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Activists hold banners protesting the U.S. use of drones during a Dec. 28 action at the Iowa National Guard Drone Command Center to commemorate the Feast of the Holy Innocents. (Courtesy of Aaron Jorgensen, Des Moines Catholic Worker)



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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

DES MOINES, IOWA — Four Catholic Workers were arrested Dec. 28 at a protest that connected King Herod's murder of young children in his quest to kill the infant Jesus with the deaths of innocent people killed by U.S. drone strikes, according to a press release.

The Des Moines Catholic Worker and Voices for Peace co-sponsored the Feast of Holy Innocents Faith and Resistance Retreat and Witness, which took place Dec. 27-28 to coincide with the Dec. 28 Feast of the Holy Innocents.

The retreat began Dec. 27 with a Bible study led by Des Moines Catholic Worker Frank Cordaro and a report on drones by New York Catholic Worker Brian Hynes and Des Moines Catholic Worker Julie Brown, who knows drone victims through her work with Christian Peacemaker Teams in Iraqi Kurdistan.

On Dec. 28, the group celebrated a liturgy with Fr. Carl Kabat and planned and carried out an action at the entrance of the Iowa National Guard Drone Command Center. They held banners that read: "Herod Killed the Infants. (Matt. 2:16.) Today the Des Moines Armed Drone Command Kills Them Too! Celebrate Christmas. Shut Down DM's Drone Command!"

After refusing to leave, four Catholic Workers including Hynes, Ed Bloomer and Al Burney from Des Moines, and Greg Boertje-Obed from Duluth were arrested and spent the night in jail.

According to a Dec. 29 press release, all four were released Dec. 29 and charged with misdemeanor trespass. Burney pled guilty and was fined, while Hynes, Bloomer and Boertje-Obed pled not guilty and hope to receive a jury trial in Des Moines.

DUBUQUE, IOWA — After 77 years in operation, the refugee resettlement program run by Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Dubuque is closing, the agency announced Dec. 18.

A reduction in the number of refugees admitted to the United States combined with a new requirement that all refugee resettlement sites must resettle a minimum of 100 refugees each year have made it impossible for the program to remain open.

"Our faith guides us to believe in the dignity of all persons and the need to protect the most vulnerable, especially refugees and migrants. It is with a heavy heart that we announce the ending of this ministry," Dubuque Archbishop Michael Jackels said in the press release.

Catholic Charities will continue to provide immigration-related legal services.

RALEIGH, NC — This Christmas, approximately 50 anti-death penalty activists gathered outside Raleigh's Central Prison to sing carols to the guards and inmates, the Raleigh-based News & Observer [reported](#) Dec. 25.

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According to a Dec. 25 [report](#) from Spectrum News, which covers central North Carolina, the event is an annual tradition which started 21 years ago when a group of six people attended. Patrick O'Neill of Fr. Charlie Mulholland Catholic Worker House organized the gathering.

Since inmates are not allowed visitors on Christmas, the carolers were not allowed on prison grounds and had to climb a bank to a nearby railroad track where their voices could echo around the prison. The group also made stops by the main entrance and near death row.

O'Neill, speaking on a Spectrum News video, said he was inspired by his faith, which encourages him to visit those in prison and show love to those whom the culture considers "the least."

TUCSON, ARIZONA — Episcopal priest Steve Keplinger and Catholic Worker Brian Flagg were among those who addressed a crowd in Tucson Dec. 21 during a memorial for people who have died while experiencing homelessness, Tucson Local Media [reported](#) Dec. 27.

National Homeless Persons' Memorial Day is held annually on Dec. 21, the longest night of the year, to honor those who have died and call for an end to homelessness. The Tucson memorial was hosted by the Primavera Foundation and recognized the 155 homeless people who died in 2017.

During the event, which was held at the county plot of Evergreen Cemetery, speakers called for action, including political advocacy, to reduce homelessness. Percussionist Tony Redhouse led the group in a Native American song and dance at the end of the memorial.

[According to NPR](#), nearly 100 memorial events were registered with the National Coalition for the Homeless this year.

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