

NONVIOLENT CHANGE

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an interorganizational project of the Organization Development Institute

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Nonviolent Change helps to network the peace community: providing dialoguing, exchanges of ideas, articles, reviews, reports and announcements of the activities of peace related groups and meetings, reviews of world developments relating to nonviolent change and resource information concerning the development of human relations on the basis of mutual respect.

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“Building Sustainable Peace to Ensure Sustainable Development” is at Bamenda, Cameroon, March 14 &15. For information visit: <http://www.lukmefcameroon.org/peaceconference/>

The **2008 Comparative and International Education Society (CIES): Toward Equity and Social Justice: Research and Practice in Peace Education Conference** is to be held March 17-21, at Teachers College, Columbia University in New York City. For information contact Dr. Monisha Bajaj, Teachers College, Box 55, 525 W. 120th St., New York, NY 10027(212)678-3194, bajaj@tc.edu.

2nd International Summit on Conflict Resolution Education, Youth and Conflict: Global Challenges - Local Strategies is March 28-29 in Cleveland, Ohio, with pre-conference trainings March 27. For information go to: www.tri-c.edu/community/girc.htm.

The University of Texas at Austin is holding a **three-day conference focusing on the theme of wars and conflicts in Africa, March 28-30.**For information contact Roy Doron: africaconf2008@gmail.com, <http://www.utexas.edu/conferences/africa/2008/>. March 30th and 31st, Closed policy meetings of the **International Network on Conflict Resolution Education and Peace Education (INCREPE) and the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) reference group.** For information contact: Jennifer Batton, Director, Global Issues Resource Center, Cuyahoga Community College - Eastern Campus, 4250 Richmond Rd., Highland Hills, OH 44122 (216)987-2231, Jennifer.Batton@tri-c.edu.

EUROCLIO Annual Conference and Professional Training and Development Course, is at Bristol, UK, March 31-April 5. More information is published on the website at: www.euroclio.edu.

The **University of Notre Dame's annual Student Peace Conference, "Bringing Peace Down to Earth,"** will take place April 4-5, 2008, at the Hesburgh Center for International Studies at the University of Notre dame, in Notre Dame, IN. The conference is sponsored by the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, and is planned and directed entirely by undergraduate peace studies students of the University. For information contact Kathy Smarrella, Events Coordinator, Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, University of Notre Dame, 0-105 Hesburgh Center for International Studies, Notre Dame, IN 46556 (574)631-9370, ksmarrel@nd.edu, <http://kroc.nd.edu/events>.

Annual Space Organizing Conference, Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space is April 11-13, in Omaha, Nebraska. The conference is hosted by Global Network affiliate Nebraskans for Peace. For information contact: Global Network Against Weapons & Nuclear Power in Space, PO Box 652 Brunswick, Maine 04011, globalnet@mindspring.com (207) 443-9502 or nfpstate@nebraskansforpeace.org, (402)475-4620, <http://www.space4peace.org>, (Blog: <http://space4peace.blogspot.com>).

Conference: "Global Legacies of Non-Violence: From Mahatma Gandhi to Martin Luther King, Jr." is April 17-18 at Oakton Community College, Ray Hartstein Campus, 7701 N. Lincoln Ave., Skokie, IL. Call for Papers deadline: February 15. For information contact Katherine Schuster, Ph.D., schuster@oakton.edu, <http://www.oakton.edu/~schuster/indiafulbright/gandhikingconf.htm>.

The **Global Article 9 Conference to Abolish War** is May 4-6, in Tokyo, Japan. For details go to: <http://www.article-9.org/en/about/index.html>.

The **Global Studies Conference** is at the University of Illinois, Chicago, May 16-18. The *Global Studies Conference* and *Global Studies Journal* are devoted to mapping and interpreting new trends and patterns in globalization. This journal and the conference attempt to do this from many points of view, from many locations in the world, and in a wide-angle kaleidoscopic fashion. The deadline for the next round in the call for papers (a title and short abstract) is February14. For details go to: <http://www.GlobalStudiesConference.com>.

Third Biennial National Humanistic Conference, “Building Truth, Building Trust: A Humanistic Vision for the Planet is at California State University, Northridge, June 6-8, Cosponsored by CSU Northridge and the Association for Humanistic Psychology. For details contact Stan Charnofsky, Dept. of Educational Psychology and Counseling, CSUN, Northridge, CA 91330 (818)677-2548, stan.charnofsky@csun.edu.

The **Eighteenth International Conference on Diversity in Organizations, Communities and Nations** is at HEC: (Ecole des Hautes Etudes Commerciales), University of Montreal, Quebec, Canada, 17-20 June 17-20. For information go to: <http://www.Diversity-Conference.com>.

The Centre for Research on Nationalism, Ethnicity and Multiculturalism (CRONEM) is putting on the **conference, "Nationalism, Ethnicity and Citizenship: Whose Citizens? Whose Rights?"** June 30 at the University of Surrey, Guildford, UK. CRONEM's 2008 conference will address issues bound up with nationalism, ethnicity and citizenship from a multi-disciplinary perspective. Multicultural societies raise crucial challenges for traditional conceptions of nations and citizenship. Ethnic diversity can mean that significant numbers of people are excluded from national projects, while the 'melting pot' metaphor belies the complexities of societies in which minority communities seek to protect their heritages and resist incorporation into the nation or state. The conference is also concerned that conceptions of citizenship appear to be undergoing transformation, and Civic engagement and participation are frequently viewed as being more effective in achieving social change than traditional forms of political representation. Also to be addressed is that at the international level, the sovereignty of the nation state has been increasingly challenged in the name of protecting or asserting universal human rights. Please send submissions to Mirela Dumic m.dumic@surrey.ac.uk, by February 1. Registration and venue details are at: <http://www.surrey.ac.uk/Arts/CRONEM/registration08.htm>.

The Seventh Annual Globalization for the Common Good: An Inter-faith Perspective "From the Middle East to Asia Pacific: Arc of Conflict or Dialogue of Cultures and Religions?" will be at Trinity College, University of Melbourne, Australia, June 30 - July 4, 2008. For details contact Dr. Kamran Mofid at k.mofid@btopenworld.com, <http://www.globalisationforthecommongood>.

The 22nd Global Conference of the International Peace Research Association (IPRA), "Building Sustainable Futures: Enacting Peace and Development," is be hosted by the University of Leuven, Belgium, July 15-19, 2008. For details go to: www.ipra2008.org.

The International Institute on Peace Education (IIPE) 2008 will take place from July 28 to August 4 in Haifa, Israel hosted by the Jewish-Arab Center of the University of Haifa and the Center of Critical Pedagogy of Kibbutzim College of Education. The event is being co-organized by the above hosts and the Peace Education Center at Teachers College, Columbia University in partnership with Global Education Associates. For information contact Global Education Associates, 475 Riverside Drive, Suite 1626B, New York, NY 10115 (212)870-3290. info@i-i-p-e.org, <http://www.tc.edu/PeaceEd/IIPE>.

"Building Cultures of Peace:" the 6th Annual Conference of the Peace and Justice Studies Association in conjunction with the Peace and Conflict Studies Consortium is September 11-14, at Portland State University, Portland, OR. Proposal deadline is April 1. For details go to: <http://www.peacejusticestudies.org/conference/submitprop.php>.

The Fourth National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation (NCDD) Conference will be October 3-5, in Austin, Texas. For details go to: (<http://wms3.streamhoster.com/faq/clients/ncdd>.

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ONGOING ACTIVITIES

Steve Sachs

Over 600,000 Avaaz members mobilized to help most of the rest of the world overcome an effort by the US, Canada and Japan to greatly limit the crucial Bali Climate Change Summit talks, in December, including 320,000 participating in the final 72 hours. For more information go to: http://www.avaaz.org/en/bali_report_back/6.php.

Numerous peace organizations have been mobilizing for policies that counter global warming, and protect the environment, in addition to opposing the Bush administrations occupation of Iraq and threatening to attack Iran. This includes "Global Exchange (<http://www.globalexchange.org>) and Codepink (www.codepinkalert.org). Recently, these organizations have called on the U.S. government to change its policy in regard to Pakistan, calling on President Musharraf to resign and appoint a care taker government to restore the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary, as well as remove restrictions on the press and setting up conditions for fair elections. Codepink and its collaborators are calling for a withholding of U.S. aid to Pakistan until that is achieved. On September 6, United for Peace and Justice member groups held a Welcome Back Congress National Call-In Day, having people call members of Congress to, "End the U.S. War in Iraq; No New War with Iran!" For more information contact: Legislative Action Coordinator, United for Peace and Justice, 1100 Wayne Ave. #1020, Silver Spring, MD 20910 (301)565-4050 x315, <http://www.unitedforpeace.org>. Upset that Congress has not cut fund for continuing the war, **NWTRCC is calling for a war tax boycott**, saying "We urge citizens of conscience to withhold and redirect a symbolic amount of their income taxes from the government, and compel Congress to use tax money to affirm life. Since the Boston Tea Party, this has been a method of direct action in the face of war crimes. We urge everyone who is going to withhold taxes to sign

this pledge, even those who already refuse to pay war taxes. The more who sign this pledge, the louder our demand in Washington to end this war." For more information go to: www.nwtrcc.org/wartaxboycott/index.html.

Global Exchange, Peace Without Borders-Sign Our Petition campaign is concerned that, "Canada used to be a haven for peace activists during the Vietnam era, a place where Americans could go to escape the madness of war. Not Anymore! On October 4, 2007, Retired Colonel and diplomat Ann Wright and Global Exchange Co-Founder, Medea Benjamin, were denied entry to Canada for engaging in acts of non-violent civil disobedience against the war in Iraq. The Canadian border officials said their names appeared on the FBI's National Crime Information Center (NCIC) database, and anyone convicted of a criminal offense, including a minor misdemeanor for peace and social justice, was 'inadmissible.' This, to us, is unacceptable. We can't sit back and watch our civil liberties erode, one by one. We can't sit back and let peace activists be treated like dangerous criminals. We can't sit back and watch governments restrict our right to engage in people-to-people ties with our neighbors". Global Exchange joined numerous Peace groups, on October 27, in "gathering in 11 cities around the U.S. in a national expression of the breadth and depth of antiwar sentiment in this nation". For more go to: http://salsa.democracyinaction.org/dia/track.jsp?key=435504910&url_num=4&url=http%3A%2F%2F, or www.globalexchange.org.

Israeli peace organizations including **Gush Shalom** (Gush Shalom, p.o.b. 3322 Tel Aviv 61033, Israel, info@gush-shalom.org, <http://zope.gush-shalom.org/home/en>) and the **Other Israel** (The Other Israel, p.o.b. 2542, Holon 58125, Israel, ph/fax: +972-3-5565804, otherisr@actcom.co.il, <http://otherisrael.home.igc.org/>), remain quite active in working to change Israeli policies and actions that they find detrimental to building peace, and repressive to Palestinians (and as such counterproductive to attaining security and peace in the long run). They have been especially strong on calling for an end to the siege of Gaza, by Israel, which has greatly reduced already terrible living conditions, and deteriorated an already bad humanitarian situation toward becoming a full crisis. In January, joint Gaza border action, by a growing number of Israeli groups together with the Gazan "**Coalition for Breaking the Siege on Gaza**" were working to get needed supplies into Gaza. Other examples of Israeli and Palestinian peace and nonviolent action include, for example, as reported in *Occupation Magazine* (http://www.kibush.co.il/show_file.asp?num=22308), that nonviolent Palestinian, Israeli, and international demonstrators in the village of Al Walaja, 8 kilometers west of Bethlehem, peacefully demonstrating the building of the Apartheid Wall, which, when completed, will completely encircle the village, were met with severe (often deadly) repression by Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) on September 14. Israeli, Palestinian and international nonviolent peace activists continue to resist the taking of Palestinian land by the Israeli government for the wall, and by Israeli settlers for illegal expansion of settlements; the prevention of Palestinians from caring for their lands and crops, including timely harvesting of them – and other deprivations caused by the restriction of Palestinian movement, and access to needed employment, goods and services. This includes the request by 50 Israelis, last fall, seeking e-mail support by others, of Egyptian President Mubarak to Break the Siege on Gaza, by opening the Rafah Crossing, saying, "The situation in Gaza approaches humanitarian disaster of staggering proportions; Arms and explosives flow from Sinai to Gaza, while the border remains sealed to civilian traffic and vital civilian supplies." In the face of international and domestic pressure, the government later eased the siege, but not sufficiently to allow the Gazan economy and living conditions to recover. In December, **Gisha and other Israeli human rights groups went to court trying to block the Israeli governments reducing electric power to Gaza, and other sanctions** on the population. Sari Bashi, director of Gisha, said, "These cuts are designed to gradually and deliberately decrease the level of economic and humanitarian activity that can take place in Gaza at the expense of 1.5 million people who have no way to defend themselves (http://www.kibush.co.il/show_file.asp?num=23882)."

Jake, "Nonviolent protestors blocking Israelis-only Highway 443" on the Apartheid Masked website (<http://www.apartheidmasked.org/?p=113>), and in *Occupation Magazine*, October 24 (http://www.kibush.co.il/show_file.asp?num=23070) states that, "**Many acts of non-violent protest in the Occupied Territories get no mention in the mainstream media**. The blocking of Highway 443 got quite a lot, including a hysterical outcry from KM Otniel Schneller, the "token settler" of Olmert's Kadima Party, who called for "stiff action against the Anarchists". This overreaction seems to derive from the fact that ordinary Israelis are encouraged to regard 443 as a "normal" route from Tel-Aviv to Jerusalem, and conveniently forget that it is passing through occupied Palestinian land and that the Palestinians on whose land it was built are forbidden to travel on it".

Occupation Magazine, reported September 8, the proposal by Ariela Ringle-Hoffman and Yediot Aharonot, "Put on the light!" "**If there is solution to the shooting of missiles, it is always based on agreements**. In this case, an Israel-Hamas agreement, an agreement with the elected Palestinian government. Negotiations could not take place in Olmert's official residence under the glare of publicity, and there will be no embracing or kissing. But it could well be conducted clandestinely, via all kinds of mediators and middle men. It is possible to grab the offer - made by Hamas and never retracted - to make a ten-year cease-fire. We can offer to give up our insistence over imprisoning Gaza and tightly controlling and inspecting every matchbox which goes in, to let the Gaza international airport be opened, to relax the naval blockade. Tomorrow, the price will be higher. In short, put on the light!" for more go to

http://www.kibush.co.il/show_file.asp?num=22209. Also in that issue, Victoria Buch, "The advancing ethnic cleansing," asserted that **while the leaders talk of declarations and principles without dates attached, the one thing which goes on non-stop is the creeping dispossession and expulsion of Palestinians. The author thinks that ultimately this is a suicidal policy:** "We are a small nation, and Palestinians are a similarly sized nation which is moreover a part of the vast Moslem world. The experience of South Africa suggests that the apartheid-type system imposed on Palestinians is not viable in the long run, even if it seems invincible at the beginning."

The **Forum for a Just Peace in the Middle East** brought numerous Israelis and Palestinians to Madrid December 14 to 16, joining Spanish and other European activists in a conference to promote A Just Peace in the Middle East ("Peace can only be achieved with an organized civil society and on the basis of International Law, respect for Human Rights and the full sovereignty of the peoples"). For more go to: http://www.kibush.co.il/show_file.asp?num=23888

As part of its Swords Into Ploughshares campaign, **Jewish Voice for Peace** has created a special Tu B' Shvat seder, designed as a political/cultural event (rather than the Kabbalistic or predominantly religious ritual usually used on this holiday) that will mark the launch of its Trees of Reconciliation project which is raising funds to plant 3,000 olive trees in the West Bank in 2008. For details contact Jewish voice for Peace, 1611 Telegraph Ave, Ste. 806, Oakland, CA 94682 (510)465-1777 info@jewishvoiceforpeace.org, <http://www.jewishvoiceforpeace.org>.

Eliyahu McLean of **Jerusalem Peacemakers** reports that over 3,000 people attended the sixth annual 'On the Way to Sulha' gathering, which took place August 14-16 in the olive groves of the Latrun Trappist monastery, between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, in the Holy Land. "We cooperated with Palestinian partner NGO's to bring over 300 Palestinians from East Jerusalem and the West Bank cities of Ramallah, Jenin, Nablus, Jericho, Bethlehem and Hebron, Israeli Jews, including many religious Jews and settlers, as well as Arabs from the Galilee and Bedouin The Bereaved Families Forum brought pairs of an Israeli and a Palestinian to share about their journeys from the pain of the loss of their loved ones to working together towards reconciliation. The Combatants for Peace Tent housed testimony and discussion led by former Israeli combat soldiers and Palestinian fighters now working together to advocate a message of non-violence. The Tent of Sarah and Hagar: a safe space for religious and secular, Jewish and Arab women to dialogue, pray and celebrate together. The Children's and Youth Tents held cooperative interaction among Arab and Jewish young people. In the Prayer Tent, religious Jews, Muslims and Christians prayed in their own tradition and at the same time, side by side, and there were panel discussions about "forgiveness" and "reconciliation in our tradition", with Jewish, Christian and Muslim religious leaders. Each day Sheikh Ghassan Manasra and Eliyahu McLean led inter-religious prayer circles with chanting in Hebrew and Arabic for peace. There was a lot of media coverage, including: Al-Jazeera, Arabic and Hebrew TV and newspapers, U.S. and European networks, Reuters, and ABC.

The convergence, in October, of the Jewish holidays and the Muslim holy month of Ramadan provided the opportunity for Jerusalem Peacemakers to organize unique peace events, the Abrahamic Reunion Ramadan celebration in the Galilee and Jerusalem Peacemakers events in the home of Eliyahu McLean in Jerusalem. For more information contact Eliyahu McLean, elijahu@actcom.co.il, or elijahu.mclean@gmail.com, or the Sulha Peace Project, Executive Director Saar Shaked: 972-54-210-3139, saar@sulha.com, www.sulha.com.

The Executive Committee of **Religions for Peace**, urge the Palestinian and Israeli political leaders to take bold steps to advance a just and durable peace. We also urge that other states - those in the region and those assisting in the peace process, notably the United States, redouble their efforts to support a practical and principled peace process. Religions for Peace is the largest international coalition of representatives from the world's great religions dedicated to promoting peace. For more information contact: www.commongroundnews.org.

The **Burma Campaign** has been attempting to bring pressure on the **Burmese government** to end its repression and return the nation to democracy by asking people to **boycott Chevron and Texaco products and services until they divest from Burma**. For more go to: <http://www.peacemajority.us/BoycottChevron.htm>.

The **Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue**, the independent Swiss-based mediation organization, called upon the Government of Myanmar to show restraint as the situation continued to rapidly deteriorate inside the country, in September. For more information on the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue or its activities, please contact: Andy Andrea in Geneva, Tel: +41 (0)79 2579974, +41 (0)22 908 1130, andya@hdcentre.org, <http://www.hdcentre.org/>.

The long active **Cyprus Civil Society Dialogue Project**, led by the **Cyprus European Union Association (KAB)** and funded by the United Nations from December 2006 through August 2008, has been partnering with the **Turkish Cypriot, Cyprus Policy Centre, the Greek Cypriot, Cyprus Intercultural Training Initiative (CITI)**, and the International, **Institute for 21st Century Agoras**, The bi-communal Civil Society Dialogue project brings together, in a participatory strategic planning process, civil society organizations from both sides of the island to share experiences and work

to create a Citizen's Platform where ideas are discussed and an Action Plan is devised to build the new reunited Cyprus. The reunification project began with forming a knowledge management team to train participants, manage the dialogue, and guide the processes, guided by the project's International partner, the Institute for 21st Century Agoras. In an initial series of 5 day dialogues, local bi-communal veterans and individuals living abroad explored situational understandings and options for action. Now, in the second phase, a series of co-laboratories for face-to-face dialogue are taking place wherein the current situation is rigorously defined in terms of opportunities and barriers. This definition phase will move into a design phase, using the Structure Dialogic Design Process (SDDP), in which participants are assembled into a number of workgroups where they frame and compare approaches in the process of constructing an integrated action plan. The project builds upon the methodology used in Cyprus by Benjamin Broom in 1994-1995, under an effort funded by the Fulbright Commission. Many of the original participants in Dr. Broom's work remain active in the current effort. The third phase will consist of a full day convention with International participation, at which workshop results will be shared and discussed with the wider public. To aid in this discussion, the Civil Society Dialogue website will be opened to collect and post thoughts and ideas of all of the participants. The combined results of the local and international workshops, the convention, and the ideas contributed through the website will be used to guide construction of a Citizens' Charter for Cyprus. The long term goal of the project is to build an enduring, bi-communal think tank that will continually generate ideas and policies and will take part in shaping the future of the island within the European Union. The Cyprus EU Association will host the think-tank and will support its activities by organizing seminars, conferences, workshops and fund raising activities. Other partners will also help supporting the think-tank with their expertise and experience. In the current stage, the Bi-Communal Dialogue project is in the process of organizing and conducting multiple co-laboratories with respect to: economic integration, media, environment, political parties, strengthening CSOs/NGOs in Cyprus, and 1960 Rights. For more information about the project and the techniques (including their use in other situations and locations) contact Institute for 21st Century Agoras, 8213 Hwy 85 #901, Riverdale, GA 30274, Ken Bausch" ken@globalagoras.org, http://clicks.aweber.com/z/ct/?cINn66wJg3JFZoNVVA1E_g.

Save Darfur Campaign is concerned that **"No Funding, No Peace:** Funding delays in Congress are threatening to hold up the long-awaited U.N.-A.U. peacekeeping mission to Darfur, and asking people to: Tell Congress to approve this funding for Darfur ASAP. The campaign reports that "peace talks in Libya were another step in the long-awaited political process that can bring peace to Darfur. **But real peace remains elusive.** The peace process could take months or years to bear fruit. Meanwhile, **violence continues to escalate,** making the need for peacekeepers even more urgent. Yet, political disputes in Washington over issues unrelated to Darfur are threatening to delay America's promised contribution to the Darfur peacekeeping mission." For more information go to: <http://action.savedarfur.org/>.

The International Crisis Group (ICG) reported, September 30 2007, that, Since it's ENOUGH Project was launched in March to end genocide and crimes against humanity, the project "has helped focus the attention of policymakers on what is needed to halt atrocities in Darfur, northern Uganda, and eastern Congo. The rapid growth of the ENOUGH Project is a welcome development to those of us who support mass action whenever and wherever it is necessary to mobilize an effective international response to atrocity crimes. The partnerships that ENOUGH is forging with a broad array of organizations - such as the **Save Darfur Coalition, the Genocide Intervention Network, Invisible Children, and a number of faith-based groups** - augur well for a more coordinated and better informed grassroots movement to end these scourges wherever they occur". ICG is increasing its resources in ENOUGH, including moving its three top people in the project from part to full time there. To receive information and materials from ENOUGH, visit: www.enoughproject.org.

Search for Common Ground (SFCG), reported in its *Common Ground Newsletter*, last fall, that in stressing, "Understand the Differences, Act on the Commonalities," "We are a transformational organization. Our goal is to bring about a fundamental shift in how the world deals with conflict - away from adversarial, win-lose approaches to cooperative solutions. Our operating strategy is to create models, which show that violent conflict can be peacefully resolved and that divided societies can come together."

SFCG commenced the leadership Wisdom Initiative, because, "For years, we have seen the negative impact that poor leadership can have in exacerbating conflict, and we are determined to do something about this. Our vision is of authentic leadership that heals divisions and combines inner and outer qualities. We want to promote leadership rooted in *common humanity*. To this end,... we have launched the Leadership Wisdom Initiative to encourage transformational leaders and to develop conflict management skills. The initiative is a highly leveraged effort to reach people in key positions - politicians, officials of global agencies, and emerging leaders, particularly women. The idea is to support leaders in reflecting on their experience and accessing their inner wisdom in dealing with the practical problems they constantly face". The Initiative's current projects include, the Negotiation Project in partnership with Harvard Law School (<http://www.pon.harvard.edu/research/projects/gnp.php3>>). It sponsored a week-long leadership training in July for senior UN mission leaders, with ongoing coaching for participants. The project is offering one-on-one coaching and leadership reflection circles for high level political and civil society leaders, including parliamentarians. Participants include leaders in Africa, the Middle East, Asia, and the U.S. Congress. The Initiative is working in partnership with the Nairobi Peace Initiative in East Africa

and *Femme Afrique Solidarité* in West Africa to explore barriers and opportunities faced by women leaders in Africa, including, in October, co-sponsoring two workshops in Nairobi that included Kenyan candidates for Parliament. In Morocco, the initiative's efforts are preventive. Its team in Rabat works to transcend deep social and economic splits. "We want to create a *culture of mediation* in which disputes are resolved peacefully and in ways that maximize the gain of the parties involved. Specifically, we work in partnership with the Moroccan Ministry of Justice to bring mediation into the court system, which is clogged with millions of unresolved cases. Mediation can be a more effective, more just way to resolve disputes, while avoiding a prolonged wait to get into court. We provide advice and training to the Ministry, and we have sponsored six consensus-building workshops and two training programs that involve more than 500 lawyers, magistrates, civil society leaders, parliamentarians, and private sector representatives. Funding comes from the UK's Foreign & Commonwealth Office." "In July, as a direct result of our collaboration with the Ministry, the Moroccan Parliament passed a law authorizing a nationwide mediation system. It allows for individual practitioners and dispute resolution centers to mediate between aggrieved parties in civil and commercial cases. Needless to say, we are thrilled with the outcome."

SFCG's projects in Iran and Syria are related to a basic operating principle "drawn from Woody Allen who said, '80% of success is showing up.' With Iran, we have been showing up since 1996 when we started the US-Iran Working Group to try to improve relations. Since then, we have sponsored discreet, unofficial meetings between key Iranians and Americans and carried out exchanges of film-makers, environmentalists, scientists and astronauts, educators, doctors, and wrestlers. While Iranian-American relations have steadily worsened in recent years, we are not deterred. We believe that we have accomplished a great deal, and we see the importance of maintaining communications - of continuing to show up - particularly now, when the two governments are barely talking. With most official channels closed, we remain well placed to play a facilitating role toward better relations. To get an idea of the impact we can have, here is what a top Iranian diplomat had to say about our role on the nuclear issue: 'I believe you saved our negotiations. Your ideas kept the negotiations going.'" "Official ties between Syria and the US are also at low ebb. To us, it is regrettable when governments do not talk to each other in meaningful ways. At the same time, the breakdown in official communications provided us with an opportunity, and we took advantage of it to form a US-Syrian Working Group. Our premise is that instead of having Syrians and Americans confronting each other as the enemy, they should sit together and face a shared problem of how to have better relations. Our group includes key Syrians and such Americans as former Ambassador to Syria Theodore Kattouf, former Ambassador to Israel Samuel Lewis, Rob Malley of the International Crisis Group, Abdul Aziz Said of the American University, and former Undersecretary of Defense Dov Zakheim. In May, with support from the Norwegian Government, the group met for two days in Damascus. The results were modest, yet promising. Both sides expressed amazement at the frankness of the talks - and acknowledged the other side for being so forthright. 'In all my years here, I never heard conversations of this depth and candor.' - US Ambassador (ret) Theodore Kattouf. 'This was much more than I expected.' - veteran Syrian negotiator."

SFCG's African program is in Guinea, "where we produce radio soap opera and sponsor non-violence and civic-education training for youth groups. One workshop took place as a violent general strike swept across the country. Participants could literally hear demonstrators and soldiers clashing in the streets. Indeed, the bloodshed and destruction became a teaching aid that spurred action. Participants went home and organized their own group-training sessions in local communities." SFCG has produced radio soaps in 11 countries and TV dramas in five more. In Nepal, SFCG e a radio series, co-produce with the Antenna Foundation called *Nayaa Baato, Nayaa Paailaa (Treading Upon a New Path)*. "As Nepal emerges from its long civil war, our shows focus on young people from different ethnic and caste groups who live together in the same village. The series uses drama to explore the root causes of the conflict and to encourage listeners to take on leadership roles in building peace." Sandhya Suri, an award-winning film-maker, has made a 10-minute video about SFCG activities to promote reconciliation in Nepal, that can be viewed at [http://video.google.com/videoplay? docid=4097679757369292165](http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=4097679757369292165).

SFCG "radio programming uses a wide variety of formats to promote *societal healing*: We make soap operas, talk shows, magazines, and children's programs. Every week in Angola, Burundi, Congo, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Nepal, and Sierra Leone, we produce a total of 30 hours of original programming. (A new video describing our Golden Kids show in West Africa, produced by Deborah Jones of Common Ground Productions, can be viewed at: <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=8170520353833026139>"). In the Democratic Republic of Congo, Common Ground reinforces the impact of its radio programming with live, theatrical performances. Audience members are invited to act out and resolve local conflicts. In the DRC, From July to September alone, actors trained and supported by SFCG performed more than 100 times to a total audience of more than 100,000 people. These performances address conflicts related to repatriation, military-civilian relations, sexual violence, rumors, stereotypes, and manipulation.

In the U.S., Common Ground recently sponsored a consensus-building process on how to provide health insurance to most of the 47 million uninsured Americans. Participants formed an ideologically diverse, working group of stakeholders from the US Chamber of Commerce, consumer and public health organizations, the American Medical Association (AMA), the American Association of Retired People (AARP), pharmaceutical companies, the American Hospital Association, United Health, and Blue Cross & Blue Shield. After many meetings, the group agreed on a series of proposals and decided to form the Health

Coverage Coalition for the Uninsured (HCCU). Already, Democratic and Republican members of Congress have introduced legislation reflecting Phase I of the group consensus, which calls for insuring America's children. Meanwhile, *The Bridge, a one hour reality-documentary* produced by Common Ground Productions (Washington), Video Cairo SAT (Cairo), Downtown Community Television Center (New York), and Baraka Productions (New York), was broadcast nationally on December 30th through Faith and Values Media on The Hallmark Channel. The show was scheduled to be broadcast in the Middle East early in 2008. "This is a pilot for a future series of programs featuring exchanges between people in the U.S. and countries throughout the Middle East." For additional information contact Susan Koscis, Director of Communications, Search for Common Ground, Washington, DC (202)777-2215, skoscis@sfcg.org, or SFCG Newsletter sfcg_newsletter@sfcg.org, <http://www.sfcg.org>.

Avaaz.org is calling on the international community -- particularly the US Congress, which has voted Musharraf billions of dollars in military aid over the last six years -- **to use all its leverage for swift elections and restoring constitutional protections in Pakistan.** For details contact Avaaz at: avaaz@avaaz.org, <http://www.avaaz.org>.

Radio La Benevolencija/Humanitarian Tools Foundation is a Dutch Humanitarian Media production NGO, running three coordinated educational broadcast campaigns to prevent violence and promote reconciliation, trauma recovery and active bystandership in the African Great Lakes region. The radio programs include educational drama series ('soaps'), journalistic factual programs, and youth programs. In addition to the media programs, RLB is organizing a grassroots program intended to further the goals of the broadcast campaign. For more information contact: info@labenevolencija.org, www.labenevolencija.org.

In 2006, a conference at the **Hoover Institution** attempted to rekindle the vision of the October 1986 Reykjavik Summit, at which President Ronald Reagan and Russian President Mikhail Gorbachev entered into an unprecedented dialogue regarding their desire to eliminate their countries' nuclear weapons. In the fall of 2007, the **World Security Institute and Lawyers Alliance for World Security** sought to reinforce the goals of those who seek a world without nuclear weapons, publishing a policy brief that encourages that. For more go to: <http://app.bronto.com/public/?q=link&fn=Key&id=bmditwyakdigmpymlijziocyojnblj&link=ayxxkqezlkkxpjkbmbjsjnsronaybmc>. The World Security Institute is concerned that *Dr. Strangelove* isn't a strange fantasy after all. A recent *Slate.com* article discusses the reality of a "doomsday device" -- possibly still in place -- to automatically launch Russian nuclear missiles in response to a perceived U.S. attack. The article also highlights the World Security Institute's **efforts to convince the U.S. and Russian governments to de-alert their arsenals and take new steps to thwart nuclear disaster.** For more go to: http://www.cdi.org/program/document.cfm?DocumentID=4079&from_page=../index.cfm.

The Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) is bringing people to Washington, DC on March 6th through 9th for a weekend of faith-based action for peace. From March 22-30, FOR will take a group of young adults to Latin America to learn about the conscientious objector movement in Colombia and to share arts and activist models across cultures. Facilitated by the **Shalom Center**, in early November, FOR joined a multi-religious call to stop the march toward war with Iran. The Shalom Center stated, "We think it is increasingly important to do this because the Bush Administration continues to intensify its attacks on Iran in exactly the same pattern it used to build the war against Iraq. It is crucial for Americans to make clear our opposition to this new war and our insistence that the real issues between our countries be addressed by direct negotiations." For information, contact: communications@forusa.org, <http://www.forusa.org/>.

Courage to Resist joined over 400 members of **Veterans for Peace (VFP)** and **Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW)** in St. Louis, Missouri, August 15-19 for the 22nd annual national VFP convention. The meeting included sessions on "Supporting GI Resistance;" and IVAW's "War is Not a Game" counter-recruiting action at the Missouri Black Expo job fair. For more go to: <http://www.couragetoresist.org/x/content/view/338/1/>.

The Student Peace Alliance, in partnership with the general campaign for a Department of Peace, from December 3-7 organized a congressional call in supporting creation of a U.S. Department of Peace. For information contact Aaron Voldman, Student Peace Alliance, Executive Director, National Youth Campaign for a US Department of Peace (802)355-5577, aaron@thepeacealliance.org, www.studentpeacealliance.org or www.thepeacealliance.org.

The **Cambridge Peace Commission** is a department of the city of Cambridge, MA connecting local & global issues of violence, peace & justice, collaborating in policy, advocacy, peace education, training & program implementation, with outreach to, and collaboration with Peace Commissioners, community groups and the city on wide range of programs, task forces, coalitions, trainings, and citywide events. For information contact (617)349-4694, peace@cambridgema.gov.

The **United Nations mandated University for Peace**, announced last fall, that, for the first time, it is **opening some of its courses in the M.A. program in Peace Education to outside participants.** The courses

The Three reports of the UN, Intergovernmental Commission on Climate Change, which warned that there were disastrous consequences for the world if immediate action were not begun to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, were written on the basis of a five year survey of scientific findings. Recent studies show however, that many changes are taking place more rapidly than expected by those studies. For example, Arctic ice is melting much faster than previously predicted, and increasingly so. In 2007 75% more ice melted in the Arctic, than melted in 2006. Developing nations expanding economies are also using oil and other fuels faster than anticipated, so that the actual production of carbon dioxide and other global warming causing gasses was near the highest, or worst, of the several possible projected levels considered by the commissions scientists. Alarming effects are already being seen in the oceans, as carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere exceed levels not seen for 250,000 years, and threaten to reach levels not found on earth for 250,000,000 million years. **The huge carbon dioxide increase is making the oceans far more acid, 30% above the previous norm at this point.** The acid is reacting with calcium, which is crucial for many ocean species of plants and animals. It is the reason that almost all of the world's coral reefs have been killed in the last few years or are dying. That is an indicator of the negative impact on a great many ocean species, whose death and reduction will have further impacts on other species, including human beings. **The warming of the oceans is also near a major tipping point.** Cold temperatures and high pressures in ocean depths trap huge quantities of methane – 14 times more global warming causing than carbon dioxide – in methane crystals on ocean bottoms. **When oceans warm sufficiently, the methane loses its crystal form, and becomes gas, which escapes into the atmosphere.** Already there are reports of ships crews smelling methane while far out at sea,

The UN Environmental Program released its *Forth Global Environmental Outlook*, in October, finding that the human population is living far beyond its means, while inflicting damage upon the environment which could pass the point of no return, as climate change, the problem of feeding a population growing to an unprecedented size, and species extinction are putting human existence at risk. "The human population is now so large that the amount of resources needed to sustain it exceeds what is available at current consumption patterns." Population, over the last two decades has expanded by 34% from 5 to 6.7 billion, while land available per person shrank from 19.5 acres in 1900 to 5 acres in 2005. The combination of population growth with unsustainable consumption and climate change has brought about an increasingly stressed planet, on which natural disasters and environmental degradation more and more endanger people, plants and animal species. In November, The UN Annual Human Development Report (hdr.undp.org/cg/en/) warned that the poorest nations progress toward a decent living will be reversed, unless richer nations quickly take adequate steps toward limiting global warming, and assist poorer nations in doing the same. On December 11, at the Bali world climate change talks, an agreement was signed establishing a fund to assist poor nations in adapting to climate change.

Meanwhile, according to the UN Pilot Analysis of Global Ecosystems in the last century (and increasingly worse now), half the world's forests (which break down carbon dioxide into oxygen and water) were cut down – with tropical deforestation possibly exceeding 130,000 square kilometers a year (about the area of Wisconsin), half the planet's wet lands were lost, 70% of the world's fisheries were depleted, and 80% of grass lands and 40% of the earth's land surface suffered soil degradation, with 40% of agricultural lands badly degraded. 20% of drylands are in danger of becoming deserts, as desertification is increasing. 58% of coral reefs are endangered by human activity. In many parts of the world the capacity of the ecosystem to provide food and clean water is declining, while threats to biodiversity and human health are increasing. Contributing to the while range of environmental problems are the growth of world by 30% from 1980 to 2000 to 6 billion (and continuing to increase), while 2.3 billion came to face water shortages – 60% more than previously estimated at centuries end, and that number is increasing, while the world's economy tripled. For more, go to: World Resources 2000-2001: *People and Ecosystems: The Fraying Web of Life*: http://pubs.wri.org/pubs_description.cfm?PubID=3027; *Millennium Ecosystem Assessment*: <http://www.millenniumecosystemassessment>; and United Nation Environmental Program: <http://www.unep.org>.

Previously, the leading view in the scientific community was that global warming, with related climate change, was a gradual phenomenon. "New evidence over the past decade suggests that the plausibility of severe and rapid climate change is higher than most of the scientific community (and perhaps all of the political community) is prepared for. If it occurs, this phenomenon will disrupt current gradual global warming trends, adding to climate complexity and unpredictability. And paleoclimatic evidence suggests that such an abrupt climate change could begin in the near future. With at least eight abrupt climate change events documented in the geological record, it seems that the questions we must ask are: When will this happen? What will the impacts be? And, how can we best prepare for it? Rather than: Will this really happen?" (<http://peakoilmedicine.wordyblog.com>, post of 7 Feb 2007).

<http://timeforchange.org/cause-and-effect-for-global-warming> reports that the main greenhouse causing

gasses are carbon dioxide (72%), methane – which is 14 times more global warming producing than carbon dioxide – (18%), and Nitrous oxide (9%), leaving 1% from other causes. The Sierra Club confirms that water vapor is also a greenhouse gas. Changes in production or release of these gases will change the percentages of global warming that each cause, and each of these materials has a different tendency to cause global warming, and other effects – both harmful and beneficial. Thus, it is important to calculate the full range of effects from any action that effects their production. Switching from internal combustion engines to fuel cells, for instance, will reduce carbon, and in some cases, perhaps methane and nitrous oxide emissions, but it will increase production of water vapor. Some water vapor is currently put into the air from the exhaust of internal combustion engines. The question is, what is the net effect of making such a change? http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2005/11/1110_051110_warming.html states that recent studies show that global warming is causing an increase in evaporation of water (as water vapor), which absorbs and than reemits infrared radiation, thus further increasing heating. Without the water vapor in the air to trap it, the infrared radiation (heat) would radiate into space, having a cooling effect. **Melting of ice in the Arctic – and elsewhere – is partly caused by increased particulate matter** – mostly pollution from burning – which darkens the surfaces of ice and snow, raising the amount of heat absorbed by the ice and snow. (While increase of particulate matter in the air blocks some heat from solar radiation from reaching the earth's surface, and causes cooling).

In the 20 years since the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer was signed, the use of these chemicals in agriculture, in refrigeration, and in pharmaceuticals, as well as in furniture manufacture, has been phased out in developed nations, and has dropped in the developing world by over 80%, so that no longer are 2 million tons of ozone-depleting substances released into the atmosphere, annually. However, there have been recent increases in the uses of these chemicals in developing nations that need to be reversed, to protect all life on the planet from excessive ultraviolet radiation that penetrates to the surface of the Earth from the reduction in the Ozone Layer of the atmosphere.

The Green Paper report by the Commission of the European Communities, in late July, emphasizes the need to research both mitigation of climate change *and* adaptation to its potential consequences, focusing on the importance of early EU action, and working to involve the integrated efforts of researchers, European society, business as well as the public sector. The report is available at: http://www.eph.org/IMG/pdf/Green_paper_on_climate_change.pdf. Both the House and Senate versions of the defense authorization bill, being considered in September, have a provision that requires that the overall National Security Strategy, which emerges from the National Security Council, gives guidance to military planners to: “assess the risks of projected climate change to current and future missions of the armed forces”; “update defense plans based on these assessments, including working with allies and partners to incorporate climate mitigation strategies, capacity building, and relevant research and development”; and “develop the capabilities needed to reduce future impacts.” For the whole article go to: <http://www.cdi.org/friendlyversion/printversion.cfm?documentID=4103>. A scaled back version of a proposed law that would regulate emissions from airlines taking off from or landing in the European Union has been approved by environment ministers. The bill to include airlines in the EU's carbon-trading scheme was scaled back from the version passed by the EU Parliament last month, aiming to start in 2012 instead of 2011 and making airlines buy only 10% of their carbon permits, with the rest distributed free, instead of the original 25%. The amended proposal also caps emissions at 100% of average emissions from 2004 to 2006, instead of 90%. The plan still needs final approval by EU governments, which is unlikely to happen until late 2008. The EU has proposed reducing average new-car CO₂ emissions 20% percent by 2012, with fines for automakers that do not meet the target. The European Union is considering a proposed law that would ban some biofuels, including palm oil from South East Assia, soy oil from Latin America and ethonal, which is imported largely from Brazil, whose expanding production is destroying CO₂ absorbing forests and wetlands, and would also ban biofuels that do not produce a “minimum level of greenhouse gas saving”. The production of ethanol and a number of other biofuels, involving use of petroleum based fertilizers and oil product burning tractors and other equipment in growth and processing, actually uses more energy than it produces, and releases more carbon dioxide than oil and gas, also taking into account all production and transportation energy uses and release of byproducts (see James Kanter, “Amid Doubts, Europe May Ban Some Biofuels, *The New York Times*, January 15, 2008, Business pp. 1 and 8). The EU, and some countries elsewhere, are also cutting subsidies to biofuel and redirecting them toward greener options (Elisabeth Rosenthal, “Europe Cutting Biofuel Subsidies, Redirecting Aid to Stress Greener Options, *The New York Times*, January 22, 2008, p. C3). At the same time, the EU is considering centralizing its carbon emissions trading system, to reduce corporate influence in the process and make polluting more expensive (James Canter and Stephen Castle, “Stricktter System to Trim Carbon Emissions is Considered in Europe,” *The New York Times*, January 22, 2008, p. C3).

The economic impact of energy demand increasing, while existing oil and gas supplies decline, and new sources are slow coming on line, is already upon the world. The rise in gasoline and heating oil prices is already a direct hardship for many people, while the increased costs of transportation and fertilizer are forcing up food and other commodity prices. As biofuel production grows to fill the energy gap, food plants are instead being used for fuel, while agricultural land used to grow food is switched to energy crop production. This has started escalating food inflation, particularly a problem for many low income people. In Mexico, for example, the rise in corn prices (good for farmers, including poor and Indigenous farmers) has already raised the price of tortillas – an important staple – to a point beyond what many people can afford. In Southeast Asia a similar problem has arisen where cooking oil prices have risen sharply, as more and more plant oil is shifted to energy use (including diesel fuel). Meanwhile, the cost of making available new supplies of oil and gas is increasing as more of the fuel has to be extracted from remote locations, and other supplies require more energy to extract. The resulting inflation is an economic difficulty, world wide, and the human hardship that accompanies it is a source of political unrest, that, at least in some cases, is likely to result in violence. The hope is that it will be more of a lever for needed reform. On the environmental side, the positive aspect is that higher energy cost makes renewable alternatives more competitive, and pollution reducing conservation more attractive.

The state of Kerala, in India, has put in motion a plan, initiated by a local grassroots movement, to be "waste-free" within five years, including waste prevention, intensive re-use and recycling, composting, replacing unsustainable materials with sustainable ones, training people to produce these materials, and providing funds for setting up sustainably run businesses. With rapid economic growth in India, New Delhi has experienced increasingly worsening air quality over the last two years, exposing residents and visitors to heightened risk of respiratory diseases. The New government in Australia has signed the Kyoto climate change agreement.

China's rapid industrial expansion, with little protection of the environment, has been causing an expanding series of environmental crises. Huge volumes of pollution have brought cancer to be the number one cause of death in the country, and greatly raised health care costs. Ambient air pollution causes hundreds of thousands of deaths a year in China. Air pollution is worst in cities, where only 1% of the nation's 560 million city dwellers breath air clean enough to meet European Union air quality standards. Sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides from vast coal burning bring serious acid rain problems to Korea, Japan, and as far away as California, also worsening ocean acidification, injuring and killing many ocean species. 500 million people already lack access to safe drinking water, and the number is growing both from expanding wasteful water consumption and increasing pollution. Water consumption in China is now five times what it was in 1949. Scarcity is becoming a sufficient problem, so that soon a choice will have to be made whether to greatly reduce wheat production on the Northern plain, which produces half of that grain crop for the country, or curtail industrial and population growth in the region (or allow both to expand until there is insufficient water in regional aquifers to sustain either). The human injuries caused by environmental degradation are also cited by the government as a cause of social unrest in a number of locations. Desertification is also increasing. There are an increasing number of environmental regulations in China, but most are weak, or weakly enforced, having the over all effect of only reducing the growth of pollution (and energy consumption). Part of the problem is that officials fear that to bring about a major reduction of pollution (including greenhouse gasses) would slow, and perhaps reverse, economic growth, impinging upon powerful interests, and threatening to create political unrest. There has been growth of wind, biofuel and other greener energy technologies, but as they can not be put on line fast enough to meet energy demand, so that consumption of dirty coal continues to increase. (See Joseph Kahn and Jim Yardley, "As China Roars, Pollution Reaches Deadly Extremes.," *The New York Times*, August 26, 2007, pp. 1, 6 and 6; Keith Bradsher, "China's Green energy Gap," *The New York Times*, October 24, 2007; and "Under the Cities of China's Booming North, the Future is Drying Up," *The New York Times*, September 28, 2007, pp. A1 and A14). Meanwhile, several million more people are scheduled to be moved for the continued construction of the Yangtze River, vast Three Gorges Dam hydroelectric project, which has caused serious pollution problems, including concentrating heavy metals in the lake, while resulting in heavy silting, that if not countered threatens to destroy the utility of the dam. China's rapid industrialization is also taking its toll on wildlife. The population of Yangtze giant soft shelled turtles has collapsed to only two known members of the species, in zoos. In a high level diplomatic meeting at the end of December, Japan urged China to do more about global warming, and pledged to help its government do so.

Meanwhile, Climate Change has already had measurable ill effects in China where variation in temperature and rainfall have reduced the output of grain per kilogram of fertilizer (much of which is a petroleum product) by almost 20% in the past 10 years, and some cereal crops have become less viable, while drought and severe weather have taken a toll on agricultural production, particularly in South China, where some forecasts project a high likelihood of severe drought around 2010 (Prof. Pan Genxing, "Danger of Climate Change to China's

agriculture and Environmental Protection: Projecting the Vulnerability of Food Production and Economy," *Celebrating NGO's 60 Years with the United Nations: The Journey Continues, 5-7 September, 2007*). Similarly, **worrying impacts of climate change have been observable in the Amazon region of South America** for some time. For example, **22% of glaciers in the region melted** from the early 1960s to 1997. This has caused lakes to grow, which has temporary benefits, but poses a **threat of massive flooding**, then as the glaciers shrink much further, **once plentiful water will become scarce, much of the year**, mixed with occasional flooding from rapid run off as water is no longer held in glaciers. This **likely will result in massive migration**. At the same time, the **Amazon region is becoming significantly drier, and projections are that the rainforest will eventually turn into grassland**, if the current trend continues. (partly from, Jimena Leiva Roesch, "Environmental Challenges Facing the Amazon Region Today," *Celebrating NGO's 60 Years with the United Nations: The Journey Continues, 5-7 September, 2007*).

Experts at the European Society of Cardiology's annual meeting stated, September 5, that **Global Warming deserves more attention to avoid increased occurrence of heart problems, because it is statistically known that people have more heart problems when it's hot**.

Satellite photos show that **Hurricane Katrina uprooted or severely damaged some 320 million trees**. With an **increasing number of exceptionally severe storms, like Katrina, the resulting huge loss of trees, which turn carbon dioxide into oxygen and water, is negatively altering the carbon balance, and increasing global warming**. Controversial **genetic engineering is being applied to changing some trees to make it easier to produce biofuel from them** (Andrew Pollack, "Through Genetics, Tapping a Trees Potential as a Source of Energy," *The New York Times*, November 20, 2007, p. D3). **Deforestation in the Amazon region in Brazil, which had slowed down, grew rapidly in the last 5 months of last year, from 94 square miles in August to 366 square miles in December**. Environmentalists have been warning that **pressure to increase grain production, for food and biofuel, would lead to increased deforesting**. Most forests in the Amazon region **grew greener during the drought in 2005, while the rivers reached 100 year lows**, according to a study published in the on line journal *ScienceExpress*, in September. **Indonesia was planning to plant 79 million trees in one day, during the Bali climate change conference, November 28. Indonesia has been promoting carbon credit plans, to try to obtain funding for restoring dwindling forests in it own, and other countries. Costa Rica obtained elimination of \$26 million in debt to the U.S., in return for the United States providing \$12.6 million, to which Conservation International and the Nature Conservancy are each adding \$1.26 million, to protect endangered forests in the Central American country**. A study published in the *Journal of Science*, in June, found that over the last 20,000 years many arctic plants have adapted to major climate change, often shifting over long distances to follow the movement of favorable temperatures. **The Vatican is receiving a gift of reforestation a stretch of the Tisza River, that will make it the world's first carbon neutral state**. In his Christmas address, the Pope made a **strong appeal for protection of the environment in the face of various kinds of dangerous polluting**.

Wild young salmon are increasingly being attacked, and many instances killed, by sea lice proliferated by fish farmed salmon. Increases in acidic algae blooms are poisoning California sea lions, and posing a growing threat to this hardy species. An Endangered Species Act report, in September, finds that after a gain in the 1990s the **population off loggerhead sea turtles of the U.S. south Atlantic coast has been declining, possibly because of commercial fishing**. The World Conservation Union reported, in October, that **poaching and deforestation are threatening dozens of primate species, so that almost one-third of the 394 species of monkeys, apes, lemurs and other primates are now endangered**.

Toxic chemicals, from industry and farming, including arsenic and mercury, polluting water on India's grain belt, in Punjab, appear, to be the cause of mutated DNA in 65% of the local population that has been tested. There are high rates of cancer and other diseases in many villages in the province.

There have been **recent moves to increase nuclear power, in what has been a largely dormant industry over the last decades. By last summer's end, approval had been sought from the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission for two advanced boiling water reactors, designed by General Electric, to be built by Toshiba, in Texas, while at that time several other license requests were anticipated, including by Constellation Energy for an atomic power plant for Calvert County, MD**. The licenses were sought under legislation of a few years ago to streamline the approval process, but by December there were signs that gaining approval might not be so easy, especially as companies were modifying the designs for proposed new plants. On November 28, **the French nuclear power company Arva announced the largest deal in its history, with the China's leading nuclear power concern for new atomic plants to produce needed electricity without adding to global warming**. That is the advantage of atomic power, but there are also the questions of the dangers of accidents, like Chernobyl, and relating to highly radioactive spent fuel that can be exceedingly dangerous for 100,000 years. Iran's move to nuclear power is well

known, and controversial as it could lead to the building of Atomic weapons. In response, **Egypt has restarted its atomic energy program** and Saudi Arabia may do so as well. One of the factors in that decision, is that **many oil producing nations are increasing their economic development as they are past the peak in producing oil, which fuels the economy. They need more and more of their dwindling petroleum supplies for domestic use, driving up international energy prices as oil income declines, and need alternative sources of energy.**

Latin America is threatened by energy shortage, as growth is outpacing fuel supplies in Argentina, Brazil and Chile. In the midst of one of South America's the coldest winters, last year, Argentina, on 79 occasions, cut back its pipeline shipments of natural gas to Chile by at least 90%, forcing factories and power plants to shift to more polluting diesel fuel and quadrupling the cost of electricity. The lack of new natural gas and power plant development is choking economic growth in southern South America.

The Israel/Palestine Center for Research and Information (reported at: www.commongroundnews.org), November 2007 Newsletter reports **There are hundreds of villages in Israel, with 100,000 people, and in Palestine, with 230,000 people, that have little access to potable water. Israeli and Palestinian water authorities will have to collaborate to alleviate the continued and unnecessary suffering of these many citizens.**

The Environmental Protection Agency has been blocking attempts by 17 states to put tougher auto carbon dioxide standards into effect. A federal judge in Vermont, in September, ruled against the U.S. auto industry's attempt to block California and the other states from setting tough new limits on global warming pollution from automobiles, requiring the EPA to rule on the state proposals. Then, in December EPA decided not to allow the states to have stricter than the national standard to regulate vehicle greenhouse-gas emissions. despite the advice of the agencies own experts that the rules were well grounded, sending the states back to court. California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger stated that he will sue the agency, and at least eight other states that would have adopted the stricter emissions standards said they will co-sue. On December 21, The EPA proposed a "better approach" to making factory farms report their levels of air-polluting emissions - exempting them from reporting them at all! Under another EPA proposal, commercial livestock operations would not have to report hazardous chemical pollution if the source was animal waste. The rule change, which would exempt Big Ag from three separate laws, would "reduce the burden on the regulated community of complying with ... reporting requirements," says the EPA. "Residents have a right to know when these factory farms spew health-threatening air pollution in their area," says Ed Hopkins of the Sierra Club. "EPA should seriously reconsider its proposal and perhaps give some thought to the purpose of these laws, which is to protect public health, not corporate interests." **12 states sued EPA, at the end of November, opposing its weakening rules requiring companies to report the toxic chemicals the use, store and release. 16 states have approved plans outlining steps to reduce the state's contribution to climate vcnange, while 10 others set a statewide goal to reduce greenhouse gas production. A renewal of tax incentives for building and installing clean energy sources was stripped from the recently signed energy bill, which mandates a limited increase in automobile mileage by 2010. Current federal tax credits for renewable energy will expire at the end of 2008. Without the credits, the development of wind and solar power generation will be set back. However, a number of congressional leaders have said they would revisit the issue in 2008. Global warming and the climate change it brings is showing itself in the National Weather Service predictions for the first three months of 2008. The 90 day forecast projects that drought in the southeastern U.S. will continue, at least through March, while most of the U.S. experiences above-normal temperatures. Storms at the end of the year, gave some relief, barely keeping 2007 from being the driest year on record in Georgia. Before the rains, Atlanta was threatened with running out of water. January has seen another round of more severe weather than normal across much of the U.S., including rare (at least in the past) winter tornadoes in Washington State and thunderstorms in New England. A report by Environment America (environmentamerica.org) finds that since 1948 there has been an increase in heavy rain and snowfalls across the U.S. from 22%-26%, with the heaviest increase in New England and the Middle Atlantic states. Extreme weather continues to be more prevalent elsewhere, as exemplified by the severe flooding, in November, that devastated the Mexican state of Tabasco.**

Maine's College of the Atlantic has made good on its pledge to be a carbon-neutral campus, while Oregon's Portland State University plans to hire as many as 10 professors with expertise in sustainability to teach subjects from economics to biology to art. Michigan's Walsh College has green-built an extension to its campus, and Northern Kentucky University has launched a campus-wide campaign to reduce fossil fuels.

Experiments are now underway to transform the energy in ocean waves into electricity, using wave buoys, off the Oregon coast. The building of wave farms potentially could produce a huge amount of renewable electric power, but care would have to be taken in placement not to interfere with fishing.

Congress has passed the Green Jobs Act of 2007, authorizing \$125 million for green job training. In November, Congress was considering legislation that would tax carbon dioxide emitted by power generation, making wind, solar and some biofuel power more competitive (Mathew L. Wald, "The Carbon Calculus," *The New York Times*, November 7, pp H1 and H2). The three west coast states, New Hampshire and Massachusetts have put regulations in place to cap or offset power plant emissions, while The two New England states joined seven other Eastern states in an agreement, to take effect next year, to reduce CO₂ emissions. 17 states now require electric utilities to produce a set minimum amount of their electricity for instate consumption by renewable means. Illinois became the 26th state to require that some of the state's electricity come from renewable sources, while Kansas became the first state to refuse a permit for a new coal-fired power plant for health and environmental reasons. New York State, in September, issued subpoenas to five companies building coal fired power plants, in an effort to use securities legislation to control emissions, questioning whether the firms plans to build the plants pose undisclosed risks to investors, that they have a right to know about. Massachusetts began considering a bill, in November, that would require all home heating oil and diesel fuel to contain 5% biofuel by 2013. Over 700 U.S. mayors, representing 25% of the U.S. population, have signed a pledge to reduce greenhouse gases by 2012. Mayors of more than 100 cities took part in the Climate Protection Summit, organized by the United States Conference of Mayors, in early November. Eight Western States, experiencing long-term drought, and the federal government forged a new agreement, in December, on how to allocate water if the Colorado River runs short, as population growth and climate change threaten a major water shortage.

World Overview

The International Crisis Group (ICG), in *CrisisWatch* N° 53, 2 January 2, 2008 (<http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=5247>) found that "Seven actual or potential conflict situations around the world deteriorated in December 2007: "In Pakistan, the 27 December 27 assassination of former prime minister and opposition leader Benazir Bhutto threw the country deeper into political turmoil. Ensuing street violence killed some 50. Credible reports of election rigging in Kenya's 27 December presidential polls sparked violence in several parts of the country. Incumbent President Mwai Kibaki was reinstated despite an early lead by opponent Raila Odinga. Over 300 were killed by vigilante groups and police. Two suicide bombers killed up to 60 in UN and government buildings in Algiers on 11 December, with five more killed in further attacks. Fighting worsened in Chad between Khartoum-backed rebels and the military. The political crisis in Lebanon deepened with the 12 December assassination of General Francois Hajj and the presidency vacant since President Emile Lahoud's term ended on 23 November. The situation also deteriorated in the Basque Country (Spain) and Kyrgyzstan. The situation improved in Nepal in December as the Maoists rejoined the government on 30 December. For January 2008, *CrisisWatch* identifies Kenya and Pakistan as Conflict Risk Alerts, or situations at particular risk of new or significantly escalated conflict in the coming month. It identifies the DR Congo as a Conflict Resolution Opportunity with a government-sponsored peace conference for the Kivus due to start 6 January."

Iraq and Iran

Peter Symonds of Global Research, "British academics warn U.S. is preparing 'shock and awe' attack on Iran," September 15 (<http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=6788>, or [wsws.org](http://www.wsws.org)), reports that an 80-page study written by British security analysts, Dr Dan Plesch and Martin Butcher, released on August 28 estimates the overwhelming force that the US would use in the event of any attack on Iran, saying, "The US has made military preparations to destroy Iran's WMD, nuclear energy, regime, armed forces, state apparatus and economic infrastructure within days, if not hours, of President George W. Bush giving the order." "US bombers and long range missiles are ready today to destroy 10,000 targets within Iran in a few hours. US ground, air and marine forces already in the Gulf, Iraq and Afghanistan can devastate Iranian forces, the regime and the state at short notice." "Any attack is likely to be on a massive multi-front scale but avoiding a ground invasion. Attacks focused on WMD facilities would leave Iran too many retaliatory options, leave President Bush open to the charge of using too little force and leave the regime intact."

Information Clearing House carried two reports in mid-November of contingency plans to attack Iran. Uzi Mahnaimi and Sarah Baxter, "Revealed: Israel Plans Nuclear Strike on Iran," stated, "Israel has drawn up secret plans to destroy Iran's uranium enrichment facilities with tactical nuclear weapons. (<http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article18688.htm>). The Associated Press. "U.S. Says Attack Plans for Iran Ready," that U.S. plans and preparations were in place, if an attack on Iran were to be ordered. "Among the possible targets, in addition to nuclear installations like the centrifuge plant at Natanz: Iran's ballistic missile sites, Republican Guard bases, and naval warfare assets that Tehran could use in a retaliatory closure of the Straits of Hormuz, a vital artery for the flow of Gulf

oil.

(http://rs6.net/tn.jsp?e=001b65CqRVzekwTEGLkLDhZDRPqxhTzd3q5OBQdUdPjKkUcZOdNsxhJOpQCXb8Ku0lbOP6GKrhuMK4nKnChMlc-tPbAauwkUw_2D4NqLna5wPoABJhzc7yVcYncFkek_IRAZwPi0La1Jh2IAQ9zZt047upUdl-BoN7k and <http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article18689.htm>).

It was reported, in late November, that a **U.S. National Intelligence Estimate**, that has been circulating in the administration and intelligence agencies for at least a year, **finds that Iran ceased its nuclear weapons development program in 2003, and has not restarted it since.** The NIE projected that even if Iran restarted its nuclear weapons program now, it could not attain bomb building capability before 2015. In late January, Brittan, China, France, Germany Russia and the United States agreed on additional sanctions against Iran for its continuing nuclear fuel repossessing, which while currently not weapons grade, could be shifted to weapons grade uranium production. The proposed sanctions were presented to the UN Security Council, calling for restrictions on cargo going to and from Iran – including banning of all dual use materials and technologies, that have civilian and military use - **supported by inspections of ships and aircraft** going in and out of Iran, travel bans and asset freezes of persons involved in Iran's nuclear program, and monitoring of Iranian financial institutions. **Iran has increased cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency** in recent months. This validates Iran's current claim that it is only undertaking nuclear development for peaceful purposes. Never-the-less the Bush administration continues to threaten military action against Iran on the grounds that its nuclear program is developing atomic weapons. While the administration may be rattling the sword only to bring diplomatic pressure on Tehran, or for internal political purposes, **the rhetoric against Iran is similar to the administrations barrage of lies about Iraq, before commencing the current invasion and occupation.** There are reports that the NIE was released because top Pentagon and intelligence officials were upset that President Bush was about to make an unjustified attack on Iran, that would be very damaging to U.S. interests.

There are fears that the U.S. military may yet attack Iran before the end of the Bush administration, and even that it might do so as a pretext for declaring marshal law and canceling the 2008 elections. That the administration is still trying to spread false reasons for attacking Iran, as it did Iraq (a survey of statements of top administration officials found 935 outright lies about "the need" to attack Iraq and pursue the conflict), may be showing itself in the January 6 incident in which the U.S. Navy claimed that a group of Iranian speedboats swarming around U.S. warships in the Strait of Hormuz were threatening those vessels, and broadcast that threat by radio. The Iranians denied that their vessels were threatening the U.S. ships, and said they did not make such a broadcast. Both sides released videos supporting their claims. On October 10, the U.S. Navy stated that it did not know where the broadcast, interpreted as a threat to the U.S. ships (and the main reason the Iranian boat movements were interpreted as a threat), had come from. For more information on this incident, see: Gareth Porter, "Official Version of Naval Incident Starts to Unravel," 1/10/08, <http://www.ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=40747>, and "The Navy Times: Prankster May Be Responsible for Radio Threats Against Navy," 1/11/08, http://www.truthout.org/docs_2006/011208C.shtml. Gareth Porter, "How The Pentagon Planted a False Hormuz Story" (<http://www.ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=40801>), January 16, states, "Senior Pentagon officials, evidently reflecting a broader administration policy decision, used an off-the-record Pentagon briefing to turn the Jan. 6 U.S.-Iranian incident in the Strait of Hormuz into a sensational story demonstrating Iran's military aggressiveness, a reconstruction of the events following the incident shows. The initial press stories on the incident, all of which can be traced to a briefing by deputy assistant secretary of defence for public affairs in charge of media operations Bryan Whitman, contained similar information that has since been repudiated by the Navy itself. hen the Navy disseminated a short video into which was spliced the audio of a phone call warning that U.S. warships would "explode" in "a few seconds". Although it was ostensibly a Navy production, IPS [Institute for Policy Study] has learned that the ultimate decision on its content was made by top officials of the Defense Department".

Straus Military Reform Project Adviser Charles Pena, stated in commentary, published by United Press International, October 5, that **as long as policy-makers in Washington continue to ignore and distort the reasons why people select to become terrorists, and as long as our policy-makers pretend that just spending more on security systems will make the United States safer, the country will continue to be less secure at home and throughout the world.** The commentary is available at: http://www.upi.com/International_Security/Emerging_Threats/Analysis/2007/10/05/outside_view_are_we_safer_yet/985/

Sir Michael Aaronson argues, in "A Holistic Approach to the War on Terror," at: www.hdcentre.org, that **it is the War on Terror itself rather than the holistic approach which is misguided.** "To effectively respond to and protect ourselves from modern day terrorism, we must change the way we view the outside world and have so far intervned in it. We must change our approaches to situations such as in Afghanistan

or Iraq.” He demonstrates how the problem comes less from different actors - humanitarian and military - working together, than from the overall political framework, its lack of clarity about aims and objectives, and about what is an appropriate role for outside intervention. Finally, the author provides suggestions on how to improve our current approach and future response to such situations. (Note in this editor’s view, Aaronson’s critique shows that the current administration approach is far from a “holistic war on terrorism.”

Concerning the initial period of the U.S. troop increase, or ‘surge’, in Baghdad, the Center for Defense Information reported, September 27, in “Still No Surge; Still No Success,” (http://www.cdi.org/program/document.cfm?DocumentID=4107&from_page=../index.cfm), “Compared to previous troop levels for analogous periods of time, the “surge” brings no significant increase in deployments in Iraq. **New tactics and deployments in Iraq do not improve the prospects for success over previous periods. Conditions in Iraq for civilians there have not improved, as measured by civilian casualties and oil and electricity production.** In fact, for the period since July 2007 when the “surge” actually took effect, civilian casualties have increased measurably, and oil and electricity production have decreased. The expansion of Iraqi security forces has not resulted in better protection for Iraqi civilians. While circumstances have apparently improved significantly in Anbar Province [where the U.S. largely withdrew and armed and supported local Suni militias], they have **deteriorated elsewhere**. Those best able to measure the success of the surge, Iraqi civilians, assert in polls that conditions in Iraq are worse than before, that the U.S. and allied forces are unwelcome and should leave the country, and by a margin of 57% that it is OK to attack coalition forces. The GAO report found that “average number of daily attacks against civilians have remained unchanged from February to July 2007.” National surveys across Iraq by ABC News, along with findings by the BBC and the Japanese broadcaster NHK, found deepening dissatisfaction with conditions in Iraq, lower ratings for the national government and growing rejection of the U.S. role in the country. The ABC, August 17-24 poll, indicated that 31% of Iraqis saw security in their local area getting worse in the last six months while 31% said it had improved, and the rest seeing no change. 60% said that security in the country overall had worsened since the surge began, while 10% saw improvement. 65%-70% of Iraqis stated that the surge worsened rather than improved security, political stability and the pace of redevelopment. A few scattered and inconsistent improvements were indicated. In **Anbar province, where the U.S. has largely turned over security to local people** (the reverse of a surge), in the last six month those rating security positively increased from 0% to 38%. In Baghdad, in August, fewer described themselves as feeling completely unsafe in their own neighborhoods, 58% percent, down from 84%, but other assessments of security in these areas have not improved, nor has the view nationally. Overall, 41% percent say security is their greatest personal problem, down from 48% percent in March, while the number calling it the nation's top problem remained at about 56%, with 28% ranking political or military issues first, with numerous other critical problems reported, including lack of jobs, poor power and fuel supply, and poor medical services. Meanwhile, 60% of Iraqis said their own lives are going badly, while the number saying things are going badly for the nation rose from 65%, last winter, to 78%. Similarly, where 69% expected improvement in Iraq in the coming year in November 2005, and 40% last winter, only 23% did in August. The number saying things are going badly for the country overall -- up 13 points from last winter. In August, more than 60% called the U.S.-led invasion of their country wrong, up from 52% percent last winter. In the same period the number seeing violence against U.S. forces acceptable rose 6%, while 47%, in August, favored the immediate withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq, up from 35% last winter. At the same time, 79% of Iraqis believe Iran is actively engaged in encouraging sectarian violence in Iraq, an increase of 8% since last winter, while majorities suspect Saudi Arabia and Syria of fomenting violence. The poll found **almost unanimous opposition to most activities of al Qaeda in Iraq, with the sole exception is its attacks on U.S. and other coalition forces.**

Later in the fall, **violence, and U.S. casualties, had dropped significantly in Iraq (with some increase in the North), but it appears that the primary reason is not the surge.** In his "Washington Babylon" section of the *Harper's Magazine* website, journalist Ken Silverstein and Straus Military Reform Project Adviser Col. Douglas Macgregor (U.S. Army, ret.), November 28, exchanged questions and answers about the current situation and the effects of the "surge" in Iraq. Straus Military Reform Project director Winslow Wheeler summarizes the main points of the Macgregor-Silverstein Q&A, "Six Questions for Douglas Macgregor on Iraq and the 'Surge'" (available at: http://www.cdi.org/program/document.cfm?DocumentID=4144&StartRow=1&ListRows=10&appendURL=&Orderby=D.DateLastUpdated&ProgramID=37&from_page=index.cfm). Col. Macgregor notes, “**The situation on the ground in Iraq has, indeed, changed, but the reduced violence has little, if anything, to do with the "surge."** The nation of Iraq no longer exists; it is now three fundamentally segregated communities, each of them still deeply hostile to each other. The virtual completion of ethnic cleansing, bribes and subsidies paid to former Sunni insurgents, and independent action by Muqtada al Sadr to suspend operations against Americans are the root causes of the reduced violence in Iraq. Each of these occurred independent of, even before, the "surge's" arrival in Iraq. The basis for virulent new violence between Sunnis and Shiites, Shiite factions against each other, and the forgoing against the United States all remain and may even

be exacerbated. The Bush administration decision to remain in Iraq for the foreseeable future makes the outbreak of new violence more, not less, likely. Simultaneously, the conditions are being laid for broader conflict in the region involving Turkey, Kurdistan, multiple Sunni-dominated governments, Iran, and the United States." Indeed, recently Turkey has undertaken several attacks against Kurdish separatist forces in Northern Iraq. An additional reason for the reduction in violence has been that, according to the U.S. Military, Iran has been more cooperative with the Iraq government, including greatly slowing the movement of weapons, particularly smart bombs, into Iraq from Iran. Also, the U.S. has armed and supported additional Sunni militias to patrol their own areas. The U.S. began a slow reduction of troop levels in Iraq, in the fall, which are slated to continue if violence continues lower than it was well into the 'surge'. By January, the Sunni militias were beginning to be hit by new attacks, and there were indications that the level of violence might again be growing, or about to increase. Regardless of the reasons for the current (perhaps temporary) reduction in armed conflict, almost no progress has been made, over the past year, on political reconciliation or economic development, with the U.S. government reporting no improvement in services. The one political advance – a law passed by Parliament that reverses previous law, allowing former Baath Party members (almost all of whom are Sunnis) to hold government jobs – has so many loopholes that it is questionable to what extent, if at all, it actually allows more Sunnis to hold governmental posts.

The Iraqi civilian death toll is least 10 times greater than most estimates cited in the US media, based on a scientific study of violent Iraqi deaths caused by the U.S.-led invasion of March 2003. That study, published in prestigious medical journal *The Lancet*, estimated that over 600,000 Iraqis had been killed as a result of the invasion as of July 2006. Iraqis have continued to be killed since then. An estimate that over a million Iraqis have died received independent confirmation from a prestigious British polling agency, in September 2007. Opinion Research Business estimated that 1.2 million Iraqis have been killed violently since the US invasion. A large national household survey conducted by the Iraqi government and WHO estimates that 151,000 Iraqis died from violence between March 2003 and June 2006. For more go to: <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/01/080113083338.htm>. Projecting to the end of 2007, the number would be at least 200,000. This is less than the *Lancet* study of perhaps 650,000 as of 2004, which would be a million, now. These are difficult estimates to make, but even the lower number is a huge catastrophe. For more go to: <http://www.zmag.org>, which has several articles on the estimates.

Later this fall, thousands of Iraqis were coming home, but to communities unprepared to receive them. Meanwhile, the head of U.S. reconstruction teams in Iraq, stated, October 18, that attempts by U.S. led teams to improve infrastructure, expand economic development, foster interethnic reconciliation, and build an effective police force and court system across Iraq have made little progress. Moreover, no measures for determining progress had been developed. Services, including electric power and health care, have also, generally, not improved (as reported by the Pentagon, December 18), and getting Iraqis to maintain U.S. built systems "has been a challenge."

Serious challenges were made to the statistics and other information that General Petraeus sited claiming that the 'surge' was an early success. The Associated Press reported, September 10, that General David Petraeus misled the country, and provided statistics to support their allegation. A number of analysts asserted that Petraeus used "funny math." According to the Washington Post, Petraeus and the Pentagon applied a bizarre formula for measuring violence in the country. For example, deaths by car bombs did not count, and assassinations counted only if the person was shot in the back of the head—not in the front. For more on this go to: http://pol.moveon.org/lte?campaign_id=84&id=11221-1653571-rPwzIC&t=3>http://pol.moveon.org/lte?campaign_id=84&id=11221-1653571-rPwzIC&t=3, <http://pol.moveon.org/petraeus.html?id=11221-1653571-rPwzIC&t=4>><http://pol.moveon.org/petraeus.html?id=11221-1653571-rPwzIC&t=4>, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=2958&id=11221-1653571-rPwzIC&t=5>><http://www.moveon.org/r?r=2958&id=11221-1653571-rPwzIC&t=5> 2, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=2941&id=11221-1653571-rPwzIC&t=6>, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=2938&id=11221-1653571-rPwzIC&t=7>><http://www.moveon.org/r?r=2938&id=11221-1653571-rPwzIC&t=7>, and <http://abcnews.go.com/US/Story?id=3571504>><http://abcnews.go.com/US/Story?id=3571504>.

In December, one year since the release of the Baker-Hamilton Iraq Study Group report, World Security Institute Senior Fellow John Newhouse revisited the Study Group's recommendations in his latest policy brief, "Iraq, Iran and Turkey: A Regional Approach," (http://www.cdi.org/program/document.cfm?DocumentID=4153&from_page=../index.cfm), arguing that the United States must keep a low profile in Iraq and push for a regional framework for resolving the crisis. But it must also realize that bigger issues now threaten the region, such as how to deal with Iran and Turkey's powder-keg situation in northern Iraq.

A large national household survey conducted by the Iraqi government and WHO estimates that 151,000 Iraqis died from violence between March 2003 and June 2006. For more go to: <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/01/080113083338.htm>. Projecting to the end of 2007, the number would be at least 200,000. This is less than the *Lancet* study of perhaps 650,000 as of 2004, which would be a million, now. These are difficult estimates to make, but even the lower number is a huge catastrophe. For more go to: <http://www.zmag.org>, which has several articles on the estimates.

Developments in Asia (including the Middle East) and the Pacific

As of early November, in Afghanistan, insurgent violence had reached its highest levels since the U.S. invaded the country in 2001. Suicide bombings, other violent incidents, kidnappings, and poppy production, have all increased over the past year, while the country struggles to maintain security gains and achieve even modest levels of economic development. The Center for Defense Information, "Afghanistan Update: Dec. 1 - 31, 2007," (http://www.cdi.org/program/document.cfm?DocumentID=4173&from_page=../index.cfm, posted January 11) "December was an important month for Afghanistan and the international forces deployed there, with successful efforts to retake territory in the south, particularly the Taliban stronghold Musa Qala. However, it will be critical in the months ahead to ensure the ability to extend security, governance, and development to hold and build upon the areas regained. With growing unrest across the border in Pakistan, heightened by Benazir Bhutto's assassination, the regional security environment is growing even more complicated; as is the humanitarian situation in southeastern Afghanistan, with many Pakistani refugees reportedly fleeing across the border." In January, the U.S. was planning to send 3000 additional marines to Afghanistan.

The International Crisis Group warned ("Reforming Afghanistan's Police, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=5052&l=1>), August 30, "Insecurity will worsen, and democracy can fail in insurgency-ridden Afghanistan if the police are not reformed and depoliticized." ICG's Senior Analyst on Afghanistan, Joanna Nathan, stated, "Rather than acting as a service to citizens, the police operate more as a coercive tool of the governing elites. Rooting out corruption and ensuring operational autonomy - with oversight - are critical to Afghanistan's security." The report also said, "Although the Afghan National Police (ANP) has made some progress since the fall of the Taliban in 2001, return on invested human and financial capital is modest. President Karzai's government still lacks political will to tackle a culture of impunity and end political interference in appointments and operations. Professionalizing the service through pay and rank reform is an uphill battle. The challenges of a growing insurgency are pushing quick fixes to the fore. Institution building is further hampered by problems associated with the expanding illegal drugs trade. Conflicting visions of police reform also undermine progress. The main motivation of foreign capitals has been to quash the insurgency, which has led to an understandable but short-sighted emphasis on quantity over quality and blurred the distinction between the military and the police. Kabul and its partners need to acknowledge that different security arms of the state have different roles; building a legitimate, accountable police institution must be seen as part of the wider process of democratization, rather than simply a short-term security task. The reform process should include appointment of a police commissioner with operational autonomy and civilian review bodies. Donor countries must commit to the International Police Coordination Board (IPCB) to develop and implement a strategy that includes conditioning funding on measurable progress". In October, the U.S. announced that it was carrying out a major reorganization and training of Afghan police, in a \$2.5 billion effort. An important part of the operation is to minimize corruption, which is seen as a larger threat to Afghan stability and development than the Taliban. In late October, out of concerns for political and health consequences of U.S. urged spraying of opium poppy fields in an attempt to eliminate them, the Afghan government was reviewing the spraying program.

The situation in Pakistan been deteriorating over the last several months. Bombings and other violence, which have been common in the nation, have increased. Unpopular president General Pervez Musharraf imposed a state of emergency, sacked the Supreme Court, shut down the media and basic freedoms, and imprisoned democratic opposition leaders, for a considerable period, before relenting. Lawyers and civil society, took to the streets until, prevented, as thousands were arrested, while violence increased across the country, even as, in tribal areas, the conflict between the military, with some tribal group support, increased as the Taliban, al Qaeda and their tribal allies grew stronger. On January 27th, in a situation of decreased security that many commentators believe elements of the security service, some of whom may be pro-Taliban, have intentionally contributed to, former prime minister, Benazir Bhutto was assassinated. The assassination was followed by riots and increased violence. ICG stated, That this was a, "serious blow to the re-emergence of democracy in Pakistan and the country's return to stability. The leader of the Pakistan Peoples Party and former prime minister died alongside her colleagues and supporters campaigning in elections. The international community must now come together

to push for a full investigation into the murders.” “Pakistan’s military-backed interim government is not in a position to carry out a fair investigation into the assassination. The United Nations Security Council should meet urgently to establish an international commission of enquiry to determine who ordered and carried out the killings. Given the long-standing connections between the Pakistani military and jihadi groups, this would be the only way to carry out an impartial and credible investigation.” After some delay, the Pakistani government did allow some international help in the investigation, particularly from British, Scotland Yard, but only after Bhutto’s body had been cremated without an autopsy,

ICG asserted, January 2 (“After Bhuttos Murder: A Way Forward for Pakistan, (<http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=5246>), “If Pakistan is to be stable in the wake of Benazir Bhutto’s murder, President Pervez Musharraf must resign and a quick transition follow to a democratically elected civilian government.... Musharraf, who seized power in a 1999 coup, is no longer, if he ever was, a factor for stability. Particularly the U.S. must recognize he is a serious liability, seen as complicit in the death of the popular politician. Unless he steps down, tensions will worsen and the international community could face the nightmare of a nuclear-armed, Muslim country descending into civil war from which extremists would stand to gain”. Mark Schneider, Crisis Group, Senior Vice-President, comments, “Bhutto’s death has drawn the battle lines even more clearly between Musharraf’s military-backed regime and Pakistan’s moderate majority, which will settle for nothing less than genuine parliamentary democracy.” “Crisis Group agrees with the Election Commission decision to postpone the parliamentary election scheduled for 8 January to 18 February but only if additional steps are taken so that the delay contributes to the creation of conditions for free and fair elections and the restoration of democracy. These include, in addition to Musharraf’s resignation: appointment, in consultation with the political parties, of caretaker governments at federal and provincial levels; full restoration of the constitution; and restoration of judicial independence, including reappointment of the judges Musharraf dismissed because they would not do his bidding in November when he declared martial law. The international community should also support an independent, fixed-deadline investigation into Bhutto’s murder.” The United States has been considering arming local militias in the tribal areas of Pakistan, as it has Sunni militias in Iraq. In both countries, while if carefully planned and carried out, along with efforts for long term integration of such forces with the national army, under the proper conditions such a plan can be far more beneficial than harmful. But without the right conditions, planning and integrative action, the long range effect can be most counterproductive, as occurred in Afghanistan with the U.S. arming militant Jihadist groups fighting the Russians, which later became the Taliban. U.S. military aid to Pakistan, as in Iraq, over the past several years is largely unaccounted for, and millions of dollars are known to have been misspent, including beefing up forces facing India in Kashmir, rather than containing al Qaeda and the Taliban. The U.S. has spent over \$100 million assisting General Musharraf in keeping Pakistan’s nuclear arsenal secure, over the past six years, but U.S. officials are raising questions about the program, now that Musharraf’s position and the country’s condition have become tenuous.

Meanwhile, the International Crises group has focused on the more critical crisis in the tribal areas. ICG stated, October 22, in “Pakistan: The Forgotten Conflict in Balochistan” (<http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=5131&l=1>), “The insurgency in Balochistan province will only subside when free, fair and transparent elections establish a legitimate government to replace Pakistan’s current military dictatorship.” “Relying on divide-and-rule policies, the military supports Pashtun Islamist parties like the JUI-F, a key patron of the Afghan Taliban, in a bid to counter secular Baloch and moderate Pashtun forces. Using Balochistan as a base of operation and sanctuary and recruiting from JUI’s extensive madrasa network, the Taliban and its Pakistani allies are undermining the state-building effort in Afghanistan. At the same time, U.S. and other Western support for Musharraf is alienating the Baloch, who otherwise could be natural partners in countering extremism in Pakistan. The federal government needs to restore a democratic election process for national and provincial governments and allow representative and participatory institutions. It should cease all military operations, release all political prisoners, including those in the unlawful custody of intelligence agencies, and accept the Supreme Court’s directive to end the disappearances of political opponents. It should immediately produce those charged with criminal offences before competent civilian courts, which should be responsible for any trials, and drop terrorism charges against Balochistan National Party leader Akhtar Mengal, transfer his kidnapping trial to a sessions court and release him on bail. The government should also ensure freedom of speech, movement, association and assembly and remove all restrictions on Baloch nationalist parties.” Samina Ahmed, ICG South Asia Project Director believes, “The staunchly anti-Taliban and secular Baloch believe the international community has yet to understand the threat the military’s Islamist allies pose, domestically and externally. The restoration of participatory democratic institutions willing to accommodate the legitimate political demands of the Baloch would assuage dissent and restore trust in constitutionalism and rule of law.”

There is some potential hope for movement toward peace, or at least improvement, in the Palestinian-Israeli situation, with President Bush having initiated a new round of peace talks, in

November, and with continuing discussions between the Israeli and Palestinian governments. There are pressures for reaching a settlement of the Israeli Palestinian situation, in the threat of continuing Middle East destabilization, and in international pressure, including from the U.S. But while the Bush administration's reengagement is a pressure for movement toward settlement, many commentators believe that the U.S. President has done too little in preparation for the November meeting, and continuing negotiations, and is not doing enough that is helpful to realizing their success.

The **ongoing situation, remains effectively unchanged**, however, with often deadly Israeli raids into Palestinian territory, rockets fired by militants in Gaza into Israel, an Israeli siege of Gaza, of varying dimensions, an increase of Israeli checkpoints in the West Bank, on going settler violence against Palestinians, and continued stealing of their land, continued Israeli building of the "security fence" – though somewhat limited by court decision – continuing to take Arab land and cut off local Palestinians from fields, jobs, supplies, services, and each other, and some continued intra-Palestinian (mostly Hamas-Fatah) violence. Avi Issacharoff, "**UN finds 40 new W. Bank roadblocks in two months,**" *Haaretz* September 20 2007 (<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/905855.html>, or http://www.kibush.co.il/show_file.asp?num=22426), reported, "**Defense Minister Ehud Barak promised U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice this week to remove 24 roadblocks and consider additional alleviations of movement restrictions on the Palestinians.** This followed a similar promise to alleviate movement restrictions that Prime Minister Ehud Olmert made to Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas. **However, the number of roadblocks has now reached 572, an increase of 52% compared to 376 in August 2005, according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). In the past two months alone, Israel put up 40 new roadblocks." Israel's escalation of military action, and failure to move significantly on other fronts, just as peace talks are starting – a repeat of past performance – is undermining the chance of gaining an agreement.** Khaled Abu Toameh, "Abbas threatens to quit if `escalation` continues" reported in the Jerusalem Post, January 17 (<http://www.jpost.com/> and *Occupation Magazine*: http://www.kibush.co.il/show_file.asp?num=24692), **Abbas was particularly enraged that Israel had stepped up its military operations shortly after U.S. President George W. Bush's visit to the region, and threatened to resign if the escalation continued. Meanwhile, the ongoing IDF attacks appear to have brought Hamas and Fatah closer to each other after months of fighting. Representatives of the two parties have appealed to their leaders to set aside their differences and join ranks to face the Israeli operations.**□

Conditions in Hamas dominated Gaza have varied, since the beginning of fall, from difficult, with a terrible economy and very poor and greatly inadequate services, to on the verge of major humanitarian crisis, depending on the extent to which the Israelis have laid siege to Gaza. The **European Parliament** passed a **resolution**, October 11. **calling on the Israeli Government to lift the blockade of the Gaza Strip and to fulfill its international obligations under the Geneva Conventions to guarantee the flow of humanitarian aid, humanitarian assistance and essential services, such as electricity and fuel.**□(http://www.kibush.co.il/show_file.asp?num=22813). The **United Nations** has **asked Israel, December 8, to resume full fuel shipments** and expressed concern about the station owners' protests. And Israeli human rights groups went to court trying to block the sanctions. "These cuts are designed to gradually and deliberately decrease the level of economic and humanitarian activity that can take place in Gaza at the expense of 1.5 million people who have no way to defend themselves," said Sari Bashi, director of Gisha, one of the rights groups. (For more, go to: http://www.kibush.co.il/show_file.asp?num=23882, and http://www.kibush.co.il/show_file.asp?num=23078). On December 15, - The **International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)** criticized the **Israeli closure and occupation of Gaza, which has left hospitals unable to treat the sick and injured, and has left farmers unable to work their land. The Red Cross called on Israel to "lift the retaliatory measures which are paralyzing life in Gaza", and to stop targeting the civilian population.**□(For more go to: http://www.kibush.co.il/show_file.asp?num=24032). **Israel's Military Agreed, January 10, to `Temporarily` Increase the Amount of Industrial Diesel Permitted to Supply Gaza's Power Station.** The announcement was made by the State Attorney's office in a court document responding to an urgent request for an injunction filed by 10 human rights groups who have petitioned against the fuel and electricity cuts to Gaza. The cuts that Israel ordered in supplies of industrial diesel to Gaza's power plant have caused severe shortages, forcing the power plant to cut production by 30% as of, January 5, causing Gaza residents to suffer up to 8 hours of scheduled daily power outages, and longer `unscheduled` outages, and their access to clean water has been disrupted. The power outages crippled the functioning of Gaza's largest hospital, Shifa, which experienced up to 12 hours a day of power outages, causing the water pump to brake down, and disrupting medical care (http://www.kibush.co.il/show_file.asp?num=24542). Also, last fall, The Israeli government forced Israeli banks to halt business transactions with Palestinian banks, creating a financial crisis in Gaza (http://www.kibush.co.il/show_file.asp?num=22817). In Early December, Sources close to Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni said that the idea of deploying NATO forces in Gaza has been raised as one way of possibly reinstating Abbas there, as well as greater Israeli involvement in NATO, and would be on Livni's agenda in her talks with the NATO chief. Previously Israel rejected NATO involvement in Gaza, and NATO has preferred not to be involved in the occupied territories until a settlement has been achieved (http://www.kibush.co.il/show_file.asp?num=23886). At least in early December, **Hamas was reported**

attempting to reach a ceasefire in Gaza with Israel. Senior Hamas officials were attempting to dissuade militants from firing Qassam rockets and mortar shells from the Strip into southern Israel, in hopes of preventing the large Israel Defense Forces (IDF) ground operations that have been so deadly and disruptive in Gaza. Islamic Jihad sources told the *Al-Quds al-Arabi Newspaper* that they had agreed to Hamas' proposal if Israel agrees to a mutual ceasefire (http://www.kibush.co.il/show_file.asp?num=23880). Israel was initially cool to the proposal, and then, on January 18, in response to a rocket attack, the IDF closed all crossing into Gaza. Maan, "Death and Darkness in Gaza: People are dying, Help us!" (<http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article19120.htm>) reported January 20, "A humanitarian crisis is underway as the Gaza Strip's only power plant began to shut down on Sunday, and the tiny coastal territory entered its third full day without shipments of vital food and fuel supplies due to Israel's punitive sanctions. The Gaza Strip's power plant has completely shut down on Sunday because it no longer has the fuel needed to keep running....leaving large swaths of the Gaza Strip in darkness." On Monday, Israel eased the blockade, allowing some food, fuel and other supplies though. Sundays full blockade was answered by an enlarged rocket attack from Gaza. Yossi Wolfson, "Economic Warfare in Gaza." *Challenge Magazine*, January/February 2008 (http://www.challenge-mag.com/en/article_196, and http://www.kibush.co.il/show_file.asp?num=24667), states, "before Israel hardened its measures, 87% of Gazans lived beneath the poverty line, which was reckoned at \$2.40 per day. Already then there were perceived shortages in basic products, and food prices rose by tens of percentage points. According to figures of the World Food Program, 85% of Gazans depend on aid to purchase food. In the view of Israel, however, the existing supply of goods is above what the law obligates it to allow, and the supplies of electricity and gasoline are even twice the minimum required." On January 24, members of Hamas knocked down a section of the fence separating Gaza from Egypt, allowing many thousands Gazans to interrupt the siege by shopping in Egypt. By the second day, the surge of shoppers, fearing the border will soon be closed again, brought with it sharp inflation, with some sellers doubling prices, and transportation prices across Egypt to the Gaza boarder also being raised. As of January 25, attempts by Egypt to close the openings in the wall were being thwarted, in some cases by crowds keeping Egyptian police at bay, and in others by Palestinians breaking down new sections of fence, as torn down sections are repaired. To date Egypt has been restrained in its efforts to reclose the border.

The situation is still difficult for Palestinians on the West Bank (but nothing like in Gaza), but there have been some bits of relief. At the beginning of September, the Israeli High Court released its verdict in the petition of the village of Bil'in against the separation barrier constructed on its land. After more than two and a half years of joint struggle by Palestinian and Israeli protesters, with International support, the High-Court deviated from its normal (but not exclusive) pattern of facilitating every move to dispossess Palestinians, deciding that the present route of the fence is illegal and that the State must propose an alternative route within a reasonable period. According to the decision, the alternative route must retain Bil'in agricultural land on the Palestinian side of the barrier. Moreover, the court ruled that the benefits of the present route are disproportional to the damage it causes, and ordered the state to consider refraining from including the planned eastern section of the "Matitiah-Mizrah" neighborhood on the "Israeli" side of the fence. "The present route raises grave questions also in regards to the security advantages it was said to provide...and the selected route cannot be explained other than by the intention to include the eastern section of "Matitiah-Mizrah" on the west side of the separation barrier". But Gush Shalom is concerned that the court also gave legal confirmation to a settlement housing project that was built illegally on Bil'in land. The Israeli peace organization interpreted that part of the decision as saying, "The message: settlers, build quickly! Create facts! All that you succeed in stealing the court will approve - Retrospectively". *H'aretz* military correspondent Avi Issacharoff, in "Restoring Order" (available from the Common Ground News Service, at: <http://www.commongroundnews.org>), reports that "Nablus now seems like the most stable and quiet city in the West Bank," after Palestinian security forces have successfully pacified the violence-plagued residents. Palestinian security forces have moved to expand efforts into neighboring towns, but still require Israel's cooperation for success, according to the Nablus intelligence chief. In Late October, U.N. Special Rapporteur on Human Rights J. Dugard stated, "In my report I have suggested that the Secretary-General ensure that the Quartet adopt a more pro-active position on the human rights front by signalling to Israel that its violations of human rights in the OPT can no longer be tolerated and that it must comply with the 2004 Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice holding that Israel must dismantle the Wall being built in Palestinian territory (...) [or] consider withdrawing the United Nations from the Quartet".

ICG wrote, December 20, "Inside Gaza: The Challenge of Clans and Families" (<http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=5234&l=1>), "As Hamas seeks to consolidate its rule and restore stability to Gaza, it must deal with powerful clans and families with which it has been at loggerheads since its June 2007 seizure of power." "Influential families, along with political movements and militias, filled the void left by the Palestinian Authority's collapse over recent years. They are now one of the most significant obstacles for Hamas, and although they probably lack the unity or motivation to form an effective opposition, this could change should popular dissatisfaction in Gaza grow. There are as yet inconclusive indications that Hamas understands this and is moderating its

approach.” “Six months after its takeover, Hamas wants to show it can govern and restore order despite Israel’s siege and continued conflict with the Ramallah-based government. The role of clans and families is essential in this, as their growing influence has both prevented Gaza’s total collapse and fuelled its mounting disorder. Some powerful families have furthered their own interests, forming militias and turning their leaders into warlords, establishing near autonomous zones with informal justice and welfare systems. After a period of tremendous chaos, Hamas dramatically reduced Gaza’s internal turmoil. While the Islamists have cracked down on the most unruly clans and those most strongly affiliated with their Fatah rivals, they risk blowback by pushing core constituencies to the sidelines. As the struggle for diminishing resources intensifies, powerful clans and families could emerge as magnets for dissent, which on repeated occasions has turned violent. Hamas retains strong support in Gaza but its popularity has diminished due to the dire economic situation and often brutal methods which have alienated important segments of the population. There are signs, early and insufficient, that it recognises this and has begun to acknowledge that families, with manpower, loyalty and arms, are there to stay.” “Ultimately, effective governance and a resolution of the crisis in Gaza necessitate political reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas and territorial unity with the West Bank, as well as a ceasefire with Israel and an end to its siege”, states Robert Malley, Crisis Group’s Middle East Program Director. „In the meantime, Hamas could help preserve order and improve prospects for stability by taking steps to cease brutal measures, broaden participation in its rule and reach a workable arrangement with Gaz’,s families.” Indeed, in the view of many commentators, **ultimately, a reconciliation among Palestinians, including between Hamas and Fatah, but encompassing all groups and families, if peace is to be obtained with Israel, and a viable Palestinian state created. This will require the resolution of many issues, and the building of good democratic process.**

An international donors` conference, to bring in financial support for the Palestinian territories, began in Paris, December 17, **promising \$7.4 billion in aid to the Palestinians,** including the United Kingdom and the United States pledging almost one billion dollars in aid, and France an additional sum. Up to the time of the conference, **little of the previously pledged aid has improved the very poor Palestinian daily life** (http://www.kibush.co.il/show_file.asp?num=24030).

In recent years, **the relationship between Egypt and Israel has become increasingly strained because Israel accuses Egypt of not doing enough to stop arms smuggling into Gaza.** As result, the U.S. Congress froze \$100 million of the \$2 billion dollars in U.S. aid to Egypt. Jewish Voice for Peace (<http://www.jewishvoiceforpeace.org>) states, that in reality, **arms smuggling, particularly into poor nations is a world wide problem, that needs a broader solution in the case of Gaza, and that blaming Egypt is not helpful, when Egypt is regularly stopping that and other smuggling,** as shown in regular News reports. A more collaborative approach would be more fruitful, for advancement on a wide range of issues.

In September, (and confirmed in October) **Israeli planes bombed what is believed to have been a nuclear reactor, possibly of North Korean design, in Syria.** Both Israel and Syria have been secretive about the incident. New construction has since begun on the site, but it is not believe to be related to nuclear development.

The **political crisis, which could yet descend into civil war, continues in Lebanon, where election of a new President by Parliament continues to be delayed,** and where there have been a number assassinations over the past months. In early January, the Arab League, including Syria, approved a plan to end Lebanon’s constitutional crisis. However, Hezbollah was cautious in its reaction to the plan, which would set up a government of national unity in an arrangement under which no one party could impose or block any decision.

North Korea has continued to shut down its nuclear weapons program and collaborate with International Atomic Energy Commission inspectors. It remains to negotiate North Korea’s disposing of any atomic weapons, or weapons grade uranium or plutonium, that it may have. Meanwhile, steps to normalize the counties international relations have continued, including beginning the first regular rail service between North and South Korea since before the Korean War. **Following a delay in completion of delivery of promised aid, North Korea, at the beginning of January, delayed completing reporting of what nuclear materials it has on hand.**

South Korea has now elected a new President, Lee Myung-bak. The International Crisis Group (ICG) reports (“South Korea’s Election: What to Expect from President Lee,” <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=5240&l=1>) that while “he has ideological differences with his liberal predecessor, he is **unlikely to make dramatic changes in foreign and security policy.**” “A former top executive of the Hyundai conglomerate, Lee has pledged to focus on the economy but he is likely to play a dominant role also in issues of concern to all the participants in the six-power talks on North Korea,s nuclear program,” and is expected to work to improve

relations with North Korea, China and Japan. In continuing South Korea's efforts at rapprochement with North Korea, he is likely "to press more firmly for reciprocity than his predecessor. He has outlined a plan to narrow the economic gap with the North by providing investment and helping Pyongyang create an export manufacturing economy. There is wide consensus in South Korea on engagement with the North, so the only change anticipated is a greater emphasis on reciprocity and holding Pyongyang to its commitments." It does seem that Myung-bak's rhetoric on North Korea is tougher than that of his predecessor, but he has also offered good relations to, and continuing negotiations with, the North. The outcome of parliamentary elections, in April, will effect the President elect's policies and power.

After weeks of growing nonviolent demonstrations, led by the countries many Buddhist Monks in Burma (or Myanmar, even the name is a political issue in the nation), the repressive military regime violently repressed demonstrations – probably killing several hundred – cutting off cell and wire phone, internet, and other communication, arresting suspected opponents, sizing monasteries, and torturing Monks, in October, driving the opposition underground. However, in late October, **Monks were again leading peaceful antigovernment marches** in the city where the first round of nonviolent demonstrations began. As of January, although some negotiations had taken place, the military regime continued its repressive rule. In January, the **government greatly increased the fee on satellite television arials, in an attempt to cut outside communication.** ICG stated, September 25, "Myanmar: Time for Urgent Action," (<http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index>), "United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon should hold urgent talks with the foreign ministers of China, India and Singapore, the current ASEAN chair, on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly and lead a joint attempt to encourage peaceful dialogue in Myanmar/Burma. China, India, and ASEAN should back Ban Ki-moon,s call on the authorities in Myanmar to exercise restraint in the face of growing peaceful protests and put their full weight behind UN efforts to find a solution to the country,s political crisis." "Only China, India, and, to a lesser degree, ASEAN have any influence on the military regime. China has very close economic and political links with Myanmar, while India has developed strong military ties. Both would suffer from worsening instability there, as they did after the violent August 1988 military crackdown." "China, India and ASEAN should communicate to the military that a repeat of the 1998 violence would be unacceptable and would lead to serious consequences, including action by the UN Security Council. China and Russia should warn Myanmar that they would support full consideration of the situation there by the Security Council, as well as a possible adoption of a Security Council Resolution, if the military use force against protestors. The Security Council should re-affirm its support of the Secretary-General's good offices mission and urge Myanmar,s leaders to work with the Special Envoy to map out measurable steps towards economic and political reform. Those countries with close ties to Myanmar should urge the military to release all political prisoners, including Daw Aung Sang Suu Kyi; take steps to alleviate economic hardship and introduce serious reforms; and start a real dialogue with the opposition."

Jason Motlagh, "India's Backdoor War " (at: <http://www.pulitzercenter.org/showproject.cfm?id=44>) reports "**India today is a media darling with a brisk economy to back it up. But rapid, urban-based development has passed by the rural poor, giving oxygen to a violent separatist movement that grows bolder by the year.** As Bollywood and the info-tech boom of the New India grab headlines, **a low-intensity insurgency waged by Indian Maoist guerrillas – known as Naxalites – has gone virtually ignored for more than four decades.** Their strength is largely due to the plight of "tribals" living deep in the central and northeast provinces, where state authority is weak at best and basic services are non-existent. Making matters worse is the state's seizure of land for mining and forestry concessions. Mounting frustrations have allowed Maoist influence to expand over as much as one-third of the country, enforced by an estimated 10,000-20,000 armed guerillas. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh recently called the movement, which has had ties with separatist forces in Nepal and Sri Lanka, the 'biggest internal security threat.' To counter this threat, the government has sanctioned what amount to paramilitary security forces in remote regions. But this so-called "peace movement" has only intensified the violence, forcing thousands into roadside camps. Hundreds more die in the crossfire." In late October, **thousands of Indian peasants, caught in competition for land and other resources, marched in New Delhi for land rights.** Following the protest, **the national government stated that it was establishing a panel to make land policies, guide states and resolve disputes over land distribution and acquisition.**

Nepal is again moving ahead with its process of building peace and democracy with the return of the Moasts to the government at the beginning of this year. New elections are to be held by April. (ICG Nepal reports of September 28 and December are at <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=5082&l=1> and <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=5082&l=1>). The Minister for Education and Sports (MoES) of Nepal announced, early this fall, that the ministry **would include peace education as new subject in schools beginning next year.** For more information see: <http://www.gorkhapatra.org.np/content.php?nid=27307>.

With the war in Sri Lanka restarted many months ago, the government has officially ended the cease fire. Both sides are now more heavily armed and militarily prepared than before the cease fire actually took place. Thus the war could become much more deadly, and there has been heavy fighting.

In Thailand, the party of ousted prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra won a parliamentary victory, in late December, over the party backed by the generals who had ousted the former prime minister and established numerous security and limitation of free speech statutes. Shinawatra has stated that he will return to Thailand but not take part in the government. Shinawatra's policies aggravated rebellion in the South of the country, that the army sought to ease by more tolerant measures. The International Crises group found, October 23, "Southern Thailand: The Problem with Paramilitaries" (<http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=5132&l=1>), "**Thailand's increasing reliance on poorly trained and loosely supervised paramilitary and militia forces is complicating its efforts to tackle the insurgency in the South**". ICG asserts that the Thai government needs to review the use of irregular forces such as the paramilitary rangers and village volunteer militias and to crack down on private sectarian vigilante groups. The plethora of forces in the South complicates command-and-control arrangements, weakens accountability and, in some cases, exacerbates communal tensions. Instead, attention should be directed towards professionalizing the regular military and police."

ICG reported, January 22, "**Indonesia: Tackling Radicalism in Poso**" (<http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=5266&l=1>), "**One year after police operations in Poso, Central Sulawesi, there is cautious optimism that jihadi violence has come to an end, but justice, accountability and corruption problems need to be resolved.**" There appears to have been a definite gain in moving toward peace, although the operation may have produced too many casualties. The problem now is to continue appropriate follow up. There appears to have been a significant reduction in the capabilities of jihadi groups in Poso, particularly those linked to Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) and the Islamic charity KOMPAK. Of "three territorial subdivisions JI once had in Central Sulawesi, two seem to be destroyed, at least temporarily, and a third, in the provincial capital Palu is split. Recruitment no longer seems to be taking place openly in mosques but may have moved to private homes. Several important fugitives remain at large, including some five Mindanao-trained JI leaders who are thought to have returned to Java and an expert bomb-maker from Poso who is believed to be still in Central Sulawesi. Police, the ministry of social affairs and the coordinating ministry for peoples welfare are now working on a number of initiatives that they hope will lessen the influence of extremist elements. One is a vocational training program, initially intended for former prisoners and men seen as potential troublemakers, which is being expanded to include individuals involved in reconciliation initiatives, out of concern that the government seemed to be rewarding those linked to violence. A second is a large, state-of-the-art Islamic boarding school, optimistically called 'Unity of the Ummat' (Muslim faithful), precisely because differences over the school's directorship had created serious rifts. A third involves efforts to get the families of prisoners on side by financing trips to Jakarta to see their relatives. The issue of most concern to NGOs and community leaders, however, is not that radicalism will return but that large amounts of poorly monitored funding flooding Poso for post-conflict recovery may create new tensions." John Virgoe, ICG Southeast Asia Project Director, comments, "The whiff - or stench - of corruption has long hung over Poso, and it undermines public trust in government more generally. If corruption can be brought under control and the deradicalization initiatives take hold, then perhaps the residents of Poso will have reason for hope."

ICG stated, January 17, "**Timor-Leste: Security Sector Reform**" (<http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=5264&l=1>), "**The government of Timor-Leste and the UN must revitalize efforts to reform the fledgling state's police and army or risk a relapse into violent civil conflict.**" "The government needs to move forward quickly with a comprehensive security review, as recommended by the UN Security Council, but while waiting for the outcome, it can take steps such as establishing clear internal complaints mechanisms for both forces, addressing legislative gaps and improving disciplinary procedures." if necessary, who has the lead role in security sector policy." "The UN should relaunch and revitalise its support for security sector reform, which was put on hold in 2007. It can start by making sure the process of police mentoring now underway is thorough and professional. Similarly, bilateral donors need to assess their contributions to the security sector in coordination, not competition, with one another."

In the **largest anti-government rally in decades, thousands marched in the capital of Malaysia,** in early November, **demanding changes in the nation's electoral system.** The demonstration, organized by 26 opposition parties and NGOs, is pushing for reform of the electoral process that it says favors the ruling coalition of Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

Clan violence that has aggravated the conflict between Islamic separatists and the government in the southern Philippines expanded this fall. In December, **two separatist groups reconciled.** Shortly after that, **the government and the separatists met, coming to an initial agreement, but it fell apart when the separatists withdrew, complaining that the government had changed the accord.** David Gorman, "A man, and a plan in war-torn Philippines," (First published in the *Asia Times*, November 1, 2007, republished by HD Center: <http://m1e.net/c?50573564-pJz6vmGOL8eRI%402871081-4BKZctp76LQvo>) comments, "**The newly elected governor of the violence-ridden southern Philippine province of Sulu has launched a brave new initiative to clear the island domain of guns and goons.** Abdusukar Tan's plan to ban the possession of guns in one of the most heavily

armed regions of the Philippines is a daring move in a country where politics, though vibrantly democratic, is mired in factional and clan violence fueled by the unrestricted access to heavy weaponry.” “The small island province of Sulu is mostly known as a front in the United States-led “war on terror”, and is known to harbor some of Southeast Asia's most wanted extremists, including at least one of those responsible for the 2002 Bali bombing in Indonesia. However, beyond the headlines, a larger problem persists on the island that helps explain why after several years of US military-backed operations, terrorist suspects are able to elude capture, and the province continues to serve as a breeding ground for extremists and remains mired in poverty and insecurity. The similarities with Iraq and Afghanistan are telling. For an island with a population of only 750,000, as many as 100,000 illegal firearms are in circulation on Sulu. Obtaining a heavy weapon, grenade or mortar is as easy as going to the market. In fact, that's precisely what one does. There are more guns on Sulu than any other province in the already heavily armed Philippines. Not surprisingly, according to the provincial government, the main cause of mortality on the island is from gun shot wounds.” “Clearly there is no better place to initiate such a program - nor is there a more difficult place in the Philippines to enforce and implement a gun ban. Sulu has only one judge and one prosecuting attorney for the whole island. The judge only comes to the province two days a month. The police are poorly resourced, heavily outgunned and many fall under the patronage of the local politicians who support the CVOs.” “So far local political leaders on Sulu as well as the ceasefire MNLF appear prepared to support the gun ban initiative, as they also realize the violence must be tackled if there is to be durable peace and economic development. It's an initiative that should be watched closely as it could establish a blueprint for limiting the spread of weapons to civilians, which in turn encourages the formation of private armed groups.”

ICG warned, December 19, “Georgia: Sliding towards Authoritarianism?” (<http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=5233&l=1>), “**The West must press Georgia to adopt genuine reforms and democratic openness, to stop creeping authoritarianism,**” in the face of “**increasing intolerance of dissent, which became evident when a state of emergency was declared in the small republic in November.**” “President Mikhail Saakashvili inherited a failing state when he came to power with the 2003 Rose Revolution and soon came under increasing pressure from Russia. He committed his government to democracy, liberal reform and pursuit of membership in the European Union (EU) and NATO and has had significant success in rebuilding institutions and reforming the economy. However, checks and balances have been stripped back, justice arbitrarily applied, human rights abused and freedom of expression curtailed. The public was protesting precisely those failings, as well as perceived widespread corruption, in late October and early November 2007, when the government responded with violence.” “Western friends of Georgia, notably the U.S., the EU and NATO, need to re-evaluate their interpretation of what is happening and press Saakashvili and his administration to correct their course. Neither the frozen peace processes with the conflict regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia nor the serious bilateral strains with Moscow, which firmly maintains its influence in these breakaway territories, justifies the trend toward authoritarianism.” “The U.S. in particular should make clear it supports democratic principles, not a particular leader. It is not enough to say that if the January elections are free and fair, Georgia will be back on track. Deeper problems relating to the rule of law, corruption, lack of media freedoms, weak checks and balances and growing economic disparities can no longer be overlooked. Genuine reforms and democratic openness are mutually reinforcing necessities.”

In an election that the observers from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe said did not provide the citizens with a real choice, Uzbekistan President Islam A. Karimov won a third seven year term with 88% of the vote, in December. The President of Kyrgyzstan dissolved Parliament, calling for new elections, after announcing that voters had approved a new constitution. Observers, however, reported wide spread ballot stuffing, and warned that the state was moving toward authoritarianism.

Developments in Europe

Attempts to reach an international settlement on Kosovo have failed, with Russia rejecting E.U. – U.S proposals that would allow for Kosovo to become independent of Serbia. Russia will not agree to independence unless Serbia acquiesces in it, which it will not. The Albanian government of Kosovo is expected to declare independence, imminently. This raises questions of renewed violence, and the rights of the Serbian minority in the territory. ICG warned, October 16, “Serbia: Maintaining Peace in the Presevo Valley” (<http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=5126&l=1>), “Albanian politicians, the Serbian government and the international community need to act now to ensure that the Kosovo status process does not destabilize the neighbouring Presevo Valley.” ICG warned, “If fighting breaks out in Kosovo, the NATO mission there (KFOR) should prevent Albanians from ethnically cleansing Serbs from the Kosovo enclaves and prevent any would-be insurgents from crossing between Kosovo and southern Serbia.” See also ICG’s December 13 Media Release (<http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=3225&l=1>) stating in part, “a decision to support Kosovo’s transition to conditional independence in the first half of 2008 should be delayed no longer.” “The plan for a conditionally independent Kosovo devised by the UN Secretary-General’s special representative Martti Ahtisaari remains the best basis for the settlement of the Kosovo issue; and states that the EU is ready to rapidly assume, in consultation with other key international actors, a significant role in Kosovo in the implementation of the Ahtisaari plan, including by preparing itself to deploy a civilian European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) rule-of-law mission

and the International Civilian Office (ICO).” **Serbia is about to have run off elections for President between a nationalist and a more pro-western candidate**, that likely will impact Serbia’s future stance on Kosovo, and relation to the rest of Europe.

A long effort has been in progress to reunite Cyprus, following Turkey’s invasion and seizing of the Turkish populated portion, in reaction to the Greek dominated government of Cyprus, moving to be part of Greece, during the period Greece was ruled by a military Junta, in the 1970s. The effort at reunification has been one of two track diplomacy. A brief report on the informal, NGO efforts, is above in “Ongoing Activities”. The last formal round of the official diplomatic portion of the drawn-out peace process ended in April 2004 when the Greek Cypriot community, which had long advocated reunification of the divided island on a bicomunal and bizonal basis, overwhelmingly rejected the UN-sponsored “Annan Plan”, which provided for just that, while the Turkish Cypriot community reversed its traditional preference for secession in voting for reunification. Despite the referendum’s defeat, the still-divided Cyprus was admitted to membership of the European Union, which continued to support reunification. Some important progress has been made informally in the last three years, but that may be set back, or lost, if the official process of reunification does not soon begin to move forward. ICG stated, January 10, **“Cyprus: Reversing the Drift to Partition”** (Europe Report N°190: <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=5255&l=1>)” **that because there are great benefits to all affected parties in reunification of Cyprus, while delay increases pressures for permanent separation, “all concerned, including the UN, should make a new effort in 2008 for a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem, which is blocking a more dynamic EU foreign policy and poisoning its important relations with Turkey....**For the Greek Cypriots, it would end lingering insecurity, give them access to the Turkish economy, the most dynamic in the region, and increase their service industry’s value as an eastern Mediterranean hub. For Turkish Cypriots, it will mean being able to enjoy the benefits of EU citizenship of which they are presently largely deprived. For the EU, the unresolved Cyprus problem now hampers its functioning on issues as diverse as cooperation with NATO in Afghanistan and Chinese shoe imports. And for Turkey a settlement would overcome a major obstacle to its convergence with the EU.” ICG recommends that: “To relaunch negotiations after the February 2008 Greek Cypriot presidential elections, 1. Greek and Turkish Cypriot leaders should jointly express their will to re-engage in UN-mediated talks on a comprehensive settlement, and the UN should build up its team in Cyprus and send a senior figure to conduct an assessment mission. To establish an environment conducive to successful negotiations, 2. The Greek Cypriot administration, as a unilateral CBM, should agree to EU implementation of its Direct Trade Regulation so as to allow Turkish Cypriot products to be sold directly to the EU. 3. The Turkish Cypriot administration, as a unilateral CBM, should freeze construction on Greek Cypriot-owned real estate. 4. Turkey, as a unilateral CBM, should implement its commitment in the 2005 Additional Protocol to the EU-Turkey Customs Union to open its seaports and airports for Greek Cypriot traffic, and its civilian and military leaders should firmly commit to the reunification of Cyprus in a bicomunal, bizonal federation and ultimate full withdrawal of Turkish troops pursuant to a settlement. To maintain momentum in the negotiations 5. Both Cypriot administrations should lift impediments that prevent the EU from working freely in Turkish Cypriot-administered areas; the Greek Cypriots should pro-actively discourage discrimination against Turkish Cypriot products and advertising in Greek Cypriot media and commerce and engage pragmatically with Turkish Cypriot police, public health authorities, and other agencies dealing with day-to-day affairs. 6. The Turkish Cypriot administration should end harassment of merchants seeking to export through Greek Cypriot ports and allow EU-financed bicomunal projects to proceed, especially to encourage joint ventures based on common interests with the Greek Cypriot private sector and a renewal of civil society meetings. 7. The UN and EU should develop and deepen collaboration on intercommunal meetings, in particular to increase opportunity for debate on the economic, social and political benefits of reunification. 8. Turkey should: (a) explore all ways to allay Greek Cypriot fears, including avoiding military exercises near the Green Line and military overflights of internationally recognized Greek or Greek Cypriot airspace; (b) offer as soon as there is significant negotiating progress to accept international monitoring of its troop strength on the island; and (c) encourage Turkish officials, business people and intellectuals to engage with Greek Cypriots to build trust in support of the negotiations. 9. Greece should explain the potential dangers of non-resolution of the Cyprus problem to all European member states in preparation for comprehensive talks in 2008 and encourage Greek Cypriots to emulate its own détente with Ankara since 1999. 10. EU institutions and member states should strongly support renewal of Cyprus talks in 2008, follow them closely so as to be ready to react to a threatened breakdown, explain to publics and policy elites in Europe how the Cyprus problem injures the common foreign and security policy, and encourage Russia to use its influence on the island to encourage a settlement. 11. The U.S. should work with European capitals and with other Security Council members to highlight the dangers of non-resolution of the Cyprus problem.”

The Russian Parliament suspended its participation in the treaty limiting conventional forces in Europe, in November, as U.S. pushed expansion of NATO to former Soviet countries and U.S. plans to station anti-missile-missiles in some of those nations rankled the Russian government. **The U.S.-Russian program to increase the security of Russian nuclear missiles**, begun in 2005, **was completed, in November, two years ahead of schedule**. **Russia has moved to reduce independent international poll watching in its own elections**, and is encouraging such a reduction in former Soviet Caucasus nations. In Chechnya, fighting was sporadic for

the second consecutive year, as autocratic President Ramazan A. Kadyrov has gained popularity for the changes he has brought, in spite of wide spread human rights violations.

The two Ukrainian parties that brought about the Orange Revolution, but then quarreled and lost control of Parliament, reached an agreement to form a coalition government, in mid-October.

Belgium, which, recently, has suffered a bitter split between its French and Dutch speaking populations, which could split the country, finally formed an interim government, in late December, that will likely serve until March, after a long political crisis caused by the ethnic division, which has ancient roots, but only recently became intense.

Moderate Muslim leaders in Britain proposed guidelines, in late November, to root out extremism and promote a culture of "civic responsibility." This is part of a program to end alienation among disaffected Muslim youth and foster a new atmosphere of openness and tolerance among Brittan's 2 million Muslims and 1500 Mosques, and improve relations with the non-Muslim community.

Developments in Africa

African and European leaders ended a meeting, in December, at which they met as equals, with African countries rejecting European trade offers, and refusing to join European leaders in criticizing Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe, whose presence at the conference was divisive.

Algeria continued to suffer a return of violence with a car bombing at a coast guard center, in September.

Kenya, until now one of the most stabile and democratic counties in Africa, has exploded into political and ethnic violence in the wake of what is widely perceived by Kenyans and international observers was a stolen election, December 27, by the incumbent President. Although there have been calls for a recount, with some support from important members of the President's party, and some limited negotiations, as of January 25, the President continues to claim he won the election, and violence is wide spread across the country, including by police.

In January, The top UN peace keeping official stated that the Darfur mission is at risk, because Sudan is obstructing, and at time attacking, peace keeping troops, and other countries have failed to supply needed transportation equipment. Malnutrition was reported rising in Darfur, in December. Rebels only sparsely attended talks in October, where they sent a mixed message. However, in early November, rebels in the South of Sudan reached an accord with the government to carry out the 2005 peace agreement. The southerners have been frustrated by the failure of the government to carry out major parts of the 2005 agreement, including removing government troops from southern oil fields.

It was reported, in November, that the worst humanitarian crisis in Africa is not in Darfur, but along a 20 mile strip in Somalia, between the Mogadishu and Afgooye where there is a lack of aid to 200,000 recently displaced people. Somalia remains violent, including in Mogodishu, despite the presence of African Union peace keepers, who at times have been attacked by rebels (who see them as supporting the government). The interim government, supported by the west, the UN and Ethiopian troops, remains fragile.

Ethiopia has intensified its war against rebels in the Ogaden Region, being accused of strafing civilians at a water hole, in November, and of conscribing civilians with, no military training, forcing teachers, doctors and aid workers into combat. ICG, "Ethiopia and Eritrea: Stopping the Slide to War" (<http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=5136&l=1>), warned, "The international community must act urgently to prevent Ethiopia and Eritrea from resuming their war and potentially throwing the entire Horn of Africa into new turmoil." With a large military build up having taken place on both sides, "The UN Security Council and the U.S. in particular must give both sides the clearest message that no destabilizing unilateral action will be tolerated, and that the parties must comply with their obligations under international law, disengage on the ground and restore the demilitarized Temporary Security Zone (TSZ)." "Both sides had agreed in Algiers in 2000 to submit their border dispute to the Boundary Commission and accept its decision as final and binding. However, since its ruling in April 2002, Ethiopia has blocked physical demarcation of the border; Eritrea, with legal right on its side, then alienated many of its supporters by blocking the work of the UN peacekeepers. The issue will come to a decisive head ^ with a real risk of fighting breaking out ^ at the end of November, when the Boundary Commission has indicated it will close down unless it is allowed to proceed to demarcation. The UN Security Council and the U.S. must urgently make it clear to both sides that no use of force

will be tolerated and that a party that resorts to it will be held accountable. Specifically, the U.S. should send a firm message to Ethiopia, that it will take diplomatic and economic measures against it if it attacks Eritrea. The Security Council should pass a resolution reiterating its support for the Boundary Commission decision and requesting it to remain beyond the end of November. The UN should also stress the requirements on Ethiopia to accept the Boundary Commission ruling and on Eritrea to withdraw its army from the TSZ. Members of the Security Council and other key international players should discuss economic incentives and disincentives that would likely be required to obtain cooperation in de-escalating the situation on the ground and implementing the Commission decision.”

Rebels in the Eastern Congo signed a peace agreement with the government, ending the last armed conflict of the long war, January 24, with the facilitation of western diplomats. A commission from the European and East African unions will oversee the integration of the rebel forces into the national army, and oversee the permanent ceasefire. 400,000 people fled their homes in the last year as fighting continued in the east. More than 4 million died in the whole war, mostly from hunger and disease. The fighting began largely over ethnic differences between Hutus and Tutsis. Unfortunately, the **dire conditions created by the fighting in the rest of the country have largely continued since the fighting ceased in 2004, so that the death rate remains the same now, about 45,000 a month.** The infrastructure and services in the Congo remain in dilapidated condition, despite the nation making considerable money from oil, partly because of the war, partly because those who bought up the nation’s debts for pennies on the dollar are now trying to collect, and partly because of rampant corruption. But those “vulture” investors are now allies in the battle against corruption.

The International Crisis Group (ICG), “Burundi: Finalizing Peace with the FNL” (<http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=5034&l=1>), stated, August 28, that **the future of Burundi’s just beginning democracy is at risk if the government does not reach a settlement with the last active rebel group in the nation, the PALIPEHUTU-FNL.** “Little progress has been made since the signing of the ceasefire agreement on 7 September 2006. At the end of July, the hasty departure from Bujumbura of the rebel delegation negotiating implementation of that agreement precipitated widespread fears fighting could resume.” There is a danger that hardliners in the government could use the failure of negotiations as a pretext for suspending civil liberties, in the current situation of tension between the presidency and the opposition. “International efforts over the last two years to implement a peace agreement between the government and the PALIPEHUTU-FNL have failed partly due to the difficulties of dealing with an insurgency that retains an ethnic reading of the conflict and considers that time is on its side, due to the expected return of 350,000 refugees from Tanzania, among whom it has important support. The government has its share of responsibility for the failure, since it has not created conditions conducive to rapid implementation of the ceasefire. The international community needs to acknowledge there is a dangerous stalemate and that a new round of talks must be launched, under supervision of a new facilitation team and led by a prominent diplomat, who would work full time on the negotiations and closely with South Africa, Tanzania, the African Union and the UN. While respecting the constitution, the government should prioritize diplomacy over military action and recognize the need to renew negotiations on a political, not purely technical level. The PALIPEHUTU-FNL should express its main demands for integration into the security forces and political institutions in clearer terms. After an agreement is signed, regional states and the wider international community should be prepared to impose serious sanctions on the rebels if they do not keep their commitments and disarm.”

The **government of Chad** stated, November 26, that its **soldiers had killed about 200 rebels in a battle** in the east of the country. **Four rebel groups signed a peace deal with the government in October, but one of those groups was expressing dissatisfaction with the agreement,** in November.

Nigeria continues to suffer violence in several areas, especially in the oil rich Niger delta, where not all the attacks are politically motivated. However, since the bad feelings surrounding the elections, many groups in the country have become more supportive of the President.

The **high rate of murders and other crime in South Africa** fell from April to September, 2007, in comparison with the same period the proceeding year. The murder rate dropped 6.6% and the rape rate 3.6%.

Opposition leader Ernest Korona won the Sierra Leone Presidential election, in September.

Malawi has ended its famine and came to prosperity, last year, **by providing large-scale fertilizer subsidies** to stimulate agricultural production. It **did so in opposition to world bank policies and exhortations to adopt neoliberal free market policies and end fertilizer subsidies.** The world Bank is now reviewing its anti-agriculture subsidy policy for developing nations.

Zimbabwe’s economic collapse and political crisis are continuing with the opening of the New Year. ICG

reported. September 18, "Zimbabwe: A Regional Solution?" (<http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=5083&l=1>), "A Regional Solution?" examining the role of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) in facilitating a negotiated political solution for the increasingly desperate country, which faces elections in six months. "Inflation in Zimbabwe is now impossibly high, and a quarter of the population has now fled. A military-led campaign to slash prices has produced acute food and fuel shortages, and state-sponsored violence continues unabated. Though the SADC initiative is fragile, South Africa and the other regional countries offer the only real hope." "International actors must close ranks behind the Mbeki mediation. SADC should extend an aid package and ask the West to lift its sanctions only in exchange for full ZANU-PF cooperation and implementation of reforms that will allow free and fair elections in 2008. If such cooperation is not forthcoming, SADC should refuse to endorse any election not a product of the mediation and be prepared to isolate Mugabe and his regime. The regional body should also enlist a panel of retired African presidents to help Mbeki and convince Mugabe to retire in 2008. The wider international community should make detailed preparations to contribute to Zimbabwe's recovery if the mediation succeeds, but also be ready to apply tougher sanctions if it collapses."

The Central African Republic began a national reconciliation process, in its capital of Bangui, August 23-25, organized by the United Nations Peace-building Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA) and the Swiss based mediation organization the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD), who chaired the meeting. The session constituted the first phase of an all inclusive political dialogue process for national reconciliation announced by President François Bozizé on August 13, as an attempt to end the escalating armed conflict developing in the country. Following the first meeting, **President Bozizé moved to set up a preparatory committee responsible for organizing the process leading to all-inclusive political dialogue.** According to the United Nations, the conflict has resulted in approximately 300,000 displaced people both internally and across borders to countries including Cameroon, Chad and Sudan. The violence has significantly increased since 2006 in the North East and North West of the Central African Republic. For more go to: <http://m1e.net/c?50573564-jRGUaZRPX1kw%402711026-VJrWSrLsFmm22>.

ICG urged the international community to increase pressure to keep the peace process moving in Northern Uganda, to end twenty-five years of war, September 14, "Northern Uganda's Peace Process: Maintaining Momentum" (<http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=5078&l=1>). "The 2 May 2007 agreement on comprehensive solutions to the conflict and the 29 June agreement on accountability lay a strong foundation to guide difficult negotiations, but they need to be detailed in a final agreement to address key judicial and security issues. The government and the LRA's full commitment to the peace process also remain questionable." "A comprehensive justice framework demands prosecution of the LRA members and army commanders responsible for the greatest crimes, as well as reconciliation and reintegration of ordinary rebels and a truth-telling compensation for victims. Donors and mediators must continue to close opportunities for those who seek to prolong the process indefinitely. While the LRA should continue to be given food on humanitarian grounds, distribution should be closely monitored to avoid aid being used for LRA rebuilding efforts. If the LRA continues to refuse to leave Congo, the cessation-of-hostilities monitoring team's mandate must be expanded so it can operate there. A two-track strategy - negotiating away the LRA security threat in Juba, and dealing with long-term redevelopment in northern Uganda - remains the best approach to ending the conflict. Addressing LRA leaders, core security and livelihood concerns is key to peace, but direct engagement with their leaders, Joseph Kony and Vincent Otti, is needed. The international community, and particularly the UN Special Envoy Joaquim Chissano, should work closely with the government to ensure its redevelopment programs are fully implemented and contribute to building a sustainable peace in Northern Uganda after Juba."

Developments in Latin America

Laura Carlsen, "NAFTA, Inequality, and Immigration" (at: <http://americas.irc-online.org/am/4705>), notes that **after 14 years of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) trade between the U.S. and Mexico, the way in which people in the two countries live has grown much further apart, with a number of consequences including uncontrollable immigration from Mexico to the U.S.** Carlson comments that **NAFTA left the Mexican economy resting on four shaky pillars: the informal economy, non-renewable resources (oil and gas), remittances from migrants in the United States, and drug trafficking.** A major flaw in the agreement is that it failed to take into account the needs of vulnerable sectors of the Mexican economy. "Although immigration is an integral component of globalization, it violates human rights when people no longer have the option of staying home and are deemed criminals in the receiving country".

The economic, political and security situation in Haiti remains difficult. ICG, "Peacebuilding in Haiti: Including Haitians from Abroad" (<http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=5225&l=1>), recommends that **to break out of its long continuing tenuous condition, Haiti needs to undertake a sustained initiative, with international support, to include the 3 million Haitians living abroad in its national development.** "The success of urgently needed structural and economic reforms depends on increased public and private capacities, and several hundred positions in the public administration could potentially be filled by skilled Haitians from abroad. Haitian expatriates have contributed an

estimated \$1.65 billion to the economy in remittances in 2006, and their economic contributions should be reflected in the political system by facilitating voting abroad, and allowing dual citizenship and diaspora representation in parliament, which is likely to require constitutional reform. Remittances could be maximized through better access to credit, finance and savings. Other resources should be leveraged through hometown associations and Haitian lobbies in developed countries. Greater confidence in Haiti's institutions will allow diaspora communities to invest more in Haiti. Some regulation of work force migration should be put in place through bilateral agreements negotiated with destination countries." Crisis Group's Latin America Program Director, Markus Schultze-Kraft, says "The government has just over three years to implement an ambitious and long-term diaspora policy that will extend beyond Préval's mandate and help Haiti achieve development and stability. If this opportunity is not seized now, it may not present itself again in the foreseeable future."

Mexico is literally engaged in a drug war with the army engaged in fighting drug gangs, and detaining police officers suspected of corrupt practices relating to drugs. There has also been an **increase in violent conflict between drug gangs**. One sign of that is a spurt of unsolved killings of Mexican country music stars, 13 in a year and a half, ending December 17, 3 of whom were murdered in the first half of December.

The **enactment of anti terrorism legislation in a number of countries has led to the misuse of those measures to suppress legitimate activists or those with views not held by the leaders of government, that have absolutely no relation to terror** (some of this is developed in, "What GWOT Has Wrought," *The Nation*, December 31, 2007). One example is **El Salvador, where anti-terror measures were used to suppress members of the street vendors association** and, on July 2, in Suchitoto, **against those peacefully protesting the "decentralization" of the country's water system - widely believed to be a step toward privatization**. Most often, **around the world anti-terror measures have been used for political rather than security purposes** (As for example, in **raids against Maori activists in New Zealand, October 15**, reported in the Fall 2007 issue of *Indigenous Policy*: www.indigenouspolicy.org).

In **Guatemala**, in November, **businessman Alvaro Colom won the Presidential election, vowing to end poverty in the country. The election campaign was marked by violence, with dozens of murders believed to be politically motivated**. Overall, Guatemala has one of the highest murder rates in Latin America, with over 5000 reported from January 1 to the beginning of November.

As the **Civil War continues in Columbia, relations between Columbia and Venezuela have worsened**, with Columbia, in late November, ending support for Venezuela's effort to mediate the release of hostages held by the largest rebel group. However, Venezuela's President Chavez later succeeded in obtaining a hostage released.

In **Venezuela**, in December, a **referendum defeated proposed constitutional changes that included expanding the power of the President and provisions that would obscure some government financial matters. Opponents of the constitutional changes included supporters of the policies of the Chavez government**, and the vote is not an indication of a shift in support for those policies. One of the interesting aspects of President Chavez's program is a dual effort at participatory democracy. The first is the development of communal councils, of which there are now 20,000 registered in Venezuela (See: Kendra Fehrer, "Reconfiguring Democracy: Venezuela's New Communal Councils Confront Bureaucracy," *Peacework*, December 2007). The councils are elected neighborhood or village planning assemblies, with fiscal and policymaking powers. Council decisions can be overruled by community vote. The decisions of councils are sometimes illegally overruled or undermined by the traditional bureaucracy. The second is the development, of cooperative businesses, with government assistance, that have previously been reported upon in these pages.

Tensions have continued high in Bolivia, with political conflict over various issues between the government, along with supporters of President Evo Morales, and conservative opponents, particularly in the west of the country, over various issues, but particularly revising the constitution. ICG stated, August 31, "Bolivia's New Constitution: Avoiding Violent Conflict" (<http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?l=1&id=5044&m=1>) that, "**Bolivia risks renewed violence if President Evo Morales does not lead a wide-ranging dialogue to reach national consensus on key state reforms**." "Mauricio Angel Morales, Crisis Group Senior Analyst, says, "Morales must now lead negotiations among all political forces aimed at committing CA [constituent Assembly] delegates to produce a constitutional text or texts by that date that can be presented to referendum; reject violence; and find a mechanism to incorporate compatibly the two sides, differing notions of autonomy. The CA should agree on a new voting mechanism by early September that allows immediate voting on all articles which have committee consensus and an opportunity for minority proposals on all articles still in dispute to be fairly considered." ICG asserts that, "Morales needs to modernize MAS by reaching out to broader segments of society. Civic committees should expand membership and make election of their leaders more transparent and democratic. The opposition parties need to engage in dialogue with MAS."

Stephen Zunes, "The United States, Bolivia, and Dependency" (<http://americas.irc-online.org/am/4701>) finds that, "Much to the chagrin of the Bush administration, **Bolivian president Evo Morales has been going to great lengths to separate his country from its economic dependence on the United States.** To understand Bolivian sensitivities to U.S. aid and its conditions, it is important to look back to what happened to a previous leftist government in that country which instead adjusted its politics to the politics of U.S. cooperation. **Unless and until Washington's policies toward Latin America are successfully challenged from within the United States, there are real limits as to how much Bolivia's government can improve the economic conditions of its people.**"

In October 2000, shortly after the massive citizen protests ended Bechtel corporations private water operations in Bolivia, a local Bechtel subsidiary, Interagua, signed a 30-year concession contract to run the water and sanitation services in Guayaquil, Ecuador's largest city. Now, after more than six years of epidemics, poor service, and other unanswered complaints, the residents of Guayaquil are demanding damages from the company for water contamination, an end to water cut-offs, and a return to local, public control. For more, see Sara Grusky, "Who Controls Ecuador's Water?" (<http://americas.irc-online.org/am/4686>).

Peru has now approved a free trade agreement with the United States, but many in Peru are unhappy that that the agreement gives U.S. investors access to natural resources in exchange for a market for relatively low-value primary sector products. To accommodate the treaty, Peru now must revise more than 50 national laws. (See Ariela Ruiz Caro comments: <http://americas.irc-online.org/am/4726>).

UN and Other International Developments

The United Nations initiated a new Web site, November 1, to track how and where the world is succeeding or failing in meeting the Millennium Development Goals on ending poverty, in the hopes that better monitoring will increase success. The site is at: <http://www.mdgmonitor.org/>. A report issued by UNICEF, December 10, "Progress for Children: A World Fit for Children Statistical Review" details information on progress towards the Millennium Development Goals, as follows: • Between 1990 and 2004 more than 1.2 billion people gained access to safe drinking water. • Between 1996 and 2000, rates of early and exclusive breastfeeding – a behavior that has the potential to avert 13 per cent of all under-five deaths in developing countries - have increased in many countries around the world. Seven countries in sub-Saharan Africa saw 20 per cent increases in early and exclusive breastfeeding. • Malaria-affected countries have expanded the use of insecticide-treated nets among children, with many of these countries at least tripling coverage since 2000. • Access to antiretrovirals that reduce the risk of the transmission of HIV and AIDS from mothers to infants increased from 7 to 11 per cent for infected women in low- and middle-income countries between 2004 and 2005. Access to antiretroviral treatment for children also increased in much of the world. • More than four times as many children received the recommended two doses of Vitamin A supplementation in 2005 than in 1999. Vitamin A supplementation reduces a child's risk of mortality from common illnesses. In addition to progress in child survival, progress has also been made in education, gender equality and child protection. Increases in school enrolment and attendance reduced the number of primary-school-age children out of school by around 20 per cent between 2002 and 2006. And while girls still remain disadvantaged in some areas, the gender gap in primary and secondary education is closing, with two-thirds of the world achieving gender parity in primary education by 2005. While the pace of change is slow, the report finds that the harmful practice of female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) has declined over the past 15 years, and that child marriage is becoming less common. Other advances include: • While the prevalence of underweight children has declined from 32 to 27 per cent in the developing world since 1990, an alarming number of children under-five – 143 million – still suffer undernutrition, with more than half of them in South Asia; • Treatment coverage for major childhood diseases, such as pneumonia and malaria, has been slow to expand. Pneumonia and malaria together account for 27 per cent of all under-five deaths each year. • More than 500,000 women still die every year as a result of complications during pregnancy and childbirth. About half of these deaths occur in sub-Saharan Africa, where a pregnant woman has a 1 in 22 chance of dying, compared to 1 in 8,000 in industrialized countries. • A lack of basic sanitation, along with poor hygiene and unsafe drinking water, still contribute to the deaths of more than 1.5 million children from diarrhoeal diseases each year. In 2004, 41 per cent of the world's population – 2.6 billion people – did not use improved sanitation facilities. While some progress has been made since 1990, keeping pace with population growth remains a major challenge. • In many countries, new HIV and AIDS infections are heavily concentrated among young people, who accounted for 40 per cent of the 4.3 million new HIV infections in 2006. Yet this vulnerable group still lacks accurate knowledge about HIV and prevention."

UNICEF reported, in September, that the **deaths of young children** (child mortality) **world-wide has reached a record low**, and is expected to decline further. Unaided has revised estimates of AIDS cases around the world over the last several years downward, **restating the 2007 estimate from 39.5 million to 33.2 million infected with HIV/AIDS.**

U.N Secretary General Ban Ki-moon pledged to lead a campaign against violence against women, in November, denouncing it as, "one of the most heinous, systematic and prevalent human rights abuses in the world." The UN began the **International Year of Sanitation**, in November, to call attention to the **often overlooked right to access to adequate sanitation, the lack of which, along with low water quality, is responsible for an estimated 42,000 deaths a week.** The UN and the World Bank announced, in September, that they are setting up a system to help developing nations recover stolen assets sent abroad by corrupt leaders, estimated to be \$40 billion a year.

64 journalists were killed world wide in 2007, the most since 1994.

U.S. and Canada Developments

Col. Douglas MacGregor (Retired), "Washington's War" (at: http://www.cdi.org/program/document.cfm?DocumentID=4118&from_page=../index.cfm), wrote, October 9, "Like so many tragic events in human history, **the occupation of Iraq could have been avoided if military and political leaders in Washington had recognized the tectonic shift in international relations created by decolonization after World War II.** This shift made any occupation, with the exception of very brief **American or European military triumphs over non-Europeans, especially Muslim Arabs, impossible.** But the decision to occupy and govern Iraq with American military power was driven by ideology, not strategy. And, when ideology masquerades as strategy, disaster is inevitable. The U.S. needs a new national military strategy, a strategy designed to enhance America's role as the world's engine of prosperity, making the American way of life attractive, not threatening, to others. However, for a new, more effective national military strategy to emerge that can rationalize the structure and content of the armed forces for operations in the aftermath of Iraq, both policymakers and the flag officers who command our forces must reorient their thinking to a strategy that exalts economy of force in expeditionary operations and rejects plans to optimize the Army and Marine Corps for any more misguided occupations. This is a strategy that deliberately limits the commitment of U.S. military resources to attainable goals and objectives consistent with U.S. strategic interests and avoids the kind of open-ended ideological warfare that nearly destroyed Western civilization in the 20th century". The article suggests a new strategy.

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In the wake of the missing weapons scandal in Iraq, **Gen. David H. Petraeus called for the United States to increase U.S. weapons sales abroad.** As a policy of the "global war on terror" (GWOT), it has been the **Bush Administration's practice to sell arms to governments who pledge allegiance to the "war on terror," despite often being deemed by the State Department as having questionable human rights records, being undemocratic, and even, having supported terrorism at one point.** For the full report see Rachel Stohl, "The GWOT Effect of Arms for Dictators" at: http://www.cdi.org/program/document.cfm?DocumentID=4114&from_page=../index.cfm. A report, released at the beginning of October, from the Congressional Research Service shows that **the United States has maintained its position as the top arms supplier to the developing world, and has surpassed Russia and France - placed first and second in 2005 - in new arms agreements with the developing world in 2006.** For more see, Rachel Stohl, "United States Reemerges as Leading Arms Supplier to the Developing World," at: http://www.cdi.org/program/document.cfm?DocumentID=4116&from_page=../index.cfm.

A study of U.S. Census data by researchers at Indiana's Manchester College and Massachusetts's Bentley College show that the **gap between the rich and the poor in the U.S. has continued to grow, since 1995.** In 2006, the 95th percentile income was 14.5 times higher than income at the 10th percentile. This measure of inequality is 12% higher than in 1995. Meanwhile, **with some ups and downs, the overall poverty rate continues to decrease.** Comparisons of several demographic and income level groups, however, reveal mixed trends. The **disparity in poverty rates between whites and other racial-ethnic groups decreased seven of the last eleven years, dropping 23% overall since 1995.** This disparity increased from 2004 to 2005 but the **decreasing trend once again resumed in 2006** (with whites still being better off overall). The poverty disparity between adults and children also decreased seven of those same eleven years, dropping 11% overall, but increased slightly in 2006 from 2005 (with adults continuously better off overall). **After narrowing each year since 1997, the gender-based poverty gap showed a large increase in 2005, widening to a level last seen in 2000.** In 2006, however, the gap once again narrowed to a level similar to that seen in 2001. Though the gap closed seven of eleven years, **the increase of 2005 resulted in there being no overall improvement since 1995** (with men still being better off overall). For the complete report go to: <http://www.manchester.edu/links/violenceindex/>.

The FBI reported, September 24, that **violent crime rose 1.9% in the U.S. in 2006**, and murders in large cities rose 1.8%, the same increase as for the U.S. as a whole. Robberies and arson increased in large population centers while reported rapes and car thefts dropped.

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DIALOGUING

ISRAEL-PALESTINE: NECESSARY NGO EFFORTS PRIOR TO U.S. SPONSORED CONFERENCE IN NOVEMBER

Rene Wadlow, August 27, 2007

This commentary was written well before the now completed conference, but the analysis remains relevant for what needed to be done, and what still needs to be done to make ongoing and future negotiations effective.

U.S. President George W. Bush has proposed holding a conference on the Israel-Palestine conflict in November 2007. In addition to the Israeli Government and the Palestinian Authority, there would be representative of the "International Quartet": the USA, Russia, the European Union (usually represented by foreign policy specialists of the European Commission) and the United Nations (which in practice is represented by members of the UN secretariat). It is also hoped that some or all the members of what is increasingly called the "Arab Quartet" would attend: Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and the Arab Emirates. Former Prime Minister Tony Blair, who is now a representative of the International Quartet, would probably be present.

The Israeli-Palestine conference would be held against the backdrop of other interlocking Middle East issues: the Iraq conflict, the resurgence of Iran, Lebanon-Syria politics. However, although all these governments play a role in the Israel-Palestine conflict, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Iran probably will not be invited.

While personally, I believe, that the USA has "burned all its bridges" in the Middle East and can not play a useful role in the Israel-Palestine issue, there are still some people who believe that the USA can play a leading role as the international facilitator. What is true, I believe, is that there is no other State which can be the substitute leader in the short run. Therefore, we, as world citizens, have two months, September and October 2007, to try to influence U.S. policy on the Middle East and to use what contacts we have to reach foreign policy specialists in Russia, the Arab Quartet, Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Iran.

Since the Israel-Palestine conflict has been with us for just 60 years, since the UN proposals for a two-State partition were being drawn up, there are many for whom "my eyes glaze over" when the topic of Israel-Palestine is brought up. Nevertheless, the geo-strategic aspects of the conflict remain important, and the suffering of people in the area is real.

I believe that there are three points which we should stress in our efforts. These three points will probably not be on the agenda if people outside the governments do not first raise them:

1) Hamas, which controls the Gaza strip needs to be invited and should be a full participant. The President of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, the Israeli Government, the US Government, and to a lesser extent the European Union, would like to see life conditions in Gaza get worse so that the Hamas administration will fail. Even if disintegration does not happen in the next two months, the idea is to leave Hamas "out in the cold" and have only Mahmoud Abbas negotiate for all the Palestinians. Such a policy is short-sighted and will lead to failure.

2) The second point is to stress the need for a wider economic zone so that prosperity will help integrate the Palestinians into a wider context. Such a wider economic zone would include Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan. The return from Lebanon, Syria and Jordan of the Palestinian refugees to Israel is impossible for political reasons. The return of the bulk of the refugees to the West Bank and Gaza is impossible for economic and ecological reasons. Palestinians have been prevented from playing an active and positive political and economic role in Lebanon This Lebanese policy should be modified if relative peace is established in the area. Only economic prosperity will build the foundation for greater cooperation.

3) The Israel-Palestine conflict needs to be placed in the wider Middle East context which currently lacks a security organization in which all States are members. There is a need to establish an Organization for Security and Cooperation in the Middle East on the lines of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe which played an important role in ending the Cold War.

Rene Wadlow is the Representative to the United Nations, Geneva, of the Association of World Citizens and the editor of www.transnational-perspectives.org, at: www.transnational-perspectives.org.

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DO NOT LET THE ARAB INITIATIVE DIE

Alon Ben-Meir*, November 5, 2007

The most momentous declaration that came out of the Arab world was the Arab Initiative which was re-adopted by the Arab League in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in March 2007. It would be tragic to allow the Initiative to die the way it withered and died in Beirut, Lebanon, when it was first introduced by Saudi Arabia in March of 2002. The Arab Initiative offers the only hope for a comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace and has the potential to extinguish many of the horrific fires and extremism that have engulfed the Middle East to the detriment of America and its allies in the region.

The continued benign neglect of the Initiative by the United States and Israel will send dangerous message to the Arab world that neither country is interested in ending the debilitating 60-year conflict. As such, it will be left to the extremist Islamic groups--the terrorists, the Jihadis, and the Takfiries—to highjack the political agenda and make today's turmoil and bloodshed seem a mini-rehearsal of the ominous days to come.

Essentially, the Initiative calls on Israel to agree to full withdrawal from the occupied territories; to arrive at a just solution to the Palestinian refugee problem, based on UN General Assembly Resolution 194, and to accept a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, with East Jerusalem as the capital. Having spoken about the Initiative with scores of Arab and Israeli officials, I feel strongly that the demands made by the Initiative can be fully reconciled with Israel's core requirements for peace which are: 1) ensuring Israel's national security and territorial integrity, 2) sustaining Israel's Jewish national identity, 3) securing the unity of Jerusalem as Israel's capital while accommodating the Palestinians, and 4) establishing normal relations with the entire Arab world.

Why is the Arab Initiative so critical to the future stability of the Middle East?

First, timing: The Iraq war continues to rage with no end in sight, Iran has ambitions to become the region's hegemon armed with nuclear weapons, there is a major Sunni-Shiite conflict in Iraq threatening to engulf the entire region, and extreme Muslim radicalism and terrorist groups are gaining popular support and pose a clear and present danger to the United States and its allies, especially Israel and the Sunni Arab states in the region.

Second, unlike any other peace proposal, including the Road Map, the Geneva Initiative, the Clinton\Barak peace plan, this Initiative is an Arab one and represents the entire Arab body politic. This is particularly important because the Arab streets today are openly antagonistic toward the United States and Israel. Both intuitively and psychologically, the Arab communities will relate far more positively to an initiative by their own governments and it will engender wide public support.

Third, since there are many extremist Arab groups, such as Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and Hezbollah, that oppose the peace process, only the collective Arab political will can rein in by any means these groups. Moreover, without such a collective effort, it will be impossible to successfully combat terrorism unless the communities that support such terrorists groups are alienated from their leadership. Here too, only the Arab states working in concert can bring about the communal socio-economic and political change, in combination with force if necessary, to achieve that objective.

Fourth, the Arab Initiative is comprehensive in that it covers all outstanding conflicting issues between Israel and the Arab states. To achieve a comprehensive peace, the conflict between Israel and Syria over the Golan Heights must also be settled. Syria is a critical player, and the efforts by the Bush administration to isolate or marginalize it have done nothing but further aggravate the security conditions in Northern Israel, Lebanon, and Iraq. Moreover, luring Syria back into the Arab Sunni fold will suck out much of the wind that fans the Sunni-Shiite conflict.

Fifth, since Iran has thrived and continues to thrive on Arab discontent with the United States and Israel, any major progress made on the Arab Initiative will erode Tehran's influence in the region and offer Iranian moderates a greater say in the affairs of their state. Distancing Syria from Iran will also force Tehran to limit its outreach to the Mediterranean, reassess its regional ambitions, and dramatically limit its sway with Hezbollah, Hamas, and other extremist groups.

To be sure, the Arab states have decided to reintroduce the Initiative because of their heightened vulnerability emanating from the convergence of events resulting from the war in Iraq and its explosive regional potential. They see an end to the Arab-Israeli conflict as a precondition to effectively addressing many of the problems that have plagued the Middle

East, stabilizing the region, and securing their regimes. But the Arab leaders, other than those from Egypt and Jordan, which are at peace with Israel, (assigned by the Arab League to pursue the Initiative with Israel), must not sit on their hands and wait. They too must reach out to Israel and demonstrate that their Initiative is genuine and are ready to engage the Israelis on any level while remaining true to the Initiative's principles.

Many opportunities have been missed in the Middle East resulting in as many tragedies. Is it any wonder why 60 years later we are still mired in the same senseless bloody and debilitating conflict? I submit that no greater tragedy will befall the Middle East if the Arab Initiative is allowed to die, except this time there will be no chance of it being resurrected.

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AN ARAB INITIATIVE TO AVOID A FAILED CONFERENCE

James J. Zogby*

Source: *Jordan Times* (<http://www.jordantimes.com>), 23 October 2007, distributed by the Common Ground News Service (CGNews: <http://www.commongroundnews.org>) with permission to republish.

In the aftermath of Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's fourth recent visit to the Middle East to prepare for a peace conference, only the meeting's proposed location has been decided. The situation looks quite bleak, with little to show for the efforts made to date.

Early in her visit, Rice made an effort to tamp down expectations about the conference - not a good sign - sending mixed and confusing signals. While the US secretary reiterating the Bush administration's commitment to a Palestinian state, she made it clear after meeting with a number of Israeli officials that the administration would not press hard for a declaration defining outcomes or setting timetables - two essential Palestinian requirements.

During Rice's meetings with the Israelis, there was no focus on the intolerable strangulation of the population in Gaza, and only slight attention directed at the hardships being visited upon the West Bank. Also short shrifted was the recent Israeli confiscation of a large swathe of land east of Jerusalem, land confiscated in order to build a bypass road that would, in effect, complete the separation of the northern and southern portions of the West Bank.

While previously the US had cautioned against "unilateral actions" (not quite a rebuke), at one point during this visit, Rice appeared to diminish the significance of this recent land grab, and even offer an excuse for it. The US secretary of State made a point of meeting with many of the fractious elements comprising Olmert's government, each of whom, in their own way, laid down the objections to and/or preconditions for the peace conference. Fearing no pressure from the US, they made clear what they were not willing to surrender to the Palestinians.

Having followed this process for decades, it never ceases to amaze me how the Israelis are able to use their internal differences to their advantage, and pose as the weak party always in need of US support. After hearing this cacophony of Israeli voices, Rice, of course, felt compelled to offer the Israelis and their weak prime minister renewed assurances. The bottom line: Israel, it appears, feels no real compulsion to respond to Palestinian requirements for peace, or to alter its behaviour. Evidence of this abounds. The above-mentioned seizure of Palestinian land for the purpose of building a bypass road and the ongoing efforts to expand settlements while continuing other disruptive projects in the occupied West Bank make this clear. So does the intensified blockade on Gaza, which amounts to cruel collective punishment.

The Palestinians and the Arab leadership, who have made clear their commitment to this peace conference and who, in fact, have much invested in its outcome, are in a bind. Without a committed American partner, a partner willing to apply direct pressure on Israel, the talks will surely fail. But failure is no option. In failure the only winners are despair and extremism, and it is the Arabs who will pay the dearest price. Already, some Hamas spokespersons are gloating, pointing at the weaknesses of "the moderates" and their "foolishness" for placing trust in a US-led effort.

To salvage the situation, Arabs need to aggressively pursue an independent strategy. Instead of being passive recipients of whatever ineffectual US diplomacy can deliver, and instead of allowing success or failure to be determined by the outcome of the asymmetric Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, Arab principals (including, at least, the Palestinian Authority, Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia) ought to formulate and propose a common declaration whose elements include:

- A detailed account of Israeli behaviour that is destroying Palestinian life and hope for an independent Palestinian state.
- A specific and realistic list of the Israeli behaviour that must end before any peace conference can occur.
- An elaboration on the Arab summit proposals that details what a final peace would look like, sequences the stages of implementation, and sets a realistic timetable for realising the Palestinian state.
- A call for postponing the proposed meeting until Israel and the US respond to this unified Arab call.

In the intervening weeks, or months, while the US and Israel are shaping their response, the Arab side ought to engage in active diplomacy to press its call to the US, Israel, and the other partners in the Quartet. The advantages of such an approach are clear. It moves Arabs from their role as passive recipients to active agents, and allows them to seize the political initiative on their behalf. Such an effort would have the additional benefit of avoiding the risk of a failed summit.

The truth of the matter is that at the moment, the Israeli, Palestinian and US governments are not in a position conducive to addressing difficult diplomatic challenges. On the other hand, the Egyptian, Jordanian and Saudi governments are in a better position. The Palestinians would do well to work in this broader Arab context than to be at the mercy of the US and Israel, especially since the Israelis appear to be in no position to move forward, and the US is disinclined to push. Instead of urging reconsideration of the roadmap, perhaps Arab interests would be better served by developing an actual road to peace. More than a poorly-conceived and ill-prepared conference, an Arab diplomatic offensive, at this time, might help breathe new life into the peace process and set the table for future talks.

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REBUILDING TRUST REMAINS AT THE CORE

Alon Ben-Meir*, October 24, 2007

Since President Bush declared his intention a few months ago to convene a Middle East peace conference, experts on the region and government officials have proposed specific agenda items that should be addressed to insure its success. Key suggestions include a declaration of principle, the creation of an ongoing negotiation process, broad-based regional representation, and endorsement of international bodies, agreement on future conferences, and the inclusion of Syria. Whereas all these ideas are necessary to reach an agreement I do believe, however, that the conference will be another missed opportunity unless the Israelis and the Palestinians agree on three critical components: an agreement in principle, enter immediately into negotiations to sort out the details, and most importantly, undertake immediate, continuous and concurrent confidence-building measures (CBM) to keep up the momentum and to offer a real hope for eventual agreement.

An agreement in principle on the issues of borders, Palestinian refugees, and Jerusalem can be brokered, but it will have to be both general and constructively ambiguous. Such an agreement will allow both sides the flexibility they need over time to mobilize their constituencies, while neutralizing opposing factions back home, to support the necessary concessions that each must make to reach an accord. Neither President Mahmoud Abbas nor Prime Minister Olmert is in a position to make these concessions at this juncture and hope to stay in power to deliver them.

Once such an agreement in principle is achieved the two parties must enter immediately into negotiations to hammer out a final accord. These negotiations will be hard, painstaking and at time will appear hopeless. Both sides, however, must remain vigilant, relentless and purposeful with unshakable commitment to stay the course under any circumstances. Otherwise extreme elements on both sides, who do not wish to reach mutual accommodation, will resort to any means to torpedo the negotiations. In addition, both parties must agree, as part of the commitment that all the means used to achieve this goal must be peaceful. No agreement at Annapolis will be worth the paper it is written on if it does not rule out, once and for all, the use of violence by either side to achieve their political objectives.

The third element and probably the most critical is rebuilding the trust between both parties that was completely shattered in the wake of the second Intifadah. Nothing engenders lasting trust more than the joint undertaking of immediate, continuous and concurrent to the negotiations of a wide range of confidence building measures that yield immediate benefits for both peoples. But for CBM to be effective and generate the desirable outcome of trust, they must meet three criteria:

First, the measures must be unilateral and not be held captive to a rigid timetable. Let me explain: the basic fault in CBM behavior is that it is conditional and based on the notion that if one party makes a good-faith gesture, the other party must respond, usually quickly, with its own. Sometimes this is impossible, and yet because there is an expectation of

it being possible, the whole cooperative structure can break down. In order to overcome this problem, I suggest that measures taken by one side should not be conditional on a direct reciprocal action by the other. Thus, each can gauge the other's commitment on a long-term rather than on a reciprocal basis (or quid-pro-quo) and perhaps even more importantly not be subject to outside disruptive elements seeking to undermine the process.

The second requirement for CBM to succeed involves Israel sending a clear message to the Palestinians that it is committed to ending the occupation. Such a message will represent the first (and most important) tangible expression of Israel's commitment to establishing a Palestinian state and should augment trust by a) making it abundantly clear that the government will not tolerate building any more illegal outposts and will dismantle all existing ones, b) ending the expansion of existing settlements (other than those being incorporated into Israel proper by mutual agreement), c) providing economic incentives and sustainable development projects to Palestinian communities that do not engage in violent activity, d) removing all roadblocks that are not absolutely critical to Israel's security, e) allowing Palestinians to legitimately build, plant, and develop their land with no undue restrictions, f) forsaking any form of collective punishment and, finally, g) releasing all Palestinian prisoners, except those who wantonly killed Israelis. With or without the support of the Palestinian Authority and regardless of the Authority's political convictions, Israel must make positive inroads into the Palestinian community to engender a lasting trust between the peoples.

The third requirement for rebuilding trust is for the Palestinians to realize that for trust to endure it must be mutual. To that end, the Palestinians must demonstrate that accepting Israel's right to exist means ending all incitements against Israel now, not some time in the future, it means ending all acts of violence against Israel, it means educating Palestinian children about the reality of Israel and of the importance of cultivating brotherly relations, and it means using the media to promote the ideas of a common future, neighborly relations, and a shared destiny with the Israelis.

The commitment toward a two-state solution must not be left to the whims of extremists on either side. It must be translated to action on the ground now. This must be the outcome of this conference. Otherwise, it will be just another missed opportunity that tragically crowded the annals of Israeli-Palestinian relations.

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THE TEST OF LEADERSHIP

Gershon Baskin*

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The public mood regarding the US-sponsored peace summit is quite negative. The leaders of Israel and Palestine are devoting time and energy to reducing expectations out of fear that the summit may not produce the agreement necessary to enable a genuine peace process to ensue. As we get closer to the summit it seems that public opinion on both sides is hardening with regard to concessions that are necessary to enable Israeli-Palestinian agreement.

Israeli positions are hardening on territorial compromises and on the issue of Jerusalem. Palestinian positions are hardening on the refugee issue. These three issues are the core of any agreement and failure to find acceptable solutions will mean that an agreement will not be possible.

Based on everything that we know from previous negotiations, an Israeli-Palestinian agreement will have to fall somewhere in between the triangle of the so-called Clinton parameters, the Taba non-paper and the unofficial Geneva Accords. Translated into terms that we can all understand, the contours of an agreement must include the following principles:

1. The embodiment of the two-state solution will have to include the mutual recognition of the national, historic and political rights of the Jewish and Palestinian peoples to have a state of their own in the piece of land known as Israel and Palestine.
2. The Palestinian state will be established on 100% of the territory of the West Bank and Gaza with agreed territorial swaps~this means the Palestinians will be able to claim that they will build their state on 22% of the land of the British Mandate west of the Jordan River. Furthermore, there will be no Israeli settlements where there is Palestinian sovereignty.

3. Jerusalem will be the capital of both Israel and Palestine, including a division of sovereignty in the Old City. Palestine would have effective control over the Haram al Sharif, or Temple Mount, while Israel would have effective control over the Western Wall. Both sides would have to limit their sovereignty in a way that gives veto power to the other regarding construction in the Old City, especially in the holy places.

4. The refugees will return primarily to Palestine. But Israel would have to acknowledge its role and responsibility in the creation of the refugee problem. That acknowledgement would have to include some form of apology short of taking full responsibility. Individual refugees would be eligible to receive financial compensation for lost properties and for 60 years of suffering.

Along with these main principles there must also be recognition that:

1. Detailed negotiations for a full-fledged permanent status agreement would have to ensue immediately following the US summit with a time limit on the length of those negotiations.

2. Gaza would only be part of any agreement once Hamas either no longer is in control there or when Hamas accepts the three international conditions for recognition.

3. Once a framework agreement or a declaration of principles is reached, the sides must return to implementing all of their obligations within the road map, including the dismantlement of all terrorist infrastructures on the Palestinian side, and the removal of all unauthorized outposts and settlements on the Israeli side.

4. The agreements must include commitments and plans for eliminating incitement and for instituting peace education programs on both sides.

5. There must be a time table and a mechanism for objective monitoring of the implementation of the agreements. The mechanism must also include a dispute resolution procedure that enables mediation and if necessary arbitration so that the process will not get bogged down in inevitable disagreements.

Can all of this be done? Common sense and historical record says "no!" The reasons are many: the leaders are weak, the political systems are weak, neither side can guarantee a majority in support of the agreements, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert is under investigation, the core issues are too sensitive and the publics don't back necessary concessions, etc. etc.

Each side will undoubtedly hold their cards very close to their chest and probably prevent the other side from knowing how far they are really willing to bend. In reality, there is very little room for real negotiations. The positions are so well known that the red lines of each side are clearly defined.

Can an agreement be reached? The answer must be "yes!" It would be much wiser for the negotiators to work with all their cards on the table so they can think creatively about how they can help each other in winning public support for an agreement. There are certainly things that the Palestinian negotiators can do to strengthen Olmert's public position. Similarly, there are many things the Israeli negotiators could do that would strengthen the public position of President Mahmoud Abbas.

The negotiations would be a lot more fruitful and the end result much more positive if the two sides played for mutual gain rather than took a zero sum, "win-lose" approach. This is not just theory; this is the real world where the public psychology of the negotiations is just as important as the substance of the agreements.

It would also be wise for the two leaders to completely ignore public opinion polls over the next few weeks. They should understand that what they are doing in the negotiating process will shape public opinion, and if they capitulate now to public opinion they will be allowing themselves to be manipulated by forces on both sides that are opposed to reaching an agreement. This is the moment of truth. There may be no such moments in the near future. Of course there are many risks involved, but there are even more risks for both sides if they fail to reach agreement. This is the real test of leadership.

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PEACEMAKING TRUTHS AND LIES

Gershon Baskin*

Source: *Jerusalem Post* (<http://www.jpost.com>), October 22 2007, distributed by the Common Ground News Service with permission to republish.□

For 60 years, Palestinian and Arab leaders have been lying to their people. Creating and sustaining the lie that the Palestinian refugees of 1948 would return to their original homes and lands makes it almost impossible for President Mahmoud Abbas to reach an agreement with Israel on the right of return, the most central issue in the conflict. Abbas and most of the Palestinian leaders from his Fatah movement have long realized that there cannot be any real return of Palestinian refugees to Israel proper, and while they have acknowledged this in private discussions with Israelis, they have not yet said it in public. The original 700,000-800,000 Palestinian refugees today number some 4.5 million. (No one knows the exact figure of the refugees and their descendents, whom have been granted refugee status by the UN). In the West Bank and Gaza, not including the Palestinian diaspora, one of every two Palestinians is considered a refugee. Abbas' largest opposition to any agreement with Israel that includes concessions on the refugee issue comes from this very large segment of the population.

For 40 years, Israeli leaders have been lying to their public. Creating and sustaining the lie that Jerusalem was united and that all of united Jerusalem will be the eternal capital of the State of Israel makes it nearly impossible for Prime Minister Ehud Olmert to make the necessary concessions on the Jerusalem issue to reach an agreement with the Palestinians. It is really quite amazing that the majority of Israelis continue to hold onto the lie, believing that Jerusalem is truly united. Jerusalem has not been a united city since the time of the British Mandate. Most Israelis have never visited (nor do they care to visit) Palestinian East Jerusalem. Areas such as Sur Baher, near Kibbutz Ramat Rahel; Jabel Mukaber just past East Talpiot; Sawahre, an Area A Palestinian village near Bethlehem; Walajeh, between Gilo and Bethlehem; and Um Tuba, which is next to Sur Baher, all have no meaning to Israelis.

In fact, most Israelis believe that the state should not invest money in those places, money that provides for equal education and public services. Thus there are parts of the "eternal capital" that look like undeveloped parts of a Third World country. Ten kilometres from downtown west Jerusalem looks like parts of Calcutta. Almost no Israeli politician has ever visited these places~ the Jerusalem mayor probably isn't even aware, or simply doesn't care that these Palestinian neighbourhoods fall under his jurisdiction. Are those Israelis who speak against dividing Jerusalem willing to fight and perhaps die (or to send their children to fight and perhaps die) so that Um Tuba remains part of the "eternal capital" of Jerusalem? I seriously doubt it.

Peacemaking will require leaders to undo the web of lies they have helped spin for so many years. It is time to be honest with both publics. Palestinians have to understand that their conception of "justice" - that Palestinian refugees be allowed to return to their original homes - is simply impossible. Not only do their original homes no longer exist, their villages and towns have been replaced by others that have already been standing for 60 years. There is also a fundamental contradiction in seeking "two states for two peoples" while adhering to the "right of return" at the same time. Palestinians say: "Recognize our right of return, and we'll negotiate the implementation details; anyway most refugees will not choose to go back." This kind of open ended "solution" would never be accepted by any Israeli leader.

It is not unreasonable for Palestinians to demand that Israel acknowledge its part in the creation of the refugee tragedy. Nor is unreasonable to expect Israel to contribute generously to an international fund for compensating and resettling Palestinian refugees. Adhering to the position that Israel must recognize the "right of return" is a non-starter. Similarly, Israeli leaders must have the courage to say out loud that Jerusalem is already a divided city, and that in the framework of an Israeli-Palestinian agreement, the Palestinian parts of East Jerusalem will be the capital of the future Palestinian state.

Most Palestinians have already come to terms with the reality that the Israeli neighbourhoods - or what they refer to as settlements - in east Jerusalem will remain under Israeli sovereignty. The residents of Ramat Eshkol, French Hill, East Talpiot, Ramot, Pisgat Ze'ev, Neve Ya'akov and Gilo need not worry.

The Clinton parameters - a blueprint for a final status agreement - which most Palestinians today accept, ensure that those neighbourhoods would remain part of Israeli Jerusalem. Jerusalem is arguably the most segregated city in the world. There are almost no areas where Israelis and Palestinians live together. A division along demographic lines is completely possible. The implementation of that division could be based on security realities. Lastly - though perhaps most importantly - is the Temple Mount, or Harem al Sherif. There are really only two possible options for dealing with the most holy of holy places: dividing the control and sovereignty, or transferring the control and sovereignty to a neutral third party.

In either case, both sides would have to agree to preserve the holiness of the sites for each other and for the future. Practically, this means that neither side would be able to build, dig, tunnel, or even repair structures or elements that are underneath the holy places.

Jews claim that the Temple Mount is the most holy of holy places for them. The place where the Holy Temples stood, and where most Jews believe lie their remnants has, by Jewish law, been beyond our reach because we believe that the Temple can only be rebuilt only by God after the Messiah comes. We have left this issue in the hands of God for over 2,000 years, surely that will not change because of agreement with the Palestinians and the Muslim world that will recognize the control that they already have on the Mount.

In exchange, Palestinians and Muslims would also recognize Israeli and Jewish control over the Western Wall with the same limitations regarding digging and tunnelling underneath these sensitive areas. With this understanding, Jerusalem would be finally recognized as the eternal capital of Israel, but only after Jerusalem is also recognized as the eternal capital of Palestine. They go together-this is the truth and the truth must be told.

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LESSONS FROM CAMP DAVID

Moshe Amirav*

Source: *The Financial Times* (www.ft.com), October 18, 2007, distributed by the Common Ground News Service with permission for republication.□

Next month the US president George W. Bush proposes to host an international conference in Annapolis, near Washington, in the hope of advancing a two-state solution for Israel and the Palestinians. The failures of previous attempts - in Madrid in 1991, in Oslo in 1993 and at Camp David in 2000 - highlight the difficulties. What have we learned from these failures to suggest that the same errors in judgment will recur?

The conflict is no longer simply about territories. Israel was ready in secret negotiations with Syria in the 1990s to return the Golan Heights. At Camp David in 2000 Israel agreed to a Palestinian state and was prepared to offer the Palestinians 92 per cent of the occupied West Bank and Gaza. But no peace agreement was reached. So if the territories and acceptance of a Palestinian state are not the main problem, what still divides Israelis and Arabs?

At the psychological level, the main requirements for Israelis are security and recognition, while those of the Palestinians and Syrians remain justice and equality. Academic literature dealing with conflict resolution emphasises that simplistic principles of justice, equality and security do not sufficiently define tangible interests, but are purely subjective. An issue such as security is difficult to define. Can territorial compromise promise security? It was clear to me at Camp David that the Palestinians were more interested in the elusive ideas of justice and equality than in definable interests. Agreement was reached on all the concrete issues, including territories and settlements, and even on the thorny issue of Jerusalem. The two main obstacles, the refugee problem and the political status of the Temple Mount, were more symbolic than concrete.

Today Israeli and Palestinian negotiators have developed new insights. Israel's important realisation is that giving up territories does not guarantee security and that security can never be absolute. The Palestinians have come to a similarly realistic conclusion regarding their ideal of justice. In parallel with the collapse of the idea of a Greater Israel, the Palestinians have woken up from any former dream of a Greater Palestine. Likewise, with the idea of achieving justice on the refugee issue as defined by the simplistic slogan "right of return," most Palestinians today accept that they will not be able to return to their former homes in Israel. These are significant steps on the long road to peace.

What happened at Camp David? I do not accept the thesis offered by Bill Clinton, former US president, and Ehud Barak, then Israel's prime minister, that the responsibility for failure was all former Palestinian leader Yassir Ar-afat's. I would like to analyse the main sticking points as objectively as I can, without pointing the finger of blame. Only in this way can we avoid similar mistakes in the next peace conference.

There are four lessons. The first is that we must be more aware of the specific minefields the negotiators will be walking into. The only questions not prepared for in advance of Camp David were those concerning the Temple Mount and the refugee problem. They were such hot potatoes it was thought advisable not to bring them up until all other problems had been resolved. But they jumped to the head of the queue. The other issues - borders, territories, settlements and even Jerusalem -

had been all but solved. Today we hear that President Bush and Ehud Olmert, Israel's current prime minister, have agreed the Temple Mount and the refugee problem will not even be on the table in November. But without preparing creative approaches to these subjects, I believe the summit will again fail.

The second lesson highlights the need for new United Nations resolutions on Jerusalem and the refugees, taking into account the new realities. The holy places, as well as Jerusalem itself, are supposed to be internationalised according to resolution 181, which was passed in 1947 and is still considered binding. Resolution 194, passed in 1949, speaks of the right of all Palestinian refugees to return to their homes in Israel. But even the Arab League modified this in 2002, with a new resolution proposing "a just solution which must also be accepted by Israel."

Third, Israel and the Palestinians on their own are clearly not capable of reaching peace. But the US can no longer be considered an honest broker. A suitable arbitrator must be ready not only to reward the two sides for any concessions, but also to bang their heads together. The US has no real tools with which to press either side. Clearly, a fourth party needs to wield its influence and, in my opinion, any arm-twisting that is to be applied to the Palestinian side can come only from the Arab League.

Fourth, we cannot separate the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from the Israeli-Arab conflict as a whole. For years we have been told that solving the first will bring peace with the Arab world. It should be the other way round: first Israel must achieve peace with the Arab world. Peace with Syria, despite recent events, is, in some ways, more achievable. Israel makes just two demands in return for the Golan: first, that it have full control of the Sea of Galilee so any newly agreed border be at least 50m from the water line; second, that monitoring stations be permitted on a demilitarised the Golan. Peace with Syria, in my opinion, is even more important and urgent than peace with the Palestinians. Ending the dispute between Israel and the Arab states would make it much easier to find solutions to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

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SDEROT IS STILL UNDER FIRE

MJ Rosenberg*

Source: Israel Policy Forum (<http://www.ipforum.org>), November 2, 2007, This article is distributed by the Common Ground News Service with permission to republish.[]

The terrorist shelling of Sderot and other towns and villages neighboring Gaza has to stop, but the policies Israel has adopted to achieve that goal will not do the job. The most significant thing to know about the shelling is that Sderot is in Israel itself~not in the occupied territories. Accordingly, it is ridiculous to refer to the attacks as representing „resistance% unless, of course, the resistance is to the existence of Israel and not the occupation. In the case of Sderot, and neighboring towns, it clearly is.

The fact that Sderot is in Israel proper is critical. In the case of Israeli settlers living in some far-flung settlement or in the midst of Hebron, one can simply ask why they are there in the first place. After all, they knew they were moving into an area where they would be surrounded by unwelcoming Palestinians. They can always return to Israel if they want the security of living in a Jewish state.

The people of Sderot do not have that option. They are in Israel. They are not settlers. They are Israelis, trying to live at home in Israel. And yet they are under constant assault by terrorists. In fact, the word terrorism cannot be more apt than it is in this situation because it is raw terror, more than death or injury that the endless Kassam firings produce.

Yedioth Achronoth this week reported on the Shacked family who was watching television “when they suddenly heard a sound with which they were already familiar - a mortar being fired in their direction.” The family - including children and infant grandchildren - took shelter in a “reinforced concrete basement, as they had practiced scores of times in the past.” One second later, the house above them was leveled. Israel not only has the right to end these horrors, it is obligated to do so. Above all else, the prime responsibility of any legitimate government is to protect its own people from external attack.

That being said, it is hard to see that the actions Israel has taken since Hamas took power will ever accomplish that goal. Almost without exception, Israel responds to the shelling of ordinary Israelis by punishing ordinary Palestinians. Some might see justice in that or, at least, parallelism. But it is impossible to believe that the terrorists shelling Israel are going to be

dissuaded because of the pain Israel inflicts on the civilians of Gaza. Is some thug aiming a rocket at a school in Israel going to cease and desist out of concern for innocent Palestinians who will pay the price for the attack later? Isn't that giving terrorists too much credit?

As columnist Calev Ben-David wrote in the Jerusalem Post, the groups firing the Kassams don't care "if the average Gazan suffers as a result of their activities, something they've proven time and again. If anything, the Hamas leadership will simply see this as a good opportunity to justify their continuing cross-border attacks."

The rationale behind making the civilian population of Gaza pay for the crimes of the terrorists is the hope that a suffering population will rise up and overthrow the Hamas government. That is unlikely, especially when Hamas is heavily armed and getting more arms all the time.

Ever since Hamas won the Palestinian election, Israel's policy toward Gaza has been closure, isolation and intermittent attacks. It is possible that these policies have hurt the terrorists, although they have not deterred them. But it is certain that they have hurt everyone else.

Take, for example, the case of the eight Palestinian Fulbright scholars. Taghreed El-Khodary, a Gaza-based New York Times journalist, described their situation in the Middle East Bulletin. They won prestigious Fulbright scholarships, allowing them to pursue graduate study in the United States this year. But Israel's closure policy keeps them locked in Gaza.

El-Khodary writes, "These are the brightest students, with strong undergraduate records; they are generally among the most open-minded too. They want to pursue graduate studies in the United States to continue their education, and come back to work and change society here. They are the ones with the potential to make changes; and they want to better understand the United States . . ." But they can't get here.

Then there are "the businesspeople who have now really been hurt. . . . Traditionally they have been apart from politics - not Hamas, not Fatah. Through their factories, shops, industries, they give young people jobs and opportunity. With no ability to get goods in or out, they cannot employ people. The young people who worked for them are out on the streets, frustrated, and depressed."

And now Israel is closing one of the two remaining crossings used to transfer food into Gaza, allowing no more than 55 truckloads of goods to cross daily instead of 120-150. (The United Nations estimates that 175 truckloads daily are necessary to meet minimum needs). Natural gas supplies have been sharply cut and Defense Minister Barak intends to start turning off the electricity once the Minister of Justice says it's legal to do so.

As an editorial in Ha'aretz put it on Wednesday, "Cutting off the supply of electricity, fuel and baby food is a blatant blow against civilians-and only against them." And it won't stop the shelling of Sderot. Surely there are better ways for Israel to handle this situation - both military and diplomatic. The IDF is more than capable of going after the perpetrators of rocket attacks and of seizing the areas from which the attacks are launched. If they have to hold on to the territory to keep the terrorists out, so be it. Part of the rationale for removing the settlers from Gaza was to enable the army to act, when necessary, without being encumbered by Israeli civilians who only got in the way.

As for diplomacy, the Annapolis conference is still on the schedule. An agreement between Prime Minister Olmert and President Abbas which paves the way toward a Palestinian state will greatly strengthen Abbas and weaken Hamas. A failed conference, or a cancelled one, will bolster Hamas and those firing the rockets at Sderot.

Furthermore, Israel needs to consider ways to open lines of communication with the Gazan authorities. Although the Fatah leadership strongly opposes any contact with Hamas (no matter how indirect), Israel may have no choice but to deal with Hamas in Gaza in order to protect the people of Sderot and nearby towns. (If Israel and Hamas communicate indirectly over the fate of prisoners, why can't they do the same on other matters?)

The election of Hamas in January 2006 has been a total disaster for the Palestinian people, but the policies of Israel, the United States, and the European Union put in place in response to it have also utterly failed. It's time for new ones.

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ENGAGING HAMAS: THE WHEN AND THE HOW

Rafi Dajani and Ghaith Al-Omari*

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The Hamas takeover of Gaza in June and the resulting West Bank-Gaza split has raised serious questions. What are the short-term prospects for reunification? Can serious political progress be made with Israel without Palestinian reconciliation? What are the elements of a successful and lasting future reconciliation?

There is no doubt that ultimately, for political, economic and geopolitical reasons, the West Bank and Gaza must be one territorial unit. Hamas represents a sizable Palestinian constituency that must be engaged and become part of the political system. But the chances of that happening in the near future are slim. Engaging Hamas without a reversal of its Gaza takeover and its acceptance of the two-state solution paradigm and all related agreements will serve only to legitimize that takeover. It would also result in the re-freezing of direly needed international aid to the Palestinians and abort current peace prospects.

In addition, the Gaza takeover was conducted by elements of Hamas representing the hard-line ideological as opposed to pragmatic nationalist strains within the organisation. Engaging these elements would validate their violent takeover and weaken the more moderate elements. However, official and unofficial messaging to Hamas must stress that their current isolation is not an effort to destroy them, but would end conditionally.

With reconciliation not a near-term option, concerns have been voiced that any agreement reached with Israel would lack legitimacy, since it excludes a sizable minority of the Palestinian people. In addition, Hamas may sabotage any agreement through violence against Israel, with the resultant and inevitable harsh Israeli response.

It is important here to distinguish between reaching an agreement and implementing it. It is entirely possible for Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to reach an agreement with the Israelis after the fall Mideast meeting without Hamas if a meaningful process toward Palestinian statehood is started following a document of principles setting the general contours of a peace agreement.

The process itself must include elements distinguishing it from previous ones, such as staggered Arab participation, rewards for both parties, reversal of Israeli actions in occupied East Jerusalem and a settlement freeze that goes beyond the declarative. In tandem must be a parallel process of internal security and governance reform in the Fatah-dominated Palestinian Authority.

Success will depend to a large degree on Israel. If no serious movement toward a political agreement is made and Israeli actions on the ground continue to undermine Palestinian statehood prospects, any PA security, governance and economic achievements will be spun by Hamas as the price the PA pays for accepting and supporting the occupation.

Implementing a peace agreement will require Palestinian reconciliation, however. If such an agreement meets Palestinian national aspirations and is backed by key Arab countries, namely Saudi Arabia, it is hard to imagine Hamas opposing it and risking alienating the Palestinian people. In fact, a new telephone survey conducted in Gaza by Near East Consulting found that most Gazans do not regard the de facto Hamas government as legitimate and support a peace agreement with Israel.

Given the deep ideological differences between Hamas and Fatah, and the fact that past attempts at national unity had papered these differences over, the reconciliation must include Hamas accepting the PLO charter, U.N. Security Council Resolution 242 and the two-state solution paradigm. Hamas must understand that even elections that legitimately brought it to power do not give it license to attempt to take over the PLO and dismantle the whole structure of "statehood through negotiations." Fatah for its part must relinquish its monopoly over governance and security institutions once Hamas accepts the above elements.

The PA's basic message~liberation through negotiation~needs serious rehabilitation through significant, concrete and credible progress toward a permanent status deal and the establishment of a Palestinian state. If such progress is made, Hamas will find itself in the untenable and losing position of campaigning against a Palestinian state.

If, on the other hand, the national secular movement as represented by the PLO fails, the outlook will be bleak. We will witness either a full disintegration of the Palestinian polity, or a Hamas takeover of the Palestinian society and political system.

The Palestinian national cause will regress to where it was in the late 1960s: a movement fighting for recognition at the margins of the international system. The implications of this for Israel, the Arab world, and the West are best avoided.

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MEASURES OF CONFIDENCE

Mark L. Cohen*

Source: Common Ground News Service (<http://www.commongroundnews.org>), September 13, 2007. This article is distributed by the Common Ground News Service with permission for republication.[]

Success in bringing about real Middle East peace will depend on more than marginalizing Hamas in Gaza and the West Bank and a political settlement with the Palestinian Authority alone. Crucially, other Arab nations in the region must also accept the future Palestine as a full-fledged neighbouring state, as well as Palestinian nationals themselves as entitled members of the Middle East community. Concrete steps in this direction-with Palestinians no longer treated by Arab neighbour states as outcasts or frontline soldiers in the war against Israel-will in turn provide Israelis and their government the confidence needed to make concessions in the peace process.

Both Palestinians and Israelis need to be convinced that the political process can lead to constructive change in their respective conditions. Progress on the outstanding issues-such as the relocation of West Bank settlers, Jerusalem, the right of return, and the PLO's obligation to crack down on terrorists and their organizations - is obviously vital. But none of this will produce real change unless the nations in the region (Jordan, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon and countries in the Persian Gulf) acknowledge that Palestinians, inside and outside a future Palestinian state, must have the right to travel, work, and attend universities throughout the area-rights which have been denied by Israel and Arab nations alike.

Only if an end is put to the isolation of Palestinians from their Arab neighbours will viable economic, social as well as political solutions emerge. And only if the two-state solution is formulated in that context will the parties make the necessary political concessions for a viable, long-term peace to take hold. Why? Because despite its economic strengths, Israel alone cannot produce meaningful change in the lives of the 3.5 million Palestinians living inside the new state, nor in the lives of the 2.4 million refugees in Jordan, Syria and Lebanon.

Yet despite this, there is at least an implicit expectation among Arabs and also Europeans that it somehow falls mostly on Israel to create the conditions needed to satisfy the aspirations and rectify the suffering of the Palestinian people. While both unfair and unrealistic, this expectation goes far back in history. Indeed, having more or less openly decided at the time of the 1948 war to isolate Palestinian refugees in camps and to prevent their integration in the Arab world, Arab states have continued ever since to claim that Israel was and is the sole party responsible for the Palestinian condition. To this day, neighbouring states have been at best ambiguous about allowing Palestinians to travel or work in their territories, and for more than 20 years, following the partition of Palestine in 1947, opposed the establishment of a Palestinian state on the West Bank. This refusal to recognize a Palestinian identity is further reflected in UN Resolutions designating Palestinians not as such but as Arab refugees.

Be that as it may, this expectation has had two counterproductive consequences. On the Israeli side, it has led to the lingering suspicion that Arab countries are disingenuous in their avowed passionate defence of Palestinian rights. On the Palestinian side, it has led to the assumption of a front line combatant mission to retrieve the lost honour of the Arab world. This has blinded many Palestinians to the prospect of any future outlook to the East, North or South, and has produced a perhaps excessive fixation on the right of return and other political rights, at the expense of focusing on the right to better lives.

Despite the outstanding issues between the two principal parties, it is now obvious that what is good for the Palestinians is good for Israel. The interdependence of both parties was addressed by Marwan Muasher, a Jordanian Foreign Minister, when he said that progress for the Palestinian people can only be achieved by allowing the Israelis to have "a real sense of security." This position is also being highlighted by the present Palestinian prime minister, Salam Fayyad, who said that peace efforts can only be successful if we address the issues of job creation, training, improved internal security and a strong way forward toward building a viable economy. In clear terms, Israelis will only make concessions to the Palestinians when they are convinced that a two-state solution is something sustainable-not just a short-term interruption in the conflict.

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SEARCHING FOR A PALESTINIAN MANDELA

Byron Bland*

Source: *Daily Star* (<http://www.dailystar.com.lb>), 04 September 2007. This article is distributed by the Common Ground News Service with permission to republish.[]

Several years ago, a high-level Israeli official asked me to tell him everything I could about how the Israelis might find their Palestinian Nelson Mandela. His question was interesting and appropriate, but also troubling; the Afrikaners didn't really "find" Mandela. It took several months before the answer came to me: Show me the Palestinian to whom you Israelis are willing to lose, and I will to show you your Palestinian Mandela.

My friend had overlooked the fact that Mandela and the African National Congress (ANC) had won in South Africa. The defining element in this so-called miracle was that white South Africans had, in one way or another and to varying degrees, accepted this outcome-making it, if not their victory, then certainly something other than their defeat.

There were many factors that drove the process toward success, but no one would deny that leadership-Mandela's leadership-played a decisive role. Although he was offered his freedom numerous times if he would just give up the struggle against apartheid, it was a deal that only a quisling would make. Mandela was made of sterner stuff and refused to make the fundamental concession the Afrikaners sought.

South African President Frederik W. de Klerk's decision to release Mandela unconditionally came in response to the unrest that had rendered the country ungovernable. De Klerk hoped to engage Mandela in a lengthy negotiation in which he could be coaxed into making critical compromises. Nevertheless, after many ups and downs, it was de Klerk, not Mandela, who made the fundamental compromises.

How did this unbelievable turn of events come about? The standard political science answer is that de Klerk found himself on a slippery slope where he thought that every concession was the last needed to get Mandela to comply. Still, this account cannot explain why, in the end, de Klerk conceded power to the ANC, especially when the South African state was not on the verge of collapse.

It is always difficult to look into the mind of a political leader at a crucial moment. Nevertheless, I think a fundamental shift took place in the way de Klerk saw Mandela. De Klerk came to power thinking that Mandela was the only African who could make the concessions needed to keep Afrikaner South Africa afloat. Slowly, he came to see Mandela, instead, as the African who could give Afrikaners a future they could live with.

Mandela let no opportunity pass to talk about the place of white South Africans in the new South Africa. He emphasized time and again that majority rule did not mean the domination of the white minority by a black majority. Seeking a "middle ground between white fears and black hopes," Mandela laid the very foundation for peace: "We do not want to drive you into the sea." Mandela believed there would be no peace unless white South Africans heard and believed his words.

In virtually every statement, Mandela presented a vision of the future in which white South Africans would be appreciated and respected. Those who heard him felt that they, their family, and their community could have a satisfying and secure life in what he was describing. Rather than offering concessions that would prop up the old, Mandela was offering a new future to many who had begun to doubt that they had one.

Israelis need to find a Palestinian Mandela, and Palestinians need to find an Israeli Mandela. However, the Mandela they need to find is not a leader who will make the concessions they seek, but one to whom they can make the concessions they say they cannot offer. Mandela was this kind of leader-his repeated actions and unequivocal words gave witness to a future that Afrikaners could embrace without fear.

Mandela presents today's leaders with a twin challenge. First, how do we find person on the other side to whom we can make the concessions we feel we cannot afford to make? Second, and much more important, how can we become people to whom the other side can make the concessions they say they cannot make? Both are important, but the second is critical

in a time when each, standing back, looks to the other to perform the difficult actions needed to move the peace process forward.

Progress toward peace between the Israelis and Palestinians is not stalled because no one can envision the final settlement. Every thoughtful observer knows that some rough approximation of the Clinton administration formula is the only deal possible. The question is not so much what is needed, for this much is known. The real question is: who will lead us there?

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PREREQUISITES FOR PEACE

Dr. Mustafa Barghouthi*

Source: *Baltimore Sun* (<http://www.baltimoresun.com>), 13 December 2007. This article is distributed by the Common Ground News Service with permission to republish.

As one who for decades has supported a two-state solution and the non-violent struggle for Palestinian rights, I view the recent conference in Annapolis with a great deal of skepticism - and a glimmer of hope. Seven years with no negotiations - and increasing numbers of Israeli settlers, an economic blockade in Gaza and an intricate network of roadblocks and checkpoints stifling movement in the West Bank ^ have led us to despair and distrust. Any commitment must be made not only to conclude an agreement before the end of 2008, but also to end Israel's occupation.

The Palestinians must also heal their internal divisions. This must include institutional reform to root out corruption and nepotism. The first step in that process is democratic elections at all levels of government. We must rid ourselves of the false dichotomy between Fatah and Hamas. These are not the only options. My movement, the 5-year-old *Palestinian National Initiative*, offers an alternative, emphasizing democratic elections, transparent government, and institution-building. Our goal is to democratize and engage the Palestinian national movement in a unified strategy to confront Israel's ongoing occupation and seizure of our land and resources. We strive to achieve our national rights in our homeland, and to establish social justice to uphold the rights of the underprivileged and marginalized - including women, children and people with disabilities.

The *Palestinian National Initiative* emerged in response to calls by the Palestinian populace for opportunities to participate in creating an independent, viable, democratic, and prosperous state that guarantees security, justice, equality before the law, and a dignified existence for its citizens. Our movement's firm commitment to democracy and non-violence can be seen, for example, in our peaceful demonstrations against Israel's apartheid wall. For more than two years, we supported the popular ^ and so far successful ^ struggle of the West Bank village of Bilin to remove the wall from its land. We are replicating these non-violent activities, with the support of international solidarity groups, in towns and villages throughout the West Bank.

But the full democracy, reform, and unity our people deserve cannot flourish under conditions of occupation. The national unity government collapsed this year when the government was unable to pay its workers after Israel withheld hundreds of millions of dollars in taxes owed to the Palestinian Authority. Far too many innocent Palestinian and Israeli civilians have suffered and died because of the persistence of Israeli military occupation of our lands. Our daily experience worsens as we are continually squeezed into ever-smaller land reserves and Israel continues to encircle Jerusalem with illegal settlements that segregate it from the West Bank. The number of Israeli settlers in the West Bank, including occupied East Jerusalem, has grown from 268,000 to more than 420,000 since the Oslo peace accords were signed. Even today, Israel is breaking its commitment, under the US-sponsored "road map" to peace, to freeze all settlement activity.

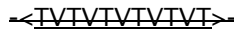
We acknowledge the painful history of our Israeli neighbours. The suffering endured by Jews in Europe was terrible. But today, Israel has the most powerful military in the Middle East, and Palestinians are the ones who suffer most. Palestinians participated in Annapolis in good faith. But we cannot simply abandon the rights of our people, including refugees. We seek for them no more than they are due under international law, and a way must be found to address these inalienable rights.

We have made our most generous offer in agreeing to establish our sovereign state in the West Bank and Gaza, together only 23 percent of historical Palestine. This is roughly half of what the United Nations allocated for us some 60 years ago. We have already more than made our historical compromise with Israel. Compromising the compromise risks leaving us with a shell state. And a meaningless and empty state is no basis upon which to build substantive peace. A state in name only

will not be enough. A state requires sovereignty. A state requires free movement and a free economy. A state requires a democratically elected government that can govern independently, without interference from Israel.

Annapolis represented an opportunity - perhaps the last before the possibility of a two-state solution vanishes. The Palestinian people will agree to two states as long as Israel withdraws its settlements and removes the wall, ends its brutal military occupation of the Palestinian territories it captured in 1967, acknowledges the rights of refugees, and agrees to share Jerusalem as the capital of both states. However, if the two-state solution becomes impossible, future Palestinian leaders may be compelled to demand equal rights within one state. It behooves Israel to hasten toward a two-state solution. The basic question Palestinians have for Israelis is: Will we be treated as equal human beings, with equal rights and equal dignity? If the answer is yes, there will be a two-state solution. There will be peace.

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BRING THEM HOME GRADUALLY

Ha'aretz editorial

Source: *Ha'aretz* (<http://www.haaretz.com>), December 4, 2007, This article is distributed by the Common Ground News Service with permission to republish.□

Since the separation fence was built, thousands of settlers who live east of it find themselves in an unclear situation. Having to wait for a political settlement to determine the permanent border is nerve-racking for those who wish to lead a normal life. Polls show that some 20,000 settlers at least would at this point like to vacate communities east of the fence, if they receive enough compensation to buy a new home.

The "compensation for evacuation" bill, which was brought before the Knesset half a year ago by Colette Avital and Avshalom Vilan, proposes a mechanism for immediate compensation for anyone who wants to leave his or her home right now. Labor Party Chairman Ehud Barak announced this week that his party will support this legislation, thereby giving the private members' bill a renewed boost.

Construction of the separation fence has created a conjectural border between Israel and the Palestinians, and anyone who knows how to read the map understands that under any future agreement, there will not be Israeli sovereignty beyond this line. A fair arrangement for evacuation-compensation on an individual basis will provide a solution for those who wish to leave right now, and will also generate a political atmosphere for converging in the direction of the Green Line.

It is safe to presume that the ideologues of Greater Israel will always remain in situ, but all the others will be able to transfer ownership of their homes to the government and receive compensation that will enable them to build a new life.

MKs Vilan and Avital founded the One House movement, whose goal is to encourage settlers to move to Israel voluntarily, and which has the backing of many MKs, including ministers Amir Peretz, Yuli Tamir, Ami Ayalon and Isaac Herzog. Although the government does not support the bill, it is enough that the Labor Party leader announced his support for it to receive a lift in the Knesset.

Beginning an actual evacuation would signal to the world and the Israeli public that the Annapolis speeches were not just speeches. There is no reason to turn the settlers in the West Bank into bargaining chips in peace talks, when everyone knows that a majority of Israelis is not in favour of continuing to maintain settlements in the heart of a Palestinian population.

A voluntary evacuation law for settlers can serve as an updated platform for the Labor Party when elections are held. An opinion poll conducted by the Dahaf Institute and Kalman Geyer found that 80 percent of the public supports this. Zvi Katzover, head of Kiryat Arba's local council, concedes that a voluntary evacuation law could tempt many to abandon the town of Kiryat Arba, which is home mostly to people who sought a housing solution.

Ehud Olmert's claim that evacuation-compensation legislation for West Bank settlers is premature indicates his fear of the coalition breaking apart. The question is whether parties like Shas and Yisrael Beiteinu ought to oppose a law that does not compel evacuation, but rather provides a fair opportunity for those who wish to do so to receive proper compensation of around NIS 1 million per family. Evacuating settlements gradually is one of the lessons of the evacuation from the Gaza Strip, and it can reduce some of the drama and trauma of a general evacuation following a political agreement.

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GOING GREEN COULD BRIDGE WEST BANK-ISRAELI GAPS

Shlomi Vruner*

Source: *Ha'aretz* (<http://www.haaretz.com>), September 19, 2007. This article is distributed by the Common Ground News Service with for republication.[]

In another month and a half, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert will go to the peace conference in Washington to be held under the aegis of the American administration. There are some who say that the conference will not produce any results or achievements beyond what has already been achieved. What is sure is that the well-known core subjects - the borders of a Palestinian state, the evacuation of the settlements, the division of Jerusalem into two capitals and the issue of the refugees - will be discussed with sensitivity and determination.

An important issue that will not be discussed, and which has never been discussed in talks with the Palestinians, is the effort to find a joint solution to the environmental problems of the region. Dealing with environmental issues crosses borders and political inclinations. Every supporter of the Likud, Yisrael Beiteinu or, alternately, a person on the left, would be able to discuss this matter with his Palestinian counterpart without fearing that he had `compromised` a piece of land from the area of the land of Israel.

Dealing with environmental quality could lead to swift cooperation that could bridge the gaps and build confidence. Subjects such as building a joint `green lung` between the West Bank and Israel with international funding, the rehabilitation of the polluted rivers in the territories and the exchange of environmental information, could form the basis of countless meetings, investments in mutual projects and so forth.

According to UN Relief and Works Agency's reports of the past few years to the UN institutions in New York, the situation of the sanitation infrastructures in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip is one of the worst in the world. This would be the place to transfer information from projects that have already been undertaken in Israel - desalination of sea water, laying of underground infrastructures, use of solar energy, and creating electricity through gas - which contributes to a considerable reduction in air pollution.

Recently there have been reports of a new enterprise by The Israel Corporation and a group headed by Shai Agassi for the establishment of infrastructure necessary to introduce electrically powered vehicles in Israel. Israeli-Palestinian cooperation in developing and producing vehicles of this type can form a mutual basis for peoples in the seam area between the West Bank and Israel.

In other words, instead of setting up barbed-wire fences in the Palestinian territories, it is possible to set up green factories that will create workplaces and reduce the desire on the part of the Palestinians to engage in terror activities. Understanding green issues and placing them at the top of the agenda of both Israel and the PA could reshape the Middle East. Speak also about the quality of the environment - and the sooner the better!

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WHAT WE READERS ARE ABOUT?

Please share with us what you are doing relating to nonviolent change. If you send us a short report of your doings, learnings, ideas, concerns, reactions, queries,... we will print them here. Responses can be published in the next issue.

Steve Sachs: I am very happy that a UN NGO Climate Change Caucus has been formed to move to limit global warming and its impact, as a follow up to the UN NGO/DPI Climate Change Conference, in September. I am involved with the Caucus' Tipping Point Task Force, working to broaden consciousness so that people realize that everything is connected and one's interests are long term, and not merely short run personal gain, in general, but especially in relation to the environment. We see the project as both necessary, and practical - because the "global mind change" is already in progress, so that especially with the U.N. connection, we may have some leverage to help accelerate it to the "tipping point," where a major shift in consciousness occurs. This would help develop peace, and improve human relations as well as moderating

is the process of self-transformation from violent consciousness to Peace consciousness. Peace & Value education is in need of a new millennium and a new paradigm for building peace and harmony.

'ASHANTI - CULTURE OF VIOLENCE

What is 'Ashanti?

Ashanti is violence, and violence is darkness. *Ashanti* is disturbance, agitation or imbalance in the mind due to ignorance. " **Violence resides in the minds of humans; while socially it is organized through so many structures of violence** " - said " Maitreya - M.L.Honda "

The root meaning of violence comes from the Latin "*Violentia*", meaning vehemence, a passionate and uncontrolled force, the opposite of calculated exercise of power. Violence is so much a part of the modern society that one is easily to lead to think of it as the dominant characteristics of the Twentieth Century.

Violent Consciousness

Religious & Cultural divisions are the main basis of violent consciousness in our society. In modern times, nationalism & racism also contributing factors of violent consciousness. We can divide violence in following main categories:

- **Individual Violence** - There is '**Individual Violence**' in everyday in modern society - such as rape, murder, bodily mutilation etc.
- **Class Violence**- There is '**Class Violence**' due to class supremacy, Racism, sexism, Communalism is very common in modern times particularly in developing countries.
- **State Violence** - There is suppression of human rights & large-scale tortures, imprisonment etc that is violence by the state on its civilians.

Political Violence: We are living in violent social order - which prevails the social tension, conflicts, wars & division of humanity due to the racism, fundamentalism, castism, sexism religion & ethnic challenges. The primary of ethnic challenges to the state, & the difficulties of politically uniting divergent ethnic, go to make the states of the South Asia amongst the most violent in the world.

'SHANTI (PEACE)- Culture of peace

What is Peace? 'Peace is energy of joy & happiness in a balanced condition, which provides harmony between People, Environment & Universe.'

- **Peace is about people** - how we handle problems and how we get along with others?
- **Peace is about community** -- about working together, encouraging each other, helping each other to live better, more fulfilling lives.
- **Peace is a balance**, a state of mind in which we feel good about ourselves, our lives, our families, our friends, our communities, and our future.
- **Peace is energy**, a qualitative energy, which emanates constantly from the one imperishable source. It is a pure force that penetrates the shell of chaos, and by its very nature automatically puts things and people into balanced order.

What is the Culture of Peace?

"Peace is the not a piece of paper". The promotion of a culture of peace and to teach education and to learn the goals of non-violence requires more than an absence of war. Peace is a process, which takes at least two forms as "negative" peace, the absence of war or as 'positive' peace, the development of culture. It is a dynamic impetus towards a productive common life. The principle of Gandhism and Buddhism are essential elements in the promotion of peace culture. **The principle of non-violence** is the key factor to eliminate the culture of war, violence and terrorism.

"Culture of Peace is a set of values, activities, modes of behavior and ways of life that reject violence and prevents conflicts by taking their root causes to solve problems through dialogue and negotiation among individuals, groups and nations"- UN Culture of peace implies that peace means much more than absence of war.

Basic Eight Keys for the Culture of Peace

The culture of peace is a peace action. Introducing such a culture is a long-term process of requiring both a transformation if institutional practices and individual modes of behavior. Finally, in order to survive and become entrenched in our values, a culture of peace requires non-violence, tolerance and solidarity.

Culture of peace is naturally linked to conflict prevention and resolution. The key-values of this culture are: tolerance, solidarity, sharing and respect of every individual's right –the principle of pluralism that ensures and upholds the freedom of opinion that strives to prevent conflict by tackling it at its source, including new non-military threats to peace and security such as exclusion, extreme poverty and environmental degradation.

Basic Eight Keys for the Culture of Peace

- 1. Respect for Life:** Respecting the rights and dignity of each human being.
- 2. Non-Violence:** Rejection of violence, obtaining justice by convincing and understanding.
- 3. Sharing:** Developing attitudes and skills for living together in harmony, putting an end to exclusion and oppression.
- 4. Listening to Understand:** Giving everyone a chance to learn and share through the free flow of information.
- 5. Preserving the Planet:** Making sure that progress and development are good for everyone and for the environment.
- 6. Tolerance and Solidarity:** Appreciating that people are different and everyone has something to contribute to the community.
- 7. The Equality of women & men:** Ensuring an equal place for men and women in building society.
- 8. Democracy:** Participation by everyone in making decisions

Eight-fold paths of Living Values The eight keys are vital factors for the promotion and protection of the culture of peace in every nation, every society and every individual.

To achieve this goal, the **Eight-fold paths of Living Values** are very useful. To be a good citizen, one should have to understand the art of living. The eight fold paths of Living values are the key factors for the peace culture, which are as follows.

- 1. Living with Simplicity**
- 2. Living with Humanity i.e. living with Compassion & Love**
- 3. Living with Respect**
- 4. Living with Tolerance**
- 5. Living with Forgiveness**
- 6. Living with Truth & Nonviolence**
- 7. Living with Honesty & Trust**
- 8. Living with Unity**

Search for Global Peace:

World peace starts with peace in self, in family, in our society, in our cities and extends beyond all political borders. We must teach our children and ourselves Peace & value education for creating peace in ourselves and in the minds of the children. World peace is possible and a natural part of mankind's evolution and it can be achieved only through Peace values. We enjoy material prosperity, but we are incapable of having a everlasting peace. We have to search global peace through peace consciousness by building common human values – such as Compassion, Love, and Forgiveness & Trust for integration of humanity.

"Peace must begin with each one of us. Through quiet and serious reflection on its meaning, new and creative ways can be found to foster understanding, friendships and co-operation among all peoples." Mr. Javier Perez De Cuellar, Secretary-General of the United Nations, September, 1986

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STORM WARNINGS: TURKEY-IRAQ

Rene Wadlow,* <http://www.solami.com/iraqsplitt.htm#transnational>, Gravières, France, October 2007

The 9 October 2007 statement of the Government of Turkey allowing its troops to cross the Iraqi border to attack separatist Turkish Kurd camps in Iraq may be the start of a dangerous escalation in an already violence-torn area. The situation needs watching closely. Storm warnings are indications of danger. They are not predictions that a storm will break out, but dark clouds and lightning mean that some preventive measures are needed.

The US Government has called for calm, and no doubt European Ministries of Foreign Affairs have dusted off their files on the PKK — the Kurdish Workers' Party. However, it is up to non-governmental organizations to see what avenues of

communication they have to both Kurds and Turks to see what possibilities of negotiation exist so that violence does not increase.

The Government of Turkey is under pressure from the military and part of the population to do something after a land mine exploded on Sunday 7 October some 25 kilometres inside Turkey from the Iraq border in south-eastern Sirnak Province. The mine killed 13 soldiers, and the Army is frustrated by the fact that PKK fighters can carry out attacks on Turkish soil and then cross the frontier into Iraqi Kurdistan. The Turkish Government is under pressure to please the Army after the Army accepted the election of former Foreign Minister Abdullal Gul as President. Some, especially in the military, felt that Gul's Islamic convictions put the secular nature of the Turkish state in danger. There was even talk of a military coup to prevent Gul's election. While these objections to Gul have calmed, the Turkish military can expect some favours in return for their moderation on the political front. Punitive raids into Iraq might be such a favour.

On 15 February 1999, Abdullah Ocalan, the leader of the PKK, was kidnapped on his way from the Greek embassy in Nairobi, Kenya to the airport and flown back to Turkey where he was tried and sentenced to death. The death penalty was commuted into life imprisonment in 2002 following the abolition of the death penalty in Turkey in time of peace. He is kept in solitary confinement on the Turkish prison island of Imrali. During his trial, he called upon the PKK to end armed violence and to take up an organized civil struggle.

Although the PKK was created to bring about equality for Kurds in Turkey, there was always a Pan-Kurd dimension to Ocalan's thinking. As there are Kurds in Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran, there have always been hopes among some Kurds for a united Kurdistan. What to the Kurds is a hope is a fear to the governments of Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran.

Current events need to be seen against the background and history of Kurdish movements in all four countries. Governments have played Kurdish factions one against another. While the Kurdish provinces of Iraq are calmer today than other parts of the country, the tensions among Kurdish groups for power, between Kurds and minorities in the Kurdish areas, and between Iraq Kurdistan's Government and the central Government of Iraq are not far below the surface.

Kurdish nationalism is of relatively recent date. During the Ottoman period, religion was the main factor of identification and division. Kurds and Turks were grouped together in the "house of Islam" while others, Christians and Jews, existed in a largely self-governing millet system. The Kurdish question is an element of the break up of the Ottoman Empire into the states of Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran. As Turkey was the heart of the Empire, the transition and ideological elements were strongest in Turkey where personal identity became a key factor in the transformation of traditional society where identities were religiously determined at the communal level to a modern society where the aim was to define an individual's identity at the State level. At the State level, there are only Turkish citizens or citizens of Turkey. The dilemma is whether all citizens are also ethnic Turks or whether a citizen of Turkey can also have another ethnic identity while still having all the rights of a citizen.

During the first period of the Turkish State (1924 to 1945), everyone(residing within Turkey) was regarded as a Turk even if he himself was not conscious of it. The theory was that as the Turks had come from Central Asia, they had absorbed all prior inhabitants, even those, like the Kurds who lived in isolated mountain areas and spoke a non-Turkic language. The State propaganda through history teaching and linguistic studies was to insist that everyone was a Turk, even those who had forgotten the fact. The Kurds were "mountain Turks."

As it often happens, when history and linguistic identities are used for political ends, counter-history and linguistics come to the fore. Thus the intellectual Kurds started studying their history, and little by little, an intellectual structure of Kurdishness developed, basically after the Second World War. Although most Kurds thought of themselves in narrow tribal/clanic terms, among intellectuals and politically-aware individuals, a Pan-Kurdish identity started to grow and stressed the kinship with the Kurds living in Iraq, Iran and Syria. In the 1920s and 1930s, there had been short-lived but violent Kurdish revolts against the centralizing tendencies of the Turkish government. But these revolts were usually led by tribal chiefs or charismatic religious leaders.

It was not until 1984 that the PKK, made up largely of youth, influenced by Marxism, independent of traditional Kurdish tribal leaders, started a program of violence against the Turkish State and against Kurds who were considered allies of the Turkish government. The PKK was strong in the poor mountainous areas where the State authorities had difficulty to

The Turkish Government's first reaction was to consider this violence as terrorism and to treat it as a military problem to be solved with military means. This is still the attitude of many political figures and most of the military. But after years of violence, with many dead and villages destroyed, the PKK is still there. However, the PKK does not necessarily represent the majority of the Kurdish people.

Within Turkey, there is a need for further democratization and devolution of decision-making powers, and the development of dialogue. Not all officials, political parties, and military officers are willing to accommodate moves toward further democratization and pluralism in Turkish society. At the same time, there is a tendency among many Kurdish radicals to pursue a policy based on what amounts to exclusive ethnic nationalism. There are no easy solutions, and time will not heal by itself. There must be leadership both among Turks and Kurds to break out of the sterility of violence and build a base for a democratic and liberal society. Events in Turkey, Iraq, and Iran will all influence each other. They merit watching closely. The storm warnings remain posted.

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PAKISTAN AT THE TIPPING POINT

Muqtedar Khan*

Source: Common Ground News Service (<http://www.commongroundnews.org>), November 6, 2007, who distributed this article with permission to publish.

On 3 November, President-General Musharraf declared a state of emergency in Pakistan, suspended the interim constitution and essentially placed the Supreme Court of Pakistan under military arrest. His move has generated a crisis in the region with serious global implications.

Pakistan to this day remains one of the few Muslim states where democratic processes have taken root over the years. Even during those periods when Pakistan is governed by military dictators, as it is frequently (1958-70, 1978-88, 1999-present), it has always sustained a free press, free speech, active political parties and an independent judiciary. In a way, Pakistan is the opposite of an illiberal democracy ^ it is a liberal dictatorship. This ability to retain liberal political institutions even under military rule is an important characteristic to keep in mind as we watch the current sequence of political events in Pakistan.

General-President Musharraf's declaration of emergency is essentially an attempt to pull a coup against an important liberal dimension of Pakistan ^ the independent judiciary. In October, Musharraf won the presidential elections while still Chief of the Pakistani military. According to Pakistan's constitution, however, government employees cannot run for elections. Therefore, Musharraf cannot be the head of the military and still run for political office.

Before the Supreme Court was to give its decision on the constitutionality of Musharraf's election as President, he declared emergency rule. He also laid siege to the Supreme Court, blacked out independent news media and detained those who had moved the Supreme Court to test his eligibility and the legality of his election.

In the last year, Musharraf's popularity has diminished both in Washington and Pakistan, as he has become less and less useful both at home and abroad. He has failed to curb the extremist violence that has claimed over 450 lives. Military campaigns in the tribal areas against Taliban supporters and at the Red Mosque have generated unprecedented amounts of resentment and anger against Musharraf. His critics see him now primarily as a Washington tool who does nothing but fight America's War on Terror, viewed in Pakistan largely as a war against Islam.

Musharraf brought a degree of stability to society and gave impetus to its declining economy after the 1999 coup. His alliance with the Bush administration after 9/11 brought billions of dollars' worth of military and economic aid to Pakistan. He also provided efficient and corruption-free governance thanks to the professionalism of the military. The Pakistani population, however, has become used to the positive changes, forgotten the corruption and chaos under the previous democratic governments from 1988-1998, and are now dissatisfied with the turmoil resulting from Musharraf's desperate efforts to retain power.

Even some of the secular elite who supported Musharraf's undemocratic ways are becoming wary of his high-handedness. They appreciated his enlightened approach to Islam. They saw him as a force that while subverting democracy as it pertained to the presidency, nurtured a degree of secularism and religious freedom. But what they ultimately witnessed is more Islamic extremism.

To the outside world, Pakistan has become the frontline state against Al Qaeda and the Taliban, and a major ally of America. The 1999 coup was described by many analysts as a coup against Washington since then Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was seen as being too close to Washington and President Clinton. Until 2001, Musharraf was *persona non grata* in the West, but has since become the face of enlightened Islam and Muslim cooperation in America's war against Islamic extremism.

In return, the United States provided military and economic aid and did not pressure him to restore democracy to Pakistan. But when two of the four provinces in Pakistan fell to parties promoting extreme versions of political Islam in state assembly elections, the dangers of instant democracy became apparent to Washington.

General Musharraf has not fully succeeded in suppressing Islamic militancy; Al Qaeda (according to the National Intelligence Council) has reconstituted itself to pre-11 September strength and the Taliban continue to wage their war against Western forces in Afghanistan from bases in Pakistan. Pakistan has steadily become the most critical state for American and Western security. Given the fact that it is a nuclear-armed state, the strategic significance of state failure or collapse in Pakistan is high.

In recent weeks, Washington has been facilitating a rapprochement with Benazir Bhutto that could enable Musharraf to make a transition to democracy and remain President with Bhutto as Prime Minister, sustaining a secular power alliance in Islamabad. The declaration of emergency by Musharraf is his second coup, this one against Washington. It not only derails the latest effort to usher in democracy but also emboldens the new Taliban-style political opposition who recognise that by taking this aggressive step, the General himself has brought Pakistan to the tipping point. It remains to be seen if they can muster the capacity to go the distance.

Washington cannot - and will not - abandon Musharraf. Indeed his move, which brings Pakistan closer to collapse, forces Washington to stand behind him more firmly, albeit unhappily. In the end, the current crisis can be diffused, if an early rapprochement between Musharraf and the Pakistani Supreme Court can be arranged. It is here that Benazir Bhutto can play a role and re-establish herself as a major player both at home and in the eyes of Washington.

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WHAT TODAY'S ISLAMISTS WANT

Ibrahim El Houdaiby*

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What exactly do Western governments and policymakers want from Islamists, i.e. individuals and groups who believe that their system of government should be based on Islamic principles? As a moderate Islamist keen to build bridges of understanding and communication with different people in the West and elsewhere, I find it difficult to answer this question.

Over the past couple of decades, a moderate discourse has developed within political Islam, reconciling Islamic teachings with modern life after decades of stagnation and resulting in Islamically-acceptable solutions for several contentious issues. Today's moderate Islamists fully endorse democracy, and their discourse illustrates a clear respect of civil liberties and human rights.

This contemporary discourse is not inherently anti-Western. True, it does take different stances on some issues, but it is a balanced discourse that makes clear distinctions between governments and civil society organisations. It is a discourse that realises that the West is not a homogeneous bloc and that a number of significant differences exist therein. Nonetheless, most ^ if not all ^ Western official circles have been very hesitant in their response to this development in political Islam.

Whereas intellectuals and think-tanks have been keen to pursue opportunities for dialogue with moderate Islamists, very few state officials have shown interest in joining such discussions despite having participated in many lectures and talks about them.

I understand that Western policymakers have security concerns in mind when dealing with Islamists. But I think it is legitimate to assume that these policy-makers are intelligent, knowledgeable and mature enough to realise that not all Islamic

activists are terrorists, and that terrorist groups are as critical of peaceful, moderate groups as they are of the West. The Muslim Brotherhood is not al Qaeda, and the political discourses of Khayrat El Shater, the deputy chief of the Muslim Brotherhood, and Ayman Al Zawahry, a leading ideologue of Al Qaeda, have hardly anything in common.

In fact, this diversity within political Islam should encourage Western policymakers to deal with moderate groups, whose empowerment could significantly undermine the radicals' contention that the doors for peaceful reform are closed. They should engage in talks with moderates, and allow their participation as elected representatives in the political systems of their respective countries.

I also understand that some Western democracy activists are sceptical of the Islamic democratic sentiment, and are still afraid of the concept of "one man, one vote, one time", which suggests that if Islamic politicians are democratically elected to government, they will make sure no other party is provided that same opportunity after them. Nonetheless, empirical evidence proves the exact opposite. Professional syndicate elections in Egypt and parliamentary elections in Turkey and Morocco, for example, clearly show that parties rooted in Islamic politics do respect the systems in which they choose to compete. The more integrated Islamists are, the more respectful of the processes of democracy they prove to be.

Some Western policymakers and civil society advocates are also worried about political Islam's attitude towards human rights and civil liberties. Again, this is a misconception caused by lumping all Islamic political activists together and failing to see the differences between them. In fact, some moderate groups are more capable of protecting and promoting human rights in the Muslim world than the contemporary regimes. Most contemporary regimes face eroding popularity, and compensate by using extralegal measures and violating human rights to silence their opposition.

Of course, Western and Muslim states will not agree on every issue. Even Western politicians disagree about how specific human rights issues, such as the right to life when it comes to capital punishment and abortion, should be translated into law. Many such decisions are made based on the values of the majority in particular societies. What matters is that the basic human rights put forward by international covenants are respected and endorsed. The real concerns for human rights activists in the region today should be the mounting statistics about torture, crackdowns on newspaper editors and media outlets, military tribunals for civilians, illegal detentions, violence against women, poverty, and lack of democracy.

Contemporary moderate Islamic politicians fully endorse democracy, support freedom of the press, and believe in equality as the basis of citizenship. That alone should resolve most human rights issues in the Middle East.

One should not judge the Islamists' stance on human rights by assessing the attitudes of some right-wing Islamic groups. The writings of Islamic scholars like Youssef Al Qaradawi, Tariq El Bishry, Selim El Awwa and others have shown a high level of respect for human rights and civil liberties.

I find it very difficult to understand what makes Western governments, unlike civil society organisations, sceptical about engaging in healthy dialogue with moderate Islamists. I find it very difficult to understand their awkward silence in the face of ongoing violations of such activists' human rights by their authoritarian regimes ^ banning them from political participation, and sending them to prisons by the hundreds. I find it even more difficult to comprehend the clear bias and lack of even-handedness illustrated by the Western silence regarding the ongoing military tribunals for moderate Islamists acquitted by civilian courts in Egypt.

Western government officials should respond positively to the positive steps taken by moderate Islamists. By shunning dialogue with the moderate voices of political Islam, Western governments are gradually handing victory to the radicals both they and moderate Islamic politicians are keen to undermine.

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THE DILEMMA OF DEMOCRACY IN LEBANAON

Bilal Y. Saab and Elie D. Al-Chaer*

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In the history of US-Lebanese relations, no American president has pledged to support Lebanese democracy more than G.W. Bush. No American president has invited Lebanese officials to the White House more than G.W. Bush. Why? Because there is no question in President Bush's mind that Lebanon can serve as a great example of what is possible in the broader Middle East. Lebanon, as President Bush has repeatedly said, is at the heart of his administration's Mideast democracy-promotion strategy.

Yet despite all this US attention and care for Lebanon, the biggest political coalition in that country ^ which has a majority in both the legislative and executive branches of government ^ has been powerless in passing laws and naming a president. Indeed, why has the pro-US coalition of parliamentary majority leader Saad Hariri failed to rule like any other majority operating in a democratic setting would?

For many, the answer seems fairly simple and obvious: the pro-Syrian/Iranian opposition, spearheaded by Hizbollah (the US-labelled terrorist group), is preventing the pro-American coalition from ruling through a variety of pressure tactics. For example, how can the majority pass a bill when the pro-opposition Speaker of Parliament Nabih Berri has shut Parliament's doors? How can they elect a president when Berri refuses to convene a session in Parliament? How can the cabinet implement much needed economic reforms when six opposition ministers are boycotting its sessions? How can government generally function when the other side deems it unconstitutional?

But the situation is more complicated than that. The political objectives of Hariri's anti-Syrian coalition, while perfectly genuine and noble, have failed to materialise largely because of the very nature of the Lebanese political system. Political sectarianism (which means that senior positions in the Lebanese government, Parliament and the administration are allocated on the basis of sectarian identity), not necessarily the opposition's agenda, has let down the aspirations of all Lebanese who are calling for a free, democratic, and sovereign Lebanon. How so?

The Lebanese system sadly resembles that of world politics: it is essentially anarchic. In Lebanon, a delicate balance of power between different religious communities assures public security and political stability. While appealing on the surface, this system has its costs. Any alteration in that balance of power, whether caused by internal dissatisfaction or external intervention, can cause the government to disintegrate.

Since its independence from French mandate in 1943, government in Lebanon has been consultative. The founders of the Republic realized early on that the consultative system was best suited to lead to cooperative and stable life. The events of March 14, 2005 notwithstanding (when more than one million Lebanese demonstrated in unity against Syrian presence and control), attempts to arouse a truly national consciousness have so far failed to overcome particularistic suspicions.

Does this mean that Lebanon should return to, and settle for, consensus politics and abandon its liberal democratic aspirations? The answer is no. Lebanon is not destined to balance political stability with full-fledged democracy. No complex modern society can live and grow solely on consensus; it needs governmental institutions capable of making decisions which consensus alone cannot make.

But if we believe that anarchy is what states make of it, then we should have confidence in the Lebanese people's ability to escape from this condition of non-statehood and peacefully transition from a limited democracy to a developed one.

The governing coalition in Lebanon should not be faulted for its aspirations, but for how it came about and tried to pursue them. By now its leaders should have learned the lessons of the past and appreciated the traps of the system. Simply put, Hariri's coalition cannot rule without negotiating with the other and cannot impose its will or ideas on the opposition. This obviously goes for the opposition too. Hence the critical need to come out of this current mess by electing a neutral president who can oversee the transition from a system of particularistic politics (the current one) to majoritarian politics (the one aspired for). The United States can help Lebanon fulfil that project by respecting the balance of power between its religious communities and continuing to protect it from undue Syrian intervention.

Ambitious and wholesale changes of the Lebanese political system as proposed (whether consciously or unconsciously) by Hariri's coalition cannot take place overnight or without elite consensus, since elites are the agents of change in Lebanon. Gradualism is the only steady and desirable path for Lebanon toward full-fledged democracy.

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ISLAM, INIMICAL TO INNOVATION?

James Wilsdon*

Source: *Financial Times* (<http://www.ft.com>), October 19, 2007. Distributed by Common Ground News Service with permission for republication.□

The names of Nasir al-Din al-Tusi and Ibn al-Nafis may be less familiar to many people than those of Isaac Newton or Albert Einstein. But these and other Islamic scholars of the 12th and 13th centuries belong in the pantheon of thinkers whose work has shaped the direction of modern science.

Like that of China, the history of Islamic science and innovation is one of a period of great flourishing followed by a steep and protracted decline. Today, research and development spending across the 57 member states of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) averages just 0.38 per cent of gross domestic product, compared with a global average of 2.36 per cent.

This is not simply a sign of relative poverty: oil-producing states such as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait are among the lowest investors in research as a percentage of GDP. In 2005, the 17 countries of the Arab world together produced 13,444 scientific publications, fewer than the 15,455 achieved by Harvard University alone. A 2002 survey of science in the region could identify only three subjects in which it excelled: desalination technologies, camel reproduction and falconry research. This has led some commentators to suggest that there is something about Islam that is inimical to innovation. However, the picture is starting to change.

Across the Islamic world, the past 12 months have been punctuated by eye-catching announcements. In May 2007, the United Arab Emirates launched a \$10 billion foundation to create research centres in Arab universities. In Nigeria, the government has poured \$5 billion into a petroleum technology development fund to support research and education. In Qatar, a 2,500-acre education city has been constructed outside Doha and is home to international campuses of five of the world's top universities. Earlier, in August 2006, King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia laid the foundation stone for a \$2.6 billion university devoted to science and technology in Taif. In December last year, Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak launched a "decade of science and technology".

At a multilateral level, there is also a focus on science and innovation. In 2005, the OIC announced a 10-year action programme, which identifies targets for educational reform and proposes that by 2015, member states should aim to spend 1.2 per cent of GDP on research and development. Particular impetus is coming from oil-rich nations, which see innovation as the key to their long-term prosperity.

How far and fast individual countries move up the innovation league tables remains to be seen. Few are likely to compete with Europe, Japan or the US in the foreseeable future, nor with the emerging science powers of China and India. But just as small nations such as Finland, Ireland and Singapore have proved some of the success stories of global innovation in the past decade, so the Islamic world may yet surprise us.

In the West, thanks to the best efforts of Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens and others, there is a renewed tendency to see science and religion as polar opposites. Elsewhere, there is often a greater acceptance that faith has its place alongside evidence and reason. More religious Islamic governments are proving some of the most supportive of scientific research. Iran, to give one example, was the first Middle East country to develop a human embryonic stem cell line.

The path to a more innovative Islamic world is not without obstacles. Some daunting challenges remain. An unusually large share of the increased funding for research is being directed towards military technology - driven more by geopolitics than the pursuit of new knowledge. Advances in Iranian nuclear technology are unlikely to be viewed elsewhere with the same equanimity as developments in Malaysia's software industry.

There is still a substantial brain drain out of the Islamic world, with many talented scientists and engineers opting to pursue their careers in the United States and Europe, and little sign of the flows of returnees that have had such a positive impact in China and India. A final and more fundamental question is whether societies that are often still resistant to democracy and open debate can genuinely become hotbeds of creativity and invention. As Pervez Hoodbhoy, a leading Pakistani scientist, concludes in a recent article in *Physics Today*: "The struggle to usher in science will have to go side by side with a much wider campaign to elbow out rigid orthodoxy and bring in modern thought, arts, philosophy, democracy and pluralism."

*The writer is director of the Atlas of Ideas project at the think-tank Demos.

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THE RIGHT OF THE BOND

Eliezer Yaari*

Source: *Ha'aretz* (<http://www.haaretz.com>), October 4 2007. This article is distributed by the Common Ground News Service with permission to republish. □

In her article "The right and the return" (*Ha'aretz*, October 3), Ruth Gavison discusses what is again becoming the watershed in the interrupted dialogue between the Palestinians and Israel. At issue are historical rights, and in this case Israel's unwillingness to recognise the Palestinians' right of return. As in all the previous rounds, this watershed will end the diplomatic discussions aimed at an agreement. Gavison proposes an alternative definition for "the right of return": "the desire to return," which she says Israel would recognise. On the other hand, she says that remaining in the framework of the "right of return" is a recipe for disaster.

Missing in Gavison's approach is an overall concept recognising that both sides in the conflict are in a crisis of self-definition stemming from their inability to realise that there is no direct connection between a cultural, historical and practical attachment and a political right.

Not only the Palestinians suffer from a difficulty in bridging the gap between the attachment and the right. The motivating force of practical Zionism since 1967 has been the attempt to turn the historical attachment to all parts of the Land of Israel, which nobody disputes, into a political right. To translate the desire to return to Shiloh, Beit El, Anatot and Hebron - the cradle of the nation - into a diplomatic right over which there can be no compromise because it is impossible to compromise on a right granted thousands of years ago. By means of that same right, claim those who hold it sacred, the Zionists came to the Jezreel Valley and Jerusalem, and afterward to Shiloh and Hebron.

It should be recalled that from the outset Zionism conceded the political right to all parts of the Land of Israel, and tried to achieve international political recognition of the Jewish homeland in the Land of Israel, within any possible physical border. At the same time, the national institutions of the Jewish people never conceded their attachment to parts of the Land of Israel that did not receive political recognition. This view - a bond that does not translate into a full right to the territory - was shared by national-religious Zionism, as opposed to the secular Revisionist camp, which did not give up the distinction between an attachment and a right.

Recognition of the fact that Israel would not be able to continue to define itself as a democratic nation state without a strong national majority prevented the annexation of the territories occupied in the Six-Day War. Although there are people who propose achieving this majority through ethnic cleansing, the Israelis and their various governments have rejected these ideas and still do.

In the talks between former prime minister Ehud Barak and Yasser Arafat, too, Israel demanded that the Palestinians concede the right of return, without distinguishing between the political right and what was understood as a demand to give up the bond, the desire to return (according to Gavison's definition). Justice will be achieved when both sides undergo this process in which they concede the political right without losing the bond. Israeli society must also learn to be satisfied with the desire to return to parts of the Land of Israel, with the attachment alone, without any intention of turning it into the political right of return.

In that context, we should mention that even those who say we should be satisfied with a bond must have such a bond. The problem with the Israeli center, and mainly with the left, is that they no longer have any major leaders who can confront the camp of believers on this issue. But leaders from the past like David Ben-Gurion and Berl Katznelson did not hesitate to confront religious Zionism's spiritual leaders and present a diplomatic viewpoint that separates the attachment to the land from the political right to it.

One of the reasons why the left and center, which have given up on the attachment to the land (despite hollow declarations about "Jerusalem the city that was reunified") are having difficulty dealing with the Palestinian side is due to this absence of a bond. For this purpose there is no difference between Ehud Olmert, Ehud Barak, Yossi Beilin, Avigdor Lieberman or Zehava Gal-On.

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A GAZA DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Rene Wadlow, "A Gaza Development Corporation" December 19, 2007

On 17 December 2007, eighty-seven states, the United Nations Secretariat, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund met in Paris for a one-day international funding conference for the Palestinian Authority. \$7.4 billion was pledged over a three-year period - \$3.44 billion for 2008. The conference, planned well in advance, comes shortly after the Annapolis meeting whose aim was to restart serious Israeli-Palestinian negotiations that would lead to the creation of a sustainable Palestinian state by the end of President Bush's term in 2008. Financing an economic recovery and development program for Palestine is an obvious need for the creation of a state.

However, it is often easier to raise funds than to spend them in ways that promote the desired ends. The World Bank stated the obvious but which no one else did as clearly: the Palestinian economy will continue to contract unless Israel eases its blockage of the Gaza strip and removes the multiple internal check points to allow Palestinians to move freely in the West Bank. The World Bank also stressed the need to integrate an economically-vigorous Palestine into the wider geographic context. Such a wider economic zone would include Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan. Prosperity depends on liberating the economic potential of the Palestinian refugees and especially their descendants.

The return of a large number of the Palestinian refugees to Israel from Lebanon, Syria and Jordan is impossible for political reasons, and the return or settlement in Gaza is impractical for ecological reasons, population density being already very high. Palestinians have been prevented from playing an active and positive political and economic role in Lebanon. Given the fractured nature of Lebanese politics, it is unlikely that Lebanese leadership will help integrate Palestinians into Lebanese society now, if they have not done it during the last 60 years. Thus, it is basically the Palestinians living in Lebanon who are likely to integrate the West Bank. Palestinians living in Jordan are likely to continue living there, and Palestine-Jordan economic ties are likely to grow.

The current plan of the Palestinian Authority is to use 70% of the new revenue for budget support and debt repayment and 30% on development. One can question this ratio in principle, but we do not have unpaid Palestinian civil servants knocking at the door. 30% of new funds for expansion and creation of new industries seems low to spark continuing economic growth.

There are two political issues that take the creation of an economically-strong Palestinian state out of the framework of economic planning and require social and peacebuilding measures. The first is the continuing poor relations between Palestinians and Israelis (at least with the majority Jewish segment of the Israeli population) and the second is the separation between Gaza and the West Bank — a political, economic as well as a physical separation.

Thus, there is a need to earmark funding for Palestinian-Israeli peacebuilding activities. Economic support for peacebuilding activities, especially those carried out by non-governmental organizations played an important role in the Northern Ireland peace process. The European Union created a Peace and Reconciliation Fund followed by the International Fund for Ireland which emphasized the linkages between economic aid, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding. Some \$393 million were spent for the period 1995-1998 and this was increased in the year 2000. Much of the money was administered by non-governmental organizations and local authorities in some 5000 projects. The peacebuilding efforts in Northern Ireland were coordinated with efforts in the Republic of Ireland whose economic growth was also helped by grants from the European Union.

While no two situations are alike, political violence had broken out in Northern Ireland in 1968 and was based on a long history of Protestant/Catholic tensions. It was largely the humanistic vision of Jacques Delors, then President of the European Commission, who saw the need for such peacebuilding financing. We have to hope that the follow up to the Paris Conference will find its Delors. The European Union is the largest aid donor to the Palestinians and pledged \$650 million for 2008. In addition, individual European states pledged funds, in particular France, Germany and the UK. The European Union has a good record of working with non-governmental organizations, but procedures can be slow. NGOs will have to make peacebuilding proposals soon if one is to build on the momentum.

The divisions between Gaza and the West Bank are real and need to be overcome. Hamas, in control of the Gaza strip, was not part of the Palestinian delegation to Annapolis nor among the Palestinian negotiators in Paris. The recreation of a Palestinian unity government, while necessary, is not likely in the short run. However, a rise in the welfare of the population in

Gaza is necessary immediately. Economic hardship and massive unemployment are unlikely to lead to more liberal attitudes and a will to compromise.

As a unity Palestinian Authority is not possible for the moment, alternative structures based on continued Hamas control of Gaza need to be put into place. One possibility would be a Gaza Development Corporation, an independent socio-economic body devoted to planning and administration and funded by part of the new revenue arising from the Paris conference. Such a Gaza Development Corporation would obviously have Hamas members, but also persons chosen for their expertise as well as persons from community organizations. Such a mixed body would be an innovative structure and could be in a cooperative but independent relation with the Palestinian Authority.

On the eve of the Paris conference, Hamas celebrated its 20th anniversary with a massive outpouring of people in Gaza. The speakers attacked the Palestinian Authority and were skeptical of the value of the Paris funding conference fearing that little of the money would find its way to Gaza. Creating a framework and institutions to help the people of Gaza will not be easy. Difficult times call for political creativity.

Rene Wadlow is the Representative to the United Nations, Geneva of the Association of World Citizens and the editor of the journal of world politics www.transnational-perspectives.org.

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THE ROLE OF PUBLIC OPINION IN THE PALESTINIAN-ISRAELI CONFLICT

Ziad Abu Zayyad*

Source: Common Ground News Service (<http://www.commongroundnews.org>), October 11, 2007, who distributed this article with permission to publish.□

The importance of public opinion stems from the fact that in democratic regimes it can play a determining role in the shift of power between the different political forces. Political leaders and parties must always bear in mind that, come election day, it is the voters who will be judging their performance and deciding whether they deserve to be reelected, or whether they should be voted out for having disappointed their electorate. Thus the agenda of political parties must always take into account the wider public agenda and concerns. This principle does not apply in the context of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

On the Palestinian side, this process has been hampered from the outset and, eventually, blocked. For the first time, Palestinian public opinion was instrumental in replacing the Fatah regime with the new Hamas regime that promised transparency, good governance, and the eradication of corruption. The result was political and economic disaster~as a consequence of the boycott of the elected Hamas government by the international community and the embargo it imposed on the occupied territories.

Furthermore, Palestinian public opinion has been fed with illusions throughout the many years of the Palestinian national struggle for liberation and independence. At the same time, it is influenced by the daily atrocities committed by the Israeli army and the Jewish settlers against the Palestinian people. These practices by the occupation are intensifying hatred and distrust among the Palestinians on the one hand, and ratcheting up the rhetoric and causing knee-jerk reactions and extremism on the other. The Palestinians are so blinded by frustration and despair that they cannot contemplate the possibility of any positive development within Israeli society or public opinion.

Another example is the issue of the right of the Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and lands inside Israel. Palestinian organisations have persistently maintained that there would be no compromise or solution without the achievement and implementation of this right. UN General Assembly Resolution 194 was constantly invoked to stress this right. However, no one has clarified the fact that the resolution was drafted not by the Security Council but by the General Assembly, which lacks the power to enforce its implementation ~ not even if it should revert to the Security Council. The reason is the U.S. position vis-à-vis the conflict and the pressure it places on the member countries not to support the enforcement of Resolution 194, and because Israel will not allow the return of Palestinian refugees, as its main concern is to ensure the Jewish character of the state and to preserve its Jewish majority. As a consequence, although the present Palestinian leadership is ready to reach a compromise on the right of return in exchange for an Israeli withdrawal from East Jerusalem and the West Bank, the Palestinian people have not caught up with the leadership and still believe in the attainability of the right of return. When the time comes ~ if ever ~ Palestinian public opinion will not have sufficiently matured to agree to a compromise, and the leadership will be faced with the task of having to convince its people to acquiesce to such a compromise. It will most certainly prove a difficult task, but not an impossible one.

As for Israel, although it is a democratic country where a change in government occurs periodically, Israeli public opinion is subjected to systematic intimidation by competing ideological parties or rival political leaders, through which they expect to dictate the national agenda and the voters' priorities. Israeli public opinion is constantly fed with disinformation about the real cause of the conflict and the intentions of the Palestinian people, focusing on the Palestinian call for the right of return. Additionally, Palestinian attacks against civilian targets in Israel are generating fear among the Israeli public and fanning hatred and suspicion. Right-wing groups in Israel present the conflict as the product of a historical Islamic hatred against the Jews, arguing that there is no chance for a real compromise with the Palestinian national movement. The fact is that the lack of a political solution to the conflict has strengthened the religious movements on the Palestinian side, giving credence to the argument of the "historical hatred." Moreover, in the wake of the failure of the Camp David II talks in 2000, then-Prime Minister Ehud Barak raised the slogan that there was "no Palestinian partner," and convinced Israeli public opinion that the failure was wholly attributable to the Palestinian attitude or demands. This, of course, was not true because Barak himself contributed considerably to the breakdown of the talks.

Another process is taking place these days. While Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert claims that he is exploring with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas the possibility of resuming political talks to reach a settlement to the conflict, Barak, currently the Israeli defense minister, is warning that the time is not ripe for a political settlement, and is intensifying military operations against the Palestinians to abort any possibility of a political process.

The fact is that Barak is looking ahead to next year's elections in Israel. He is planning to run as the leader of the Labor Party. His advantage is his impressive military background. And to win the elections and become the next prime minister, he must place the issue of security at the top of the Israeli voters' priorities. To do that, he is accelerating the military operations, heightening the tension and, most likely, instigating Palestinian retaliation~this will play into his hands.

To conclude, I believe that both Palestinian and Israeli societies are traumatized societies and are incapable of playing an effective role in changing the attitudes of their respective leadership. Public opinion on both sides is subject to perverse influences and, as such, is unable to contribute positively towards the efforts aimed at ending the conflict. This represents a challenge to peace movements and civil society organisations on both sides to join forces in a search for common ground to promote dialogue, break taboos, and build bridges of confidence and understanding between the two peoples.

*Ziad Abu Zayyad is the co-publisher and editor of the Palestine-Israel Journal, and a former Legislator and Minister in the Palestinian National Authority.

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PEACE IN PALESTINIAN CLASSROOMS

Judith Sudilovsky*

Source: *The Lutheran* (<http://www.thelutheran.org>), October, 2007 Edition. This article is distributed by the Common Ground News Service with permission for republication.

It should take Amal Abed Rabbo, 16, one hour to reach the Lutheran Dar al-Kalima School in Bethlehem from her Jericho home. With Israeli travel restrictions, it takes three hours each way. Instead, she stays with her uncle's family in Bethlehem during the week. But the Roman Catholic 11th-grader doesn't harbor any hatred. "The situation is not good for us, but I don't have hatred against Israel," she said. "I have hope and faith that the situation will one day end and we will have peace."

Students at the four schools run by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land must strive daily to practice Jesus' edict to "love thy neighbor." Each day they face political hardships with the Israeli government and within their society. Charlie Haddad, educational director for the schools, sees helping students come to terms with their reality as a main task, in addition to striving for academic excellence.

"If they start hating, it will never end," he said. "It is the biggest challenge to convince the young people not to feel [hate]. Of course they struggle with it. They see the news, hear their parents and feel the economic hardship. It is very difficult to convince them that it is a government doing that and not to stereotype a whole nation." But Haddad doesn't necessarily want the children to get used to the situation either.

Learning about the other

Before the outbreak of the second Intifada (uprising), Haddad encouraged the schools to meet with Israeli counterparts. The meetings fizzled once the violence began. "Both sides are afraid of the other," he said. "They each know very little about the other."

School administrators and teachers are hesitant to restart dialogue for fear of being seen as traitors because Christians and their institutions are associated with unpopular Western and American regional policies, Haddad said. "A lot of fanaticism was created by the intifada," he said. "Before the intifada there was no Hamas or Islamic jihad. ... Muslims look at us as foreigners now. ... It puts Christians in an awkward situation."

Yet Haddad would like to see programs developed so Israeli and Palestinian students can communicate freely. After the intifada, only the Arab Education Institute's peace education program - aimed at exposing teachers, administrators and students to the religious traditions of the three monotheistic faiths - continued to function, he said. But the joint workshops with Jews, Christians and Muslims are intermittent, partly because of travel restrictions.

Talking openly

It's vital not to sweep problems under the carpet, Haddad said. Many times the morning devotion at the Dar al-Kalima School is dedicated to discussing current events, allowing students to express their fears and concerns. "If you ... suppress things, you allow anger to grow," said Munib Younan, bishop of the Lutheran denomination. "We need to teach toleration and love, [to] not succumb to hatred but instead find a solution. Teaching violence is the tool of incompetence." Younan sees "toleration" as acceptance of diversity and living together in peace, whereas, he said, the word "tolerance," which he dislikes, means something you must accept. Abed Rabbo said students at her school can discuss problematic issues without letting it affect their relationships with each other. "We don't take it personally," she said. "The problems are outside, they are not between us."

Last year, when tempers flared in the Muslim world over Danish cartoons that lampooned the prophet Mohammed, Younan said all teachers at the Lutheran schools were asked to devote classroom time to the topic. "It is allowed to be angry, but as Jesus taught: Be angry but don't sin," he said. "You are allowed to be angry when someone is killed. I would be lying to you if I said I did not become angry when anybody - Christian, Jewish or Muslim - is killed. But this anger should not trespass a line and it should not only remain in anger but find ... solutions."

At the Lutheran schools - as in all Palestinian schools - Christians and Muslims attend separate religion classes. But in Dar al-Kalima the two classes also meet twice a month to learn about the other religion as well as about Judaism and the Old Testament. Tony Nassar, Christianity teacher, said the schools can do more to create understanding between Christians and Muslims than with Jews because both are part of Palestinian society. Nassar teaches the joint lesson with In'am Shaktour, the Islam teacher. "They see Tony and me working together, and they learn from us," Shaktour said. Both try to help students differentiate between Judaism as a religion and Israel as a political entity, she added.

Haddad said he'd like to see the school's program become more structured. He submitted a proposal to the (Lutheran) Church of Norway for funding that would allow more frequent meetings and special trips to holy sites. As inheritors of Martin Luther's Reformation, the Palestinian Lutheran schools hope to be part of the reformation of Palestinian society through formal and informal educational programs. It's something Haddad said he'd like to see.

*Judith Sudilovsky is a freelance journalist, and the Jerusalem correspondent for Catholic News Service.

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PEEK AT THE AGREEMENT

Gershon Baskin*

Source: *Ha'aretz* (www.haaretz.com) December 21, 2007. This article is distributed by the Common Ground News Service with permission for republication.

The American poet and public figure Archibald MacLeish once wrote that "since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed." These words, subsequently incorporated into the preamble of UNESCO's 1945 constitution, remain as relevant today as they were when they were penned during the waning days of World War II.

As Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, and their respective teams begin negotiations toward establishing a Palestinian state and achieving Israeli-Palestinian peace, it is time to think seriously about how to construct "defences of peace" in the minds of Israelis and Palestinians. Tel Aviv University's most recent Peace Index shows that while a majority of Israelis believe that the leaders of Israel and the Palestinian Authority truly want peace, only a minority feel that a peace agreement would be durable. Polls show that Palestinians are equally sceptical. Without support from civil society on both sides, it will be difficult for their leaders to achieve their vision of two states, one Jewish and one Palestinian, living side by side in peace and security.

Even as progress is being made along the political track, it is clear that more needs to be done to expand and strengthen support from civil society for an ultimate resolution of the conflict. I believe that peace education must be a key element of this effort, before, during and even long after an agreement is reached.

Peace education will encompass many activities. At home and in sporting activities it can mean practicing taking turns, sharing and fair play. In the classroom it can mean teaching civics, studying the history and beliefs of other cultures and learning foreign languages. Civic groups and religious leaders can encourage their communities to practice techniques for peaceful conflict resolution, to tolerate other points of view and to value diversity.

The fundamental goal of all such activities should be to teach people, from childhood, how to get along with others in order to overcome the innate fear of those different from themselves. With peace education, it will be harder to demonise and dehumanise groups we don't know and harder for them to do the same to us. With peace education, pessimism about future peace will no longer have the upper hand. Of course, it would be nice if peace education were offered in every educational system in both societies, but I don't think we can afford to wait that long in this conflict. For now, an effort that is mutual and involves both Palestinians and Israelis would be a huge step forward.

Fortunately, there are many elements of Israeli civil society that recognise the importance of peace education, and are working to create the conditions that will make it possible to build a durable peace. Operating in a wide range of fields, they are developing educational curricula and methods for conflict resolution, and are helping to strengthen the principles of democracy in Israel's evolving society. One Israeli organisation is conducting what could best be described as a peace game, in which Arab and Jewish students take part in mock peace negotiations. Other organisations are developing bridges between Israel's Arab and Jewish communities and between Israelis and Palestinians. In other words, many Israelis and Palestinians are already engaged in the hard work of constructing the defences of peace.

For our part, the US Embassy in Israel has been partnering with many Israeli grassroots organisations and schools to conduct peace education programs. We work closely with groups and institutions that teach respect for democratic values and diversity, provide students with solid citizenship skills, tackle conflict resolution, develop language skills, and foster knowledge of and respect for others.

Currently, the US government is working with a well-known US management training company to offer a course in leadership development skills for young professional Israelis and Palestinians. We have also provided support to the Hand-in-Hand Arabic-Hebrew bilingual schools to help open a new school in Be'er Sheva. This comes on top of a previous grant to Hand-in-Hand to prepare a bilingual curriculum for use in their schools and other institutions interested in their model.

These are just a few examples of our long-term commitment to peace education. More people and institutions need to be involved. Such efforts need to reach all levels of Israeli society. The goal is not simply to understand and respect each other, although that would certainly be significant. We must do everything possible to learn and appreciate each other's traditions and history and to integrate this knowledge into our understanding of a shared humanity. Our ultimate goal, of course, is not merely to "construct the defences of peace," but to build a durable peace. However, only by strengthening the perception that peace is, in fact, possible will we succeed. It is time to get started!

*Richard Jones is the U.S. ambassador to Israel.

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RESPONSIBLE INVESTMENT: GATES FOUNDATION AND THE CALIFORNIA MODEL

Paul Rogat Loeb*

Given the magnitude of the global crises we face, we'd hope the key nonprofits trying to address them would use every appropriate tool to maximize their impact. Yet, Seattle's Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, which does much good with its

programs (particularly its global immunization efforts), is missing a significant opportunity by not aligning the foundation's investment commitments with its larger social goals. Its choices offer a lesson for other foundations, for pension funds, college and university endowments, and all other nonprofit institutions that control financial capital. If Fates Foundation wanted to consider a different approach, it might learn from institutions like California's massive CalPERS (California Public Employees' Retirement System) pension fund, which has combined first-rate financial returns with investments that put its dollars in service of socially responsible values.

At present, the Gates Foundation invests solely around trying to maximize returns, arguing that the more it makes, the more worthy projects it can fund. That means it has steered its dollars toward a number of companies that contradict the best of its values. Exxon/Mobil (<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-na-gatesx07jan07,0,6827615.story>), for instance, has been the prime funder of think tanks and individuals denying global warming. The Foundation invested in mortgage companies, like Ameriquest, that have been accused in lawsuits or by government officials of making it easier for thousands of people to lose their homes, even as it also supported nonprofits that helped victims of predatory lending. It put money into Tenet Healthcare, which has paid over \$1.5 billion in settlements for fraud, kickbacks, and patient-care lapses. The only category of corporations the Foundation excluded was tobacco companies, and Gates Foundation CEO Patty Stonesifer defended their approach by saying it would be naïve to suggest that an individual stockholder can stop the human suffering blamed on the practices of companies in which it invests. "Changes in our investment practices would have little or no impact on these issues."

But the current approach is an opportunity lost to make a broader impact with the Foundation's \$66 billion of capital (counting the pledged contributions from Warren Buffett). And the financial returns for trying to do the right thing don't have to be lower. To take the example of the \$248 billion CalPERS fund, it has more than three times the assets of the Gates Foundation, while facing the legal and fiduciary strictures of being a public pension system. Yet, it has managed to shift its investments toward companies that take account of social and environmental impacts for a broader bottom line, while shifting away from those they find problematic. In addition, CalPERS has engaged in proactive shareholder advocacy, using the leverage of its holdings to change corporate policies. It helped win better drug access for AIDS patients in poor countries. It improved working conditions for Asian suppliers to corporations where it's invested. It has publicly joined shareholder campaigns to require that Exxon/Mobil shift major resources toward alternative energy and to force the resignation of the director of Exxon's public-issues committee — "due to the company's inaction on the business risks from climate change."

CalPERS is now investing [close](http://www.treasurer.ca.gov/greenwave/update.pdf) to a billion dollars in renewable technologies and in increasing the energy efficiency of the \$12.2 billion of buildings and houses in its portfolio and that of its sister fund CalSTRS. And its still earned excellent returns consistent with its legal responsibility to the California taxpayers: 12.89% over the past five years for CalPERS ([http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-na-gatesx07jan07,0,6827615\).story](http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-na-gatesx07jan07,0,6827615).story) and 13.1% for CalSTRS. According to studies by the consulting group Wilshire Associates (<http://www.calpers.ca.gov/eip-docs/about/facts/corpgov.pdf>) and by UC Davis Finance Professor Brad Barber, the retirement system's proactive stands on corporate governance have actually added market value to corporations whose policies they successfully worked to shift.

The Gates Foundation would do well to solicit the perspectives of former California state Treasurer Phil Angelides and former Controller Steve Westly, who spearheaded the most far-reaching CalPERS initiatives. It would also do well to talk with leaders of other institutions that have followed similar paths. Of course nothing's guaranteed. Sometimes you do lose money by not investing in tobacco stocks or the equivalent—at least until the lawsuits hit. But there's no shortage of examples to suggest that you can get at least comparable returns by doing right. The [Domini 400 Social Index](http://www.domini.com/), for instance, has outperformed the S&P 500 on an annual risk-adjusted basis since its 1990 inception, 12.10% to 11.45%. Educational Foundation of America has used very aggressive social screens and shareholder activism to secure a 9.88% average return over the past 10 years (<http://www.efaw.org/Responsible%20Investments.htm>), vs. 8.32% for the S&P 500. A United Nations report (http://www.unepfi.org/fileadmin/documents/show_me_the_money.pdf) entitled Show Me the Money: Linking Environmental, Social and Governance Issues to Company Value does an excellent job of exploring the relationship between more ethical business practices and corporate success in a variety of economic sectors. We'll never live in a world where our every choice matches our values, but if the Foundation can shift all or part of their \$66 billion portfolio from companies acting destructively to ones whose actions benefit the communities they affect, or lobby for shifts in corporate priorities in those where they're a stockholder, it can make a major difference.

Imagine, for example, if the Foundation disinvested from Exxon and shifted the money into renewable energy equities, mutual funds or program-related investments, along the lines of the new alternative energy fund that major Silicon Valley venture capital firm Kleiner Perkins created last year (<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/12281625/>). Exxon, as mentioned, has been the prime source of financial support for practically every major denier of global warming worldwide (<http://environment.guardian.co.uk/climatechange/story/0,,1875762,00.html>). Its given massive amounts of money to

Country list and article last updated Sept. 6, 2007; is available, including a printable PDF version, at: http://www.cdi.org/program/document.cfm?DocumentID=4080&from_page=../index.cfm.

The Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD Centre) has published: *A guide to Mediation, enabling peace processes in violent conflicts*, the first guide ever written on armed conflict mediation. Produced in collaboration with the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, it provides practical guidance and support to professionals engaged in mediated peace processes; and Dr Hugo Slim, *Killing Civilians* on how civilians suffer in war, and why people decide that they should. To obtain copies or other information, contact Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, 114 rue de Lausanne, Geneva, Geneva 1202, Switzerland, +41 (0)22 908 11 30, brannon@hdcentre.org, or andya@hdcentre.org, www.hdcentre.org.

David Cortright and George A. Lopez, Eds., foreword by the Hon. Lee H. Hamilton, vice-chair of the 9/11 Commission, *Uniting Against Terror: Cooperative Nonmilitary Responses to the Global Terrorist Threat* is published by The MIT Press: <http://mitpress.mit.edu/catalog/item/default.asp?ttype=2&tid=11367>.

The *CANVAS Core Curriculum* provides information on a broad range of topics relevant to waging nonviolent conflict. The Curriculum consists of three books: *The CANVAS Core Curriculum Students Book* (currently available), *The CANVAS Core Curriculum Teachers Book* (available in early 2008), *The Strategic Estimate Workbook* (available in early 2008). Printed and downloaded copies are available from: <http://www.canvasopedia.org/content/special/core.htm>.

Stanley Foundation publications include: *Papers including: United Nations of the Next Decade 2007: Implementation of the UN Global Counterterrorism Strategy*; and *Beyond Fear: America's Role in an Uncertain World*; Policy Analysis Briefs including: "The Un an Iraq Moving Forward?;" "Overcoming Nuclear Dangers;" and "Supplying Demand or demanding Supply? An Alternative Look at the Forces Driving East Asian Community Building;" and the quarterly *Courier: Provoking Thought and Encouraging Dialogue About the World*, all – often at no charge – from the Stanley Foundation, 209 Iowa Ave., Muscatine, IA 52761 (563)264-1500, info@stanleyfoundation.org, www.stanleyfoundation.org.

The AIC Settler Violence Report, including many incidents of Israeli settler acts harmful to Palestinian, not covered in any mainstream media, is published bimonthly, by Ahmad Jaradat/Federica Battistelli at the Alternative Information Center (AIC) and is available at: <http://www.alternativenews.org/>.

Journal of Globalization for The Common Good, dedicated to global cooperation and dialogue, is published semi-annually at: www.commongoodjournal.com.

The Journal of Religion, Conflict, and Peace began publishing in September at www.religionconflictpeace.org. The online scholarly journal, published by a collaborative of Indiana's three historic peace colleges, is a forum for discussion of the role of religion in both conflict and peacebuilding.

Peace Research: The Canadian Journal of Peace and Conflict Studies, publishing twice yearly, has been in continuous publication since 1969. Peace Research publishes broadly on issues of conflict, violence, poverty, just peace and human well-being. Peace and conflict studies holds peace as a value, and peaceful methods as the most desirable way to resolve conflict. For information go to: <http://www.peaceresearch.ca/index.html>.

Caucasus Context is a comprehensive and multi-disciplinary journal focused on regional integration and cooperation among the three South Caucasus republics: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, that can be accessed at: <http://www.worldsecurityinstitute.org/showarticle.cfm?id=218>.

Nonviolent Social Change: the Bulletin of the Manchester College Peace Studies Institute, published since 1971 as the *Bulletin of the Peace Studies Institute*, was converted to an online format and assumed a focus on nonviolent social change this year. The purpose of *Nonviolent Social Change* is to highlight contemporary or historical instances—particularly those that are relatively unknown—in which social or political change was achieved through nonviolence. If you would like to submit an article of this nature, or if you know of authors who might be interested in doing so, thank you for informing us nonviolentsocialchange@manchester.edu. The journal can be accessed through: http://www.manchester.edu/Academics/departments/Peace_Studies/bulletin/index.ht.

The newly forming *Peace Studies Journal* (with the goal of promoting peace and nonviolence within and outside the academy), housed at the Center for Ethics, Peace, and Social Justice, at SUNY, Cortland, New York invites people to join its staff. The interdisciplinary journal, will focus on the processes of creating peace, with topics such as feminism, disability studies, environmentalism, international affairs, NGOs, global economics, security and terrorism, policing, prison reform, health

care, African-American studies, Native American concerns, art, poetry, media, and conflict studies, that will be addressed. The Center is just beginning, but we have some amazing goals and projects already underway. If you are interested in joining the Editorial Board of the Peace Studies Journal, contact Jill McMichael, Assistant Managing Editor: jillianmcmichael@gmail.com.

Peace Economics, Peace Science and Public Policy (PEPS), published by the Berkeley Electronic Press is at <http://www.bepress.com/peps>.

The Muslim World Journal of Human Rights (MWJHR) is at: <http://www.bepress.com/mwjhr>.

Jewish Peace News (JPN), from Jewish Voice for Peace, offers subscribers to its E-mail list serve a selection of important and timely news clippings and editorial commentary on the Israel / Palestine conflict, and other peace issues, at no cost. For details go to: www.jewishpeacenews.net.

USEFULL WEB SITES

UN NGO Climate Change Caucus, with numerous task forces, is at: <http://climatecaucus.net>.

The center for defense information now carries **regular reports** on **Global Warming & International Security** at: <http://www.cdi.org>.

Global Beat, has been an excellent source of information and further sources for *Nonviolent Change*, at: <http://www.nyu.edu/globalbeat>. Global Beat also has an E-mail list serve.

The **International Crisis Group (ICG)** carries regular reports and sets of recommendations about difficult developing situations around the globe, and has been an extremely helpful source of information and ideas for this journal: <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm>. ICG also has a regular E-mail report circulation service that can be subscribed to on its web site.

The International Relations Center (IRC): <http://www.irc-online.org/>.

Europa World Plus: Europa World/Regional Surveys of the World On Line is at: www.europaworld.com.

The Pulitzer Center, whose mission is to promote in-depth coverage of international affairs, focusing on topics that have been under-reported, mis-reported - or not reported at all: <http://www.pulitzercenter.org/>.

Association for Conflict Resolution (ACR): www.acr.net.

Peace Media publishes a monthly web magazine at: <http://peacejournalism.com/ReadArticle.asp?ArticleID=6086>

The Open society Institute and the Soros Foundation: <http://www.soros.org/>

Conciliation Resources (CR) has re-launched its website <http://www.c-r.org>.

Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue: <http://www.hdcentre.org/>.

International Peace Bureau (IPB): <http://www.ipb.org>

The Institute for Strategic Studies: <http://www.iiss.org/publications/armed-conflict-database/>

World Security Institute and the Center for Defense Information: www.worldsecurityinstitute.org. The World Security Institute (WSI) offers audio podcast programming in its list of interactive communication features at the iTunes Music Store, WSI's podcasts will include audio recordings of press conferences, panel discussions, and interviews with WSI experts hosted by WSI or in collaboration with other media outlets. Download iTunes at www.apple.com/itunes. Find WSI podcasts by searching for "World Security Institute" under the podcast section of the iTunes Music Store, or by clicking this link: <http://phobos.apple.com/WebObjects/MZStore.woa/wa/viewPodcast?id=215717216>, The WSI Brussels Security Blog aims to continue and expand the efforts of the World Security Institute, Brussels, to inform, stimulate, and shape the debate around the security and defense dilemmas facing Europe and the world, with a view to formulating effective and lasting solutions, posting regular commentary related to: Afghanistan, the Balkans, Darfur, ESDP, Iran, Iraq, Missile Defence, NATO, OSCE, Peace Support Operations, and Terrorism, at: <http://wsibrusselsblog.org/>.

The Peace and Justice Studies Association (PJSA): <http://www.peacejusticestudies.org/>.

The International Peace Research Association has a new website, as of November, 2007: <http://www.ipraweb.org>.

The International Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR) Program a American University web site, including bi-monthly newsletters, is at: newsletter at www.aupeace.org.

The Human Rights Campaign (HRC): <http://www.hrc.org/>.

The Stanley Foundation, "brings fresh voices and original ideas to debates on global and regional problems. The foundation seeks a secure peace with freedom and justice, built on world citizenship and effective global governance," is at: www.stanleyfoundation.org.

Grist carries environmental news and commentary: <http://www.grist.org/news/>,

The International Journal of Conflict and Violence focuses on one specific topic in each semi-annual on line issue while also including articles on other, unrelated subjects. In the Fall 2007 issue the focus will be on terrorism. The Journal is at: http://www.ijcv.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=14&Itemid=27.

Culture of Peace Online Journal is at: <http://www.copoj.ca/>.

The Journal of Stellar Peacemaking is at: <http://www.jsp.st>><http://www.jsp.st>.

Peacework Magazine, "Global Thought and Local Action for Nonviolent Social Change" (also in print), published by the American Friends Service Committee - New England, 2161 Mass. Ave., Cambridge, MA 02140 (617)661.6130, pwork@igc.org, is at: www.peaceworkmagazine.org.

Jewish Voice for Peace and *Jewish Peace News*: www.jewishpeacenews.net.

Peace Research: The Canadian Journal of Peace and Conflict Studies is at: <http://www.peaceresearch.ca/index.html>.

The Canadian Journal of Peace and Conflict Studies is at: <http://www.peaceresearch.ca>.

Nonviolent Social Change: the Bulletin of the Manchester College Peace Studies Institute, Nonviolent Social Change: the Bulletin of the Manchester College Peace Studies Institute: http://www.manchester.edu/Academics/departments/Peace_Studies/bulletin/index.ht.

Journal of Globalization for The Common Good, dedicated to global cooperation and dialogue, is at: www.commongoodjournal.com.

Globalisation for the Common Good Initiative (GCGI): www.globalisationforthecommongood.info.
Peace Economics, Peace Science and Public Policy (PEPS), is at <http://www.bepress.com/peps>.

The UN Chronicle: United Nations in a United World is at: www.un.org/chronicle.

The Muslim World Journal of Human Rights (MWJHR) is at: <http://www.bepress.com/mwjhr>.

The Journal of Religion, Conflict, and Peace began publishing in September at www.religionconflictpeace.org.

Caucasus Context is at: <http://www.worldsecurityinstitute.org/showarticle.cfm?id=218>.

The National Conference on Dialogue and Deliberation (NCDD)'s Learning Exchange, as of August 2007 included over 2200 resources, is at: www.thataway.org/exchange/.

The Global Development Briefing, the largest circulation publication designed specifically for international development professionals, is at: www.DevelopmentEx.com.

The Information Age Publishing Group has authorized, Jing Lin, Edward J. Brantmeier, and Ian Harris to be the editors of a Book Series on Peace Education. If you wish to send a proposal, for details on how to make submissions, please contact Ian M. Harris, Emeritus professor, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (414)372-4761, imh@uwm.edu, <http://www.uwm.edu/~imh>.

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