

**Written Testimony by Bishop David J. Malloy, Chairman,
Committee on International Justice and Peace
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops to the
House Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs
April 14, 2023**

On behalf of the Committee on International Justice and Peace of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), I thank the Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs for this opportunity to submit testimony on appropriations for FY 2024. Together with Catholic Relief Services (CRS), the overseas relief and development agency for the U.S. Catholic Church, we urge you to appropriate funding for the international poverty-reducing humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding accounts in the table below.

| Agency | Appropriations Account | Amount in \$,000 |
|---------------|--|-------------------------|
| USAID | Maternal Health and Child Survival | \$1,012,000 |
| USAID | Nutrition | \$230,000 |
| USAID | Vulnerable Children (orphans and displaced) | \$35,000 |
| USAID | Malaria, TB, Global Health Security & other NTDs | \$2,728,500 |
| DOS/PEPFAR | HIV/AIDS (State Funding/PEPFAR) | \$4,725,000 |
| USAID | Development Assistance (including water, education) | \$5,425,697 |
| USAID/OFDA | International Disaster Assistance | \$4,899,362 |
| DOS/PRM | Migration and Refugee Assistance | \$4,112,000 |
| DOS/PRM | Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance | \$100,000 |
| USAID | Complex Crises Fund and Atrocities Prevention Board | \$85,000 |
| MCC | Millennium Challenge Corporation | \$1,073,000 |
| DOS/IO | Contributions to International Peacekeeping Activities | \$1,940,702 |
| DOS/IO | Peacekeeping Operations | \$420,458 |
| | | |
| DOS/IO | Green Climate Fund | \$1,600,000 |
| DOS/IO | Combatting Trafficking in Persons | \$126,400 |

In his 2020 encyclical on fraternity and social friendship, [*Fratelli Tutti*](#), Pope Francis teaches, “The decision to include or exclude those lying wounded along the roadside can serve as a criterion for judging every economic, political, social and religious project. Each day we have to decide whether to be Good Samaritans or indifferent bystanders...” (#69). Such international assistance demonstrates our nation’s compassion and gives life to our values as a nation and as a world leader.

Our assistance cannot stop there. Pope Francis stated in his 2013 apostolic exhortation, [*Evangelii Gaudium*](#) (The Joy of the Gospel), “The need to resolve the **structural causes of poverty** cannot be delayed...Inequality is the root of social ills” (#202). He adds that the growing inequality in the world “eventually engenders a violence which recourse to arms cannot and never will be able to resolve” (#60).

At a time when the world media focuses on the war in Ukraine and the growing rivalry between the United States and China, it is important now more than ever that we continue to show our

compassion to the rest of the world, where hundreds of millions of people struggle to deal with the root causes of persistent conflict, hunger, and unprecedented displacement. We commend the United States Government's recent efforts to re-prioritize Africa with a flurry of high-level visits to the continent and the U.S. Africa Leaders' Summit held in December 2022. We look forward to the effective implementation of the Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act and the Global Fragility Act Strategy (GFAS) in the five countries and the region in which the Strategy will operate. We hope these laws and the processes they put in place will aid progress in preventing and resolving conflict and building peace.

In this context, we would like to raise some **strategic-level issues and recommendations** on how the United States may rebalance and refocus its international diplomacy and assistance to better align with the problems and threats that our world faces. We ask that you consider this analysis in the report language for this appropriations bill. We urge the United States to:

1. Re-Imagine How to Balance the GFAS with Existing International Priorities

The GFAS commits the United States to improve stability, democratic rule, fight corruption, end conflict, and build social cohesion for the common good over the interests of corrupt, autocratic, or worse, predatory governments. The U.S. must delicately balance a local government's responsibility to provide for its people's peace and prosperity while preserving their civil rights and full participation in the political process. The United States also needs to adopt a comprehensive and long-term approach if it is to address the root causes of instability. ["Building democratic systems in a context of widespread poverty, acute inequality, high levels of corruption, and entrenched interests of local and foreign actors who have nothing to expect from truly transparent and accountable governments is a huge challenge that requires much more than short-term support to elections and governance."](#) (Carnegie Endowment for Peace Comments on U.S. Africa Leaders' Summit)

The Catholic Church in many fragile countries seeks to hold its local government accountable for its corrupt or autocratic rule. For example, the South Sudan Council of Churches issued a statement committing its members to active non-violent means to convince its government leaders to halt the decade-long senseless violence. It calls on the international community to pressure their government to uphold the common good and promote democratic rule of law. The U.S. must clearly be a champion of the common good and of local civil society groups who struggle for civil rights and freedoms. Continuous instability and fragility only benefit national and international actors who create and foster those conditions for their own political and economic interests at the expense of the wellbeing of the local people.

The GFAS raises conflict prevention to a central policy objective along with the political, economic, and diplomatic interests of the United States. The U.S. Mission will also adopt a "compact style" country partnership with local governments. These measures will only succeed if State Department and USAID allow the in-country Mission GFAS representative to exert the authority, leadership and ownership to make GFAS objectives and implementation the guiding priorities in U.S. international partnerships in fragile countries.

To accomplish this, the U.S. will have to resist the tendency to overestimate security, economic and 'big power' rivalry concerns over the benefits of better governance and democracy. Many observers believe that this will require a deep culture shift and institutional re-engineering in our

international relations structures. How should in-country U.S. Missions in fragile countries be restructured to fully prioritize the GFAS objectives of conflict prevention and stabilization into a whole of Mission approach? Congress and the Administration will have to remain committed to this and vigilant to ensure that the State Department meets its GFAS goals to build peace and prosperity in fragile countries. We are encouraged that House leadership shares these goals. As Rep. Michael McCaul (R-TX-10), Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, noted, “By addressing root causes of instability and violent extremism, such as poverty and weak governance, [the Global Fragility Act (GFA)] will work to prevent conflicts before they occur.”

2. Re-Imagine the Funding of the GFAS and Peacebuilding

The State Department receives only 1% of the federal budget and of that, Peacebuilding funds to State Department and USAID (exclusive of funding to the UN) was only \$570.7 million in FY 2021 for the entire world. Of that, the Congress appropriated \$125 million (out of \$200 million authorized by the GFA) to implement the GFA strategy in four countries across the world and the five countries in the Coastal West Africa region. GFA funding is 1-2% of total in country international assistance and 6% and 12% in the other two.

Peacebuilding funding is scattered among 11 different budget accounts such as promotion of human rights and democracy, atrocity prevention, prevention and stabilization, Complex Crises Fund, Conflict Stabilization Operations, Transition Initiatives and Reconciliation. These accounts are split between various offices in the State Department and USAID who partner with a myriad of NGOs, contractors and foundations in the U.S. In this world of complex, country specific conflict, it is unclear how these various U.S. programs and accounts match up with the corresponding needs of so many countries in conflict.

The GFAS offers an opportunity to do a thorough review of the various peacebuilding accounts to determine how they match the state of conflict in today’s world, how effective, flexible, and nimble they are in addressing conflict at its various stages and make appropriate adjustments. What is clear though is that the overall amount of funding to address conflict at all its stages in the world is woefully inadequate to respond to the alarming and growing level of violence.

3. Place a Greater Priority on Empowering Civil Society and Faith-Based Groups

One commonality in all fragile countries is the political dominance of **government** institutions and **private for-profit corporations**, while a **vast array of private, independent civil society associations** struggle to protect civil rights, promote justice, fight corruption, and safeguard elections. Often, **faith-based institutions** are among the few civil society institutions remaining with enough credibility, authority, and institutional cohesiveness to stand up to corrupt and repressive governments. The local Catholic Church is often the biggest, most stable civil society organization in the country or region. Across Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, and Asia, the Catholic Church, along with other Christian and Muslim denominations, has denounced corruption, repression, defrauded elections, state violence and insurgencies, often at the risk of their own personal and institutional peril. They also work to address nascent or open conflict in local communities.

For example, in Ghana, a GFA country, Muslim and Catholic leaders are working together with Catholic Relief Services to prevent the violent conflict in Burkina Faso from spreading into northern Ghana. The Catholic Diocese of Navrongo-Bolgatanga in northern Ghana worked with the Doba and Kandiga communities to resolve a land dispute before it evolved into violence. Armed groups or extremists exploit this kind of normal societal dispute to win new recruits and provoke new violence and instability. A Muslim leader in the same area of northern Ghana leads an Interfaith Dialogue Center and partners with the government-sponsored Peace Council to identify and resolve conflict before it turns violent, especially that between local Muslim and Christian communities. In Mozambique, CRS, along with Helvetas, partner with the Diocese of Pemba's Justice and Peace Commission (CEJP), the Islamic Council of Cabo Delgado to implement the "Youth-led Action for Peace," a People-to-People project funded by USAID's Center for Conflict and Violence Prevention (CVP) to build youth resilience against violence and to strengthen social cohesion.

U.S. Government representatives would do well to consult with local religious leaders regularly. The local Church organizes peace and justice institutions, electoral monitoring teams, political mediation efforts, and negotiations between armed groups and the government. Their efforts are courageous, but often too small and under-supported. Peacebuilding experts know it requires a generation or more to transform conflict. We urge you to use the GFA Country Strategies to make a generational commitment to build local civil society organizations' capacity to defend human rights, end repression and violence. This funding must be long-term, flexible, and nimble while ensuring accountability and impact. This can be done through three-way partnerships between USAID, American civil society institutions like Catholic Relief Services, and their local civil society and faith-based partners.

4. Address State Fragility and Conflict in Other Vulnerable Countries

The GFAS countries where armed conflict is currently latent (Benin, Togo, Ghana and Papua New Guinea), in the past (Côte d'Ivoire), current (Haiti and Guinea Conakry), or present in an isolated part of the country (Mozambique). As the GFA Strategy takes shape in coastal West Africa, it must remain keenly vigilant to conflict in the Sahel region that is to the coastal countries and is likely the most lethal threat to stability in these coastal countries. The U.S. must respond swiftly to address the growing and out of control conflict in Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and Nigeria. Two approaches are desperately needed to better address the conflict drivers of radical extremism and herder-farmer conflict: a program to build Muslim-Christian collaboration to counter the allure of extremist groups, and another program to promote regional herder-farmer conflict stabilization and prevention strategies. The United States spends hundreds of millions of dollars yearly to care for the victims of violence in the Sahel. The United States should also assist them to end the fighting and suffering.

The U.S. Bishops strongly oppose any expansion of taxpayer funding of abortion as part of this appropriations legislation. The longstanding, bipartisan, and life-saving Helms Amendment policy and all Hyde-related pro-life riders must be included before this bill moves forward. The USCCB will oppose any bill that expands taxpayer funding of abortion, including any appropriations bill. We implore Congress not to play politics with this crucial funding by departing from the longstanding, bipartisan position of the Helms Amendment.