him fall on the ground, but I didn't see him get up."

Partners Relief & Development, **Crimes in Northern Burma**, November 2011.





## **PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE PASTORAL CARE OF MIGRANTS AND ITINERANT PEOPLE**



### **World Fisheries Day Message**

**21<sup>th</sup> November 2011**

World Fisheries Day is celebrated every year on November 21 throughout the world by fishing communities to highlight the precarious situation in which many of them live and the importance of maintaining the world's fisheries.

Fisheries are a source of income and livelihood for millions of people around the world, but it is extremely difficult to have precise data of the number of persons engaged in it. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), it is estimated that roughly 15 million fishermen are employed aboard decked or un-decked fishing vessels operating in the marine capture fisheries. If part-time fishermen are included, as well as those involved in freshwater fisheries and aquaculture, the number rises to 36 million.

The vast majority of fishermen engaged in small-scale and traditional fishing are found along the coasts of undeveloped countries living in great poverty, using antiquated methods of fishing and in extreme unsafe conditions.

Fishermen employed on board of Distant Water Vessels (DWV) are forced to live on board of their vessels for extended periods of time, working long hours in all kind of weather conditions, sometimes without any protection, and receive very little salary.



Fishermen working nets in the waves, Kenya.

Source: © FMAP / Josh Cinner.



Fishermen from developing countries are confronted with lack of people interested in the job, increased prices of fuel and policies limiting period of catch and establishing restricting national quota.

For all of them every day is a struggle against the forces of nature that devastate their boats and nets, sometimes seen in a very dramatic way such as the tsunami in Asia in 2004 and, more recently, in Japan. They have to face climate change and ecological/environmental disasters that, together with overfishing, destroy the sources of their livelihood and finally the economic system that exploits their hard work. These facts are making fishing one of the most dangerous and hazardous occupations in the world.

The Apostleship of the Sea (AOS), with its network of Centers around the world, has been for long time a "safe harbor" for many fishermen. Chaplains and volunteers have provided different kinds of services and assistance to respond to their spiritual and material needs.

In this Fisheries Day we would like to unite our voice to the voices of fishermen, to invite International Organizations and Governments to develop standards which will ensure decent and productive work for fishermen's employment, income and food security and to have the *Work in Fishing Convention*, 2007 (No. 188) ratified to guarantee a safe working environment and welfare provisions.

May *Mary Stella Maris* continue to be the source of strength and protection to all the fishermen and their families.

+ Antonio Maria Vegliò  
President



New Zealand fishing boats and operations.

Source: © FMAP / New Zealand Seafood Industry Council.



## **Australian Human Rights Commission announces inquiry into the treatment of suspected people smugglers who say that they are children.**

The Australian Human Rights Commission will conduct an inquiry into the treatment of suspected people smugglers who claim to be children.

Commission President Catherine Branson QC announced the inquiry today.

***"I have been concerned for some time that errors may have been made in the processes used to determine the age of these individuals,"*** Ms Branson said.

"These errors may have resulted in children being detained for long periods of time in immigration detention and in adult prisons".

"The individuals of immediate concern are Indonesian nationals who have worked as crew on boats bringing asylum seekers to Australia and who have subsequently been investigated for people smuggling offences," Ms Branson said.

Ms Branson said Australia has a range of human rights obligations in relation to unaccompanied children who arrive in Australia and she holds concerns for at least 20 individuals currently detained in adult prisons who say they are children.

***"Australia has a responsibility to ensure that unaccompanied children who arrive in Australia are provided with special protection and assistance due to their vulnerability,"*** Ms Branson said.

"Australia is also obliged to ensure that children deprived of their liberty are separated from adults in detention or prison."

Ms Branson said the inquiry would consider the use of wrist x-rays as evidence of age in criminal proceedings.

***"Wrist x-ray evidence has been used to prove age in many cases even though its reliability is disputed by medical experts,"*** she said.

The Commission's inquiry into the treatment of individuals suspected of people smuggling offences who say that they are children is expected to run until mid-2012.

The inquiry will request documentation about these individuals from a range of Commonwealth agencies. It will also consider material gathered from submissions, public forums, interviews and visits to immigration detention centres and prisons.

Information about the inquiry can be found at

[www.humanrights.gov.au/ageassessment](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/ageassessment)

Media contact: Louise McDermott on (02) 9284 9851 or 0419 258 597



## ***For I was a stranger and you made me welcomed"***

Monsignor John J. Murphy, former Director of the Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office concluded his journey here on earth, Monday, November 14, 2011.

The Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office joins the many people who mourn and offer prayers for this truly good and faithful servant of Jesus Christ and of the Church.

During his life, Monsignor Murphy has served the Church in various ministries. The Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office wishes to remember him, above all, for his long, passionate and generous contribution to the ministry to migrants and refugees.

In 1969, he was appointed Director of the Catholic Immigration Office of the Archdiocese of Melbourne, where he served until 1992. After few years as Dean of St Patrick's Parish in Mentone, VIC, the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference appointed him National Director of the Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office (ACMRO) on July 1 1995, where he served until the end of 2008.

In my role now as Director of the ACMRO, I see continually the profound care and commitment that permeated Mons. Murphy's ministry to migrants and refugees.

In January 1994, he was awarded the Order of Australia Medal (OAM) for his service to the Catholic Immigration Office.



Together with the ACMRO Staff, I take this opportunity to

thank Monsignor Murphy for his faith-filled contribution to the pastoral care of migrants and refugees in Australia, and his assistance to dioceses, religious institutions and others in this work, over many years.

Monsignor John J. Murphy with staff of ACMRO, 2009.

His death happened during the last week of the liturgical year which concludes with the proclamation of Chapter 25 of Matthew's Gospel: ***"Come you, whom my Father has blessed, take for your heritage the Kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world. [...]. For I was a stranger and you made me welcomed". (Mt 25:35).***

I have no doubt, the Lord has welcomed Monsignor Murphy home now with the same care and consolation he welcomed so many migrants and refugees in Australia.

Fr. Maurizio Pettenà CS

National Director Canberra, 15 November 2011

## MEDIA RELEASE 28 November 2011

### **New policy on community integration for asylum seekers “promising” says Catholic Church.**

The Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office welcomed today the decision by the Minister for Immigration Chris Bowen to move asylum seekers arriving by boat into the community on bridging visas while their claims are assessed.

Director of the ACMRO Fr Maurizio Pettenà CS said that the announced policy change is another important step by the Government to alleviate the detrimental effects of prolonged detention of desperate people.

*“This is a very appropriate step and one that has been made due to the passionate support of the Departments and charitable organisations who have made hosting asylum seekers in the community such a great success”.*

“It shows good will for which we are very grateful. Australia’s commitment to uphold the dignity of those who seek asylum was stated when signing the 1951 refugee convention. These changes seem to reflect something of that statement”, he said.

The ACMRO also welcomes the decision to grant work rights to those on bridging visas. The right to work is essential for anyone in order to protect and provide for their family.

*“I believe this policy will be well executed, and asylum seekers who are given the opportunity to live and work in the community with the support of the Department and other Non-Government Organisations, will see their lives greatly improved and the community will be all the richer for it”,* said Fr Pettenà.

The policy would see asylum seekers released into the community as soon as it is deemed that they do not present a security risk to the country, and they would be allowed to live in the community freely until their claims for asylum are adequately processed.

Those considered too vulnerable to be given “bridging visas” such as unaccompanied minors have already been released into the community under an existing program, and under this policy, would continue to be given a high level of support.

Mr Bowen said the first group consisted of long-term detainees, all single men, previously accommodated at a range of detention facilities across Australia and at various stages of their asylum claims. They are mostly Afghans and Sri Lankans.

For media enquiries,

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