News



Activists hold a banner at a Fly Kites Not Drones event March 21 at the Iowa Air National Guard base in Des Moines, Iowa. (Courtesy of Brian Terrell)



by Maria Benevento

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Editor's note: Welcome to NCR's Justice Action Bulletin, where every Tuesday we bring you the latest news on active nonviolence in the service of peace and justice. Do you have news you would like to share? Contact Maria Benevento at mbenevento@ncronline.org.

UNITED KINGDOM — Peace activists in the United Kingdom, including the London Catholic Worker and Pax Christi, called on groups around the world to join them in hosting "Fly Kites Not Drones" events on or near Nowruz, the Persian new year, March 21.



Activists fly kites at a Fly Kites Not Drones event March 21 at the Iowa Air National Guard base. (Courtesy of Brian Terrell)

According to a Jan. 17 email from Voices for Creative Nonviolence UK calling on U.S. Catholic Workers to join the campaign, Fly Kites Not Drones started five years ago in Kabul, Afghanistan, to highlight the fears drones cause children, and convey the message that "beautiful blue skies should be kept as a place of fun, wonderment and joy, not a means of reaping terror and fear."

The email also said the campaign has gained increased urgency with the news that the U.S. may be shifting more resources to the war in Afghanistan at a time when civilian casualties are already at an all-time high.

The Fly Kites Not Drones website lists 10 events that have taken place or are planned between March 17 and April 1 in the United Kingdom, and at least one U.S. event took place at the Iowa Air National Guard base, protesting the 132nd Wing's drone control center March 21.

OLD LYME — A married couple from Pakistan received sanctuary in the First Congregational Church of Old Lyme, Connecticut, after Immigration and Customs Enforcement ordered them to be deported March 19, Connecticut station News 8 reported March 22.

The church hopes to shield the couple from deportation by allowing them to live on its property because Immigration and Customs Enforcement has a policy of not conducting enforcement in "sensitive" locations such as churches.

According to a March 22 report from the Shoreline Times, the couple, Malik Naveed Bin Rehman and Zahida Altaftake, are business owners and have been in the U.S. since 2000. Their visas expired and they were misled by a lawyer, who was later incarcerated for fraud, when they attempted to extend them.

The couple has a 5-year-old daughter who is a U.S. citizen. She is being cared for by friends and family in New Britain, Connecticut, so she can attend kindergarten.

HOUSTON — Latino and Muslim activists are working to build solidarity and increase connections with a movement called "A Taco Truck at Every Mosque," most recently hosting an event in Houston that was attended by 300 people, according to a March 25 report from the Houston Chronicle.

The program, founded in Orange County, California, by Rida Hamida and Ben Vazquez and inspired by Latinos for Trump co-founder Marco Gutierrez's warning that American could see "taco trucks on every corner," hosts religious services at mosques that include a call for Latino-Muslim cooperation. Afterwards, a taco truck parks outside to serve free halal tacos.

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At the time of a Feb. 8 report from NPR, the program founders estimated they had served 7,300 people and nearly 29,000 tacos at events from Baja California in Mexico to Sacramento, California. They had also inspired a similar event in the Milwaukee, Wisconsin, area.

WASHINGTON — A little more than a week before Deferred Enforced Departure status is set to expire for Liberia, a group of 119 faith-based organizations and 509 faith leaders sent President Donald Trump a letter urging him to extend the status, according to a March 22 press release from the Catholic Legal Immigration Network Inc. (also known as CLINIC).

Deferred Enforced Departure, like the better known Temporary Protected Status program, allows immigrants from specific countries to remain temporarily in the U.S. with permission to work because it is not safe for them to return to their home countries. Unlike Temporary Protected Status, status determinations are made by the president.

Liberia was first granted Deferred Enforced Departure by President George W. Bush in 2007; the status has been extended in 12, 18, and 24 month increments ever since, but could expire March 31. The press release said the country is still recovering from war and unrest, faces food insecurity and has experienced Ebola and malaria outbreaks.

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