Blog

Maryknoll Sr. Susan Nchubiri holds a sign during a pray-in Nov. 9 at the Hart Senate Office Building in Washington, D.C., calling for a cease-fire in the Israel-Hamas war and the release . of more than 200 hostages taken by Hamas in an Oct. 7 attack. (Courtesy of Pax Christi)

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***Editor's note**: Global Sisters Report's Monday Starter is a feature from GSR staff writers that rounds up news from or about women religious that you may otherwise have missed.*

Catholic sisters and representatives of their organizations participated Nov. 9 in a "pray-in" at the Hart Senate Office Building in Washington, D.C., calling on U.S. lawmakers to push Israel for a cease-fire in Gaza as civilian deaths and injuries rise in the region. They also urged a release of more than 200 hostages taken by Hamas in an Oct. 7 attack.

Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, Sisters of Mercy of the Americas Justice Team, along with the Carmelite Sisters of Vedruna were among organizations that participated in the event urging Christian members of Congress "to abide by Jesus' way of courageous love and to heed Christian leaders, such as Pope Francis' call to take the side of peace, and urge all parties to de-escalate hostilities; abide by an immediate ceasefire."

Several participants were arrested but none seemed to be sisters, said Judy Coode, communications director for Pax Christi USA headquartered in Washington.

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The groups involved with the event urged diplomacy, instead of military force. "Sending more deadly weapons is not constructive," the organization said in a press release.

Worldwide, peace activists are calling on Israel to spare civilians in Gaza, particularly those in hospitals where fuel and water have run out, adding to the suffering of the injured.

Religious communities such as the Adrian Dominican Sisters in Michigan issued a statement Nov. 3 against the violence and terrorism in the Holy Land, but also the "resulting words of hatred and acts of violence in the United States" that have resulted against Muslims and Jews in light of the conflict.

In Illinois, a 71-year-old man some have identified as a member of a Catholic parish was charged in October with first-degree murder, attempted murder as well as hate crimes for stabbing a Muslim woman, and killing her 6-year-old son. Local prosecutors in a filing said the man had wanted to evict the woman and child and was "angry at her for what was going on in Jerusalem."

The Adrian Dominicans appealed to people of faith to look at the commonalities instead of the differences.

"As Christian women of faith who share common ancestors in Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar with our Jewish and Muslim brothers and sisters, our hearts ache at the horrors of terrorism and war that continue to ravage the lives of innocent children, women, and men in the Holy Land," their statement said. "We pray daily that a nonviolent solution may be found to bring lasting peace and security to all of God's people in the region, a safe return of the hostages, and an end to unfathomable suffering."

News reports said hospitals in Gaza can longer serve their function and many are looking for ways to bury the bodies of people who have died on their grounds as a result of attacks or lack of water and working equipment at the facilities.

"May all of us in our Abrahamic faith traditions turn to the profound call to honor the inherent dignity of all persons, made as we are in the image and likeness of God. Our Christian tradition calls us further — to love one another," the Adrian Dominicans' statement said.

A group of U.S. bishops makes their way to the Aid Center for Deported Migrants in Nogales, Mexico, March 31, 2014. (CNS/Nancy Wiechec)

Volunteer opportunity for sisters at the border

The Kino Border Initiative is accepting applications for women religious who want to volunteer to work with and learn about migrants along the U.S.-Mexico border for a month or more. Kino, an organization inspired by Jesuit spirituality, operates along the Nogales area — in Arizona on the U.S. side and Nogales, Sonora, on the Mexico side. Travel and lodging expenses for those participating in "Catholic Sisters Walking with Migrants" program are covered by a grant from the Hilton Foundation.

Though there seems to be no deadline, the organization says it's accepting applications for March, April, August and September 2024 at volunteer@kinoborderinitiative.org.

Kino offers humanitarian aid to migrants, educates others about their plight by promoting encounters and advocates for solutions to immigration challenges.

Sisters take part in presentation focused on eliminating violence against women

To recognize the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, sisters participated Nov. 14 in the screening of a film and a panel on the topic at the headquarters of the International Union of Superior Generals in Rome. The event began with the screening of "Invisibles No More" about a group of resilient women who overcame violence.

Following the screening, sisters participated in a panel discussion about how to best give visibility to the suffering of vulnerable women, victims of violence and discrimination, and best practices religious congregations and lay organizations can use to help them and raise awareness of their plight.