

NONVIOLENT CHANGE

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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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The **60th Annual Conference: New Approaches to Enduring Conflict** is at the National Press Club, 529 14th Street, NW Washington, DC 20045, November 13-14.

Memory, Narrative and Forgiveness: Reflecting on 10 Years of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission conference is at the University of Cape Town, Cape Town, South Africa, November 22-25. For details contact: Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela and Chris van der Merwe, Dept of Humanities, UCT, Coordinator: Deborah McTeer, Conference Management Centre, University of Cape Town, Anzio Road Observatory, 7925 Cape Town, South Africa, deborah@curie.uct.ac.za, Tel +27 21 448 6263, www.uct.ac.za/depts/pgc.

The **Transformations Conference 2006: Culture and Environment in Human Development**, will take place Australian National University, Canberra, November 27-29. "Transformations is a unique national conference series that engages communities, bureaucrats, academics, the media, and human service planners, and spans from the local to national and international levels. It is supported by a number of intergovernmental and international NGOs. Part of the agenda of the convening agencies of Transformations 2006 is to recognize, in a post-industrial globalized world environment, that human development must be understood as a process that occurs both locally, and within a total environment. Planning for development is not just a function of economics, social or political change, health advancement, human and cultural rights, the absence of physical violence, or sustainable physical environments. Rather, it is achieved within, and through, the interplay of all these functions. These processes, inter-related, iterative, and necessarily achieved through collaborative and simultaneous endeavor, have been recognized for many years. They were first comprehensively yet succinctly described in the document that distilled much of the earlier thinking: the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, November 2001 (UDCD). The UDCD argues for a new understanding of the value of human difference. It is designed to protect and enhance the international intellectual, economic, spiritual and moral value of cultural diversity. The Declaration affirms this diversity as the vital resource to protect cultural rights, bio-diversity, individual self-value, social harmony, cross-cultural communication and to humanize globalization." For details, contact Prof. Amar Galla, The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia, Armar.Galla@TransformationsConference.com, <http://www.TransformationsConference.com>.

The **2nd international conference of the Groupe de Recherche Identités et Cultures (GRIC) on Conciliation and Reconciliation** is at Le Havre, France, December 7-9. For information, contact: Michele Goussin, Université du Havre, Faculté des Affaires internationales, GRIC Secrétariat du colloque, Conciliation et Réconciliation, Bureau C, 105, 25, rue Philippe Lebon BP 42076057 Le Havre, Cedex France (michele.goussin@univ-lehavre.fr).

Global Symposium: "Towards a New World Civilization" is December 8-11, in Lucknow India, organized by the World Unity and Peace Education Department of City Montessori School (CMS) at the World Unity Convention Centre in Lucknow city. Proposals for presentation and workshops are currently being accepted. Deadline is September 30. For the registration timeline, and to register go to: <http://www.gpwd.org/register.htm>. For more information on the Global Symposium visit: <http://www.gpwd.org>.

Gendering the Transnational in Conflict, Migration and Post-conflict Reconstruction: From the Middle East to Europe is in Florence, Italy, March 21-25. For details contact: <http://www.iue.it/RSCAS/Research/Mediterranean/mrm2007/Index.shtml#workshops>.

The **6th Annual International Conference on an Interfaith perspective on Globalisation for the Common Good: A Non-violent Path to Conflict Resolution and Peace Making (Building a World that is Just, Free and Prosperous for all)** is in Istanbul, Turkey: The City of Understanding and Reconciliation between East and West **July 5-9, 2007**. With Post-Conference optional visits to: Konya (the resting place of Rumi), July, 9-11 and Smyrna, Aegean District and Bursa (the first Capital of Ottoman State), July 11-14. For information contact the Conveners: Dr. Kamran Mofid, Founder-Convener, Globalisation for the Common Good Initiative, www.commongood.info, Dr. Gokhan Bacik, Department of International Relations, Faith University, Istanbul, <http://www.fatih.edu.tr/indexen.fhtml>. The conference has the support of Cemal Usak, Secretary General, Intercultural Dialogue Platform, Istanbul, <http://www.cul-dialogue.org/?url=/home>. To make a paper proposal, submit a one-page abstract of your paper, which should include a working title, the author's discipline and field, address, institutional affiliation and email address. Please send your abstract by March 15, 2007 to Dr. Kamran Mofid and Dr. Gokhan Bacik: K.mofid@btpopenworld.com and gbacik@fatih.edu.tr.

Rebuilding Sustainable Communities in Iraq: Policies, Programs and Projects is in Boston, Massachusetts, July 23-26. For details contact: Prof. Adenrele Awotona, Dean, College of Public and Community Service, University of Massachusetts, 100 Morrissey Blvd., Boston MA 02125-3393 (fax: (425)984-7100, rsci@cpcs.umb.edu, www.cpcs.umb.edu/rsci/registration.html).

ONGOING ACTIVITIES

Steve Sachs

The activity of the **Save Darfur Coalition** has included the Rally to Stop Genocide in Washington, DC, on April 30, bringing together people from all over the U.S. Information is available at: <http://www.savedarfur.org/rally>. The coalition is also pressuring the United States government to resolve the crisis with the Million Voices for Darfur campaign at: <http://www.savedarfur.org/sojourners>. The **Genocide Intervention Network** has acted to hold Congress people accountable for their records on genocide in Sudan by creating the first-ever scorecard grading Congress on its efforts to end the genocide in Darfur, Sudan. The score card, available at www.DarfurScores.org, shows that a large majority of legislators failed to follow through on a 2004 unanimous congressional resolution that called for an end to the genocide.

Codepink: Women for Peace has remained extremely active, Calling for a ceasefire in Israel and Lebanon, while undertaking a variety of actions aimed at getting the U.S. to remove its troops from Iraq. This included a hunger strike in front of the White House, beginning on

July 4, and an ongoing Voters Pledge not to vote for candidates who support the continuation of U.S. military action in Iraq, to be followed from September 21-28 with a series of nationwide demonstrations focusing on 'a declaration of peace. For information, contact CODEPINK : 2010 Linden Ave : Venice, CA 90291 : (310) 827-4320 codepink@democracyinaction.org, <http://www.codepink4peace.org/>.

Betty Reardon announced on the **Peace and Justice Studies Association (PJSA)** list-serve (to join visit: <http://www.peacejusticestudies.org/>), July 28, "We have exciting news to share with you today! After being rebuffed in our numerous attempts to meet with Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, including setting up "Camp Al-Maliki" across from the Iraqi Embassy and publishing an open letter to him in one of the largest Iraqi newspapers, we received an amazing invitation: Five members of the Iraqi Parliament who are working on a Reconciliation Plan to end the violence in their country contacted us. Moved by the commitment of the long-term fasters and dismayed by their prime minister's refusal to meet with us, these parliamentarians asked us to join them in Amman, Jordan next week to discuss their Reconciliation Plan, on condition that we break our long-term fast with them!"

On the Fifth anniversary of September 11, **Columbia's Center for International Conflict Resolution at the School for International and Public Affairs and the Peace Education Center at Teachers College, in collaboration with September 11th Families for Peaceful Tomorrows**, put on a program, " From Afghanistan to Zimbabwe: Creative Responses to Conflict, focusing on: "How can we challenge the widely held assumption that violence can only be countered with greater violence? What are some of the ways to move from tragedy toward transformation, preventing further occurrences of violence?" For more information go to www.tc.edu/PeaceEd/911.

Psychologists for Social Responsibility (PsySR) published the following resolution, in late July. "Psychologists for Social Responsibility opposes the grievous and unlawful violations of the human rights of children and their families on all sides due to the current violence in Gaza, Israel, and Lebanon. The psychology of war and peace clearly indicates that continued violence in the Middle East is likely to beget new cycles of violence. For these reasons, an immediate ceasefire is a humanitarian necessity. Ceasing the violence now could open new options for all parties to the conflicts to address the underlying problems in more effective, non-violent ways. We urge the US Congress and President Bush to exert every effort in the United Nations and in every other possible public and private forum to help secure an immediate ceasefire on all sides." Similarly, "Voices for Creative Nonviolence calls for an immediate end to all forms of hostilities in Israel, Lebanon, Gaza and the West Bank. Voices calls for the release of Israeli soldiers held by Hezbollah and Hamas and for the release of Palestinians unjustly held in Israel's prisons and detention centers. Voices calls upon the U.S. government, as the key ally of Israel, to act to end Israel's military attack upon Lebanon and Gaza". For more information contact Voices for Creative Nonviolence, 1249 W Argyle Street #2, Chicago, IL 60640, (773) 878-3815, info@vcnv.org, www.vcnv.org. In August, **PsySR urged the American Psychological Association to declare immediately, clearly, and unequivocally that psychologists should not participate at this time in any way in national security or military interrogations.** PsySR stated that multiple, well-documented reports indicate that psychologists have played a crucial role in the development and use of psychologically coercive and psychologically abusive practices against detainees. The allegations pertain to Guantánamo Bay and other U.S. operated detention centers. For more information contact Anne Anderson: (Cell) 202-262-0989.

Peaceful Tomorrows put on a number of events in New York city surrounding the fifth anniversary of 9-11, all of which address their central mission of peaceful solutions and protecting the lives of civilians. They were joined in the September 8-14 activities by members of other groups from around the world of people who have been hurt by violence, and have banded together to put an end to violence. For details call (212)588-0970, www.peacefultomorrow.org.

During the Lebanon war, **The Peace Team** used its web site to build and focus opposition on the U.S, remaining in Iraq and for an immediate ceasefire in Lebanon and Israel, and it continues its anti-Iraq war activity at: <http://www.peaceteam.net/whoarewe.php>.

Israeli peace organizations, including **Gush Shalom** and the **Other Israel**, among others, often along with Palestinian peaceful resistance groups, have remained active in opposing the illegal seizure of Palestinian land, usually for the building of the security fence, the bulldozing of Palestinian houses and related destruction of property and the killing and injuring of innocent Palestinians in indiscriminate attacks, especially in Gaza, which are continuing. For example, the other Israel reported and protested the June 12 killing of 11 Palestinians in Gaza, eight of whom were civilians. During the Lebanon war, members of the peace movement were extremely critical of the wide spread Israeli attacks causing extensive loss of life, huge numbers of refugees and immense destruction of infrastructure, houses and businesses, with numerous people calling for an immediate cease fire. In an ad, announcing a demonstration, published in *Ha'aretz*, July 21, the peace coalition stated, "The policy of brute force a war, backed by the Bush Administration, exacts a heavy price from Israelis, Lebanese and Palestinians. The attempt to create a 'New Regional Order' and the plans to attacks Syria as well are bound to lead to new disasters. This is the time to confront the war crimes and the deliberate targeting of civilians. This is the time to demand: Silence the guns, start talking! There are no military solutions. The bombings do not prevent attacks on the Israeli civilian population, nor will they restore the captive soldiers to their families. We call upon all citizens of Israel &€" men and women, Jews and Arabs, each and every person of conscience to work together for the restoration of sanity, against the illusion of a military dictate. Let us demonstrate for an alternative way, a way of peace and security based upon the withdrawal of the IDF from all Occupied Territories, dismantling of the settlements, a peace agreement between the State of Israel and the State of Palestine, and respect for the sovereignty of all states in the region. In September, in response to Israeli authorities, over the past few months, denying to Palestinian residents who hold foreign passports the right to Enter or re-enter the West Bank, including people who had lived there for decades and who have there their homes, spouses, children and in some cases grandchildren in the West Bank, a campaign was begun against "this blatant injustice." For more information contact Gush Shalom, pob 3322, Tel-Aviv 61033, Israel, info@gush-shalom.org, www.gush-shalom.org, Peace Now (in Hebrew and English): <http://www.peacenow.org.il/site/he/>, Rabbis For Human Rights: info@rhr.israel.net, The Other Israel, pob 2542, Holon 58125, Israel, ph/fx: +972-3-5565804, otherisr@actcom.co.il, http://www.geocities.com/toi_billboard.

Following a Visit to the Gaza Strip, PHR-Israel warns of humanitarian disaster in the Gaza Strip in early September, **Physicians for Human Rights-Israel** reported "The medical staff met patients that do not have treatment in Gaza and are sentenced to a slow death as they cannot go for treatment in Israel or in Egypt." A routine of collective punishment and killing of civilians: There were cases of people

who were not critically injured but who died from loss of blood at the scene of the attack. Moreover, people who tried to help others were harmed themselves during the evacuation process. There is hunger in Gaza- the delegation met with women and children in states of malnutrition. Streets and homes were completely destroyed for no apparent reason. In the hospital morgues the delegation saw charcoaled and shredded bodies." For more, go to: http://www.kibush.co.il/show_file.asp?num=16150.

From Monday to Wednesday, August 28-30, over 50 Arab & Jewish teenagers and adults embarked on a bus journey organized by **On the Way to Sulha' and Jerusalem Peacemakers**, throughout the Galilee, to bring the spirit of Sulha-- reconciliation-- to communities affected by the recent war in Israel and Lebanon. This bus ride was a positive response to the deep rift that has developed between the Arab and Jewish societies within Israel after the war. For information contact Eliyahu McLean, 'On the Way to Sulha', inter-religious advisor, and Director of Jerusalem Peacemakers, eliyahu@actcom.co.il, eliyahu@jerusalempeacemakers.org.

Nonviolent organizing surged in Lebanon as a result of the war. Activist Ramzi Kysia included the following in a late August message received through the Peace and Justice Studies Association (PJSA) list serve. "This wasn't a war against Hezbollah, with some collateral damage on the side. This was a war against the basic structures necessary to sustain civilians in South Lebanon. This was a war against the basic structures of human life. But there are Lebanese who will not let that happen. During the war, a coalition of Lebanese educators, engineers, architects, merchants, health care workers, NGO workers, students, and others, came together under banner of Civil Resistance - the Arabic phrase for non-violent direct action. Our founding statement of purpose began with the words, "We, the people of Lebanon, call upon the local and international community to join a campaign of civil resistance to Israel's war against our country and our people. We declare Lebanon an open country for civil resistance." During the war we organized a fifty-two car convoy to take needed relief supplies from Beirut to the South, disregarding the Israeli ban on traveling in our own country. We were stopped by internal, Lebanese politics - something we are going to make sure does not happen again. Today, Lebanon is united in resistance to war. Today, we are organizing a nation-wide petition demanding that the Lebanese government expel Jeffery Feltman, the U.S. Ambassador to Lebanon, as a threat to peace. Today, we are organizing to provide direct assistance to communities in need throughout South Lebanon. In just the past, few days we've organized solidarity missions to Qantara and Selaa. In Selaa, short hour before the ceasefire took effect, Israel destroyed thirty-five homes, killing at least eight people, and shutting off running water to the entire community. We organized a mission to Selaa, building connections with civic leaders in the village. With donated funds from across Lebanon, we purchased a suction pump and water storage tanks for the villagers. We distributed food, donated clothes, children's toys, and sanitar supplies. We located a doctor willing to come to the village to provide free medical exams, and helped fill needed prescriptions. Since the phone lines are down in the village, we contacted the Lebanese Army on their behalf to request assistance in removing unexploded bombs from the area. As time goes on, we will maintain and deepen our ties to Selaa, Qantara, and other villages we are able to help, shifting from providing direct relief to other work, such as restoring schools and organizing cultural events. We will not give up. We are not alone. Samidoun, another grassroots Lebanese coalition, is assisting three, other villages in South Lebanon. As we do our work in the South, we hear of other such coalitions, other such campaigns. Abid Na'im lost his sixty-five year old father in the bombing of Selaa. There was barely enough left of the remains to bury but, despite his grief, Abid summed up the spirit of Lebanon today when he told us, "It's impossible to beat the people. You can destroy the stones, you can destroy the homes--but you can't destroy the people." Members of **Voices for Creative Nonviolence** have also been reporting on, and providing assistance in, Lebanon. For details go to: <http://vcnv.org/>.

Orthodox Rabbi David Rosen, speaking, in July, at "**Interfaith Relations in the Middle East: Trying to Resolve a Family Crisis,**" put on by the **American Jewish Committee in Pittsburgh and Christian Associates of Southwest Pennsylvania**, and attended by representatives of Islam and the major Christian denominations, first stated the expected, that Jews have a historical and religious claim to the land known as the West Bank and Gaza, but went on to add, just because the Jews have such a claim doesn't mean they have to exercise it.

CUPE Ontario, the province's largest Canadian labor union, in May, decided to "Support the international campaign of boycott, divestment and sanctions until Israel meets its obligation to recognize the Palestinian people's inalienable right to self-determination and fully complies with the precepts of international law, including the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as stipulated in UN resolution 194." CUPE Ontario has been inviting Israeli support for this action, which can aid the union to ward off attacks and encourage the National union to adopt the Ontario policy. A petition expressing this view can be signed by organizations sending an E-mail to dor_naor@netvision.net.il and by Individuals sending their full names and, if desired, titles, to: liveletlive2001@yahoo.com. The petition is available in English: http://www.geocities.com/liveletlive2001/letter_to_CUPE.htm and in Hebrew at: http://www.geocities.com/liveletlive2001/hebrew_translation.htm.

Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP) "uses grassroots organizing, education, advocacy, and media toward the goal of a lasting peace in the Middle East that recognizes the rights of both Israelis and Palestinians for security and self-determination". JVP has some 100 San Francisco Bay Area activist members who attend meetings and develop projects and campaigns, as well as new activist chapters in 5 cities across the U.S., over 1000 paid members and more than 20,000 online action alert participants. For more information contact: jobs@jewishvoiceforpeace.org.

Jim Tree of Hamilton, Montana (jimtree3@yahoo.com). On May 17th Jim began a sacred journey carrying the United Nations Turtle Pipe over to the Middle East with the "**Native American Leaders Alliance**" (<http://www.NALAcircle.org>) to hold a Pipe Ceremony with representatives of both the Palestinian and Israeli governments, in conjunction with the arrival of the Peace Totem Pole that has been traveling across the North American Continent, being blessed by Elders of all Native Nations along the way, with the purpose of bringing peace and healing to that region of the world. This Pipe was created to help bring harmony throughout all the nations of the earth and usher in the prophesized "Age of the Pipe", (Lakota) the age of Inter-dependence and peace.

Global Exchange stated on July 21, "The political and humanitarian crisis in Gaza and Lebanon grows worse every day. The escalating violence has killed hundreds, mostly civilians, and is re-opening the dangerous schisms of the Lebanese civil war. We call on all parties to ensure an immediate ceasefire. Bombing, rocket attacks, ground invasions, kidnappings and all other forms of violence must be

suspended. First and foremost, as a human rights group, we condemn the killing of innocent civilians. The numbers of innocents killed in this conflict are staggering: Eleven children were killed in Southern Lebanon by Israeli air strikes. Since last Wednesday, well over 200 Lebanese have been killed, primarily civilians. A Canadian family of seven, including 4 small children, were killed when their vacation home in Lebanon was bombed. The Gaza death toll has grown to over 85 since the conflict began on the Lebanese border. Israel destroyed the Palestinian Authority Foreign Ministry office in Gaza, killed another 6 Palestinians on Monday and continues their annexation plans within the West Bank. Over two dozen Israelis have been killed, about half of which are civilians. The UN is warning of an impending humanitarian crisis in Gaza. Most Gazans have only a few hours of electricity per day, water is running out, hospitals are running on generators, and all the borders are currently closed, cutting off the access of most Gazans to reliable emergency health care." "The Israeli attacks against civilians in Gaza and Lebanon are not legitimate self-defense. Rather than targeting militants, the Israeli army is specifically bombing bridges, airports, sanitation facilities and power stations, even a milk factory, and has killed hundreds of civilians with no connection to Hezbollah. Retaliatory attacks that harm civilian populations and public infrastructure are forbidden by the Geneva Conventions. Through our experience in the region, - <http://www.globalexchange.org/countries/mideast/> - we have met a people that, on the whole, rejects violence. In fact, more than 50% of the population of Lebanese voters rejected Hezbollah in the last election, and the parliamentary majority is against the group's actions. Cracking down on the civilian population of Beirut is not going to achieve any lasting solution. The U.S. government's response has been to block UN measures for peace. Last Thursday, July 13th, John Bolton, U.S. Ambassador to the UN, vetoed a resolution calling for all sides to exercise restraint. On Sunday, a UN attempt to call for a ceasefire between Israel and Hizbollah was once again blocked by the U.S. This is not just a humanitarian crisis: it is a political crisis. Some have called Hizbollah a "front group" for Iran and Syria, and the Bush administration is tacitly threatening action against these countries. We fear that further polarizing the region will set up the groundwork for another U.S.-led war in the Middle East." For more information contact Global Exchange: action@globalexchange.org, <http://www.globalexchange.org/getInvolved/actnow/index.html>.

Eliyahu McLean reports that he participated in the **World Congress of Imams and Rabbis for Peace**, in Seville, Spain, March 19-22, with over 100 Jewish and Muslim religious leaders (including eight Muslim sheikhs and Imams from the Gaza Strip), and 100 experts in Jewish-Muslim dialogue work, coming together for discussion, prayer, and practical project building. "The mayor of Seville welcomed all of us, recalling that during the Golden Age, Seville was a place where Muslims, Jews, and Christians lived in and peaceful co-existence together. At the plenary the Palestinian Imams from Gaza emphasized the difficulty of everyday life for the citizens of Gaza. There was some tension, as some of the rabbis felt that the discussion had turned from religious to political. One rabbi later said, it's important for us to listen to our brothers from Gaza even if we don't agree with everything. Andre Azoulay, the Jewish advisor to the King of Morocco, asked me to organize an evening of sacred singing with the Muslims present at the Congress. The Imam of the Dome of the Rock, Abdel Karim al-Zorba led the beautiful chanting, reciting Quranic verses and Islamic poetry. The Chief Rabbi of Rishon L'Zion, Yosef Azran, sat next to the Imam and started to sing the most beautiful Piyutim (sacred songs) in Arabic, then in Hebrew. Before we knew it, the Rabbis and Imams were sitting in the circle together chanting sacred songs back and forth in Hebrew and Arabic for 3 hours! Observers commented, "Now THIS is the heart of the Congress!". By the second day, we had broken up into smaller working groups. We helped facilitate a dialogue about the situation in Gaza between one of the Imams from Gaza and Rabbi Zion Cohen, the Chief Rabbi of the Negev Communities who lives in Sderot, a town near Gaza that has been shelled by Qassam rockets. Even though a close family friend of the rabbi was killed in a Qassam rocket attack, he didn't mention it. His first response was: how can I help organize humanitarian support for the Palestinians of Gaza from the Jewish towns around Gaza. By the last day of the Congress, over 20 working groups had been formed, working on issues like racism, Islamophobia and Anti-Semitism, sharing Jerusalem, rereading the holy texts, misconceptions about Islam. Most of us present at the Congress left with a renewed sense of hope that if the most religious of the Jews and Muslims could learn to cooperate, then perhaps we were taking a step closer to achieving the seemingly impossible dream for peace in the Holy Land and the wider world". For more on the conference go to: <http://interfaith.israel.net/imansandrabbisforpeace/>.

McLean also took part in the **Arahamic Reunion**, June 20, in the town of Tel Sheva, in the Negev, in southern Israel and the 'On the Way to Sulha' gathering of grass roots and religious peacemakers, August 22-24, reported at: www.sulha.com. Prior to that, on July 27 the **Sulha Peace Project, Bereaved Families Forum, Middle Way** and others undertook a prayer vigil in a central public space in Jerusalem, inviting Christian, Jewish and Muslim religious leaders and common people to pray together, and to bear witness to the pain of Israelis who have fled the north and read letters from friends in Gaza and Beirut about their situation. McLean reports that "Behind the scenes, Rabbi Menachem Froman has been a bridge for dialogue between Israeli and Palestinian leaders, seeking to bring about a cease-fire based on principles found in Islam and Judaism." For more information go to: <http://www.jerusalempeacemakers.org/eliyahu/donate.html>.

Search for Common Ground (SFCG), SFCG has been running an intergovernmental program called the Middle East Consortium on Infectious Disease Surveillance (MECIDS). It is designed to bring together public health policy makers and academics from Israel, Jordan, the Palestinian Authority and other Middle Eastern countries to prepare and respond to such shared public health threats as avian flu and food borne infectious diseases. MECIDS has helped enhance the laboratory capacity of its members. It has made progress on development of a common action plan for the next avian flu outbreak. And it has built strong working relationships among Jordanians, Palestinians and Israelis in the public health sector, over the past four years building a solid cooperative foundation and it is poised to begin a critical phase of its history as the participating states move to take concrete steps in regional cooperation in combating infectious disease. SFCG's funding comes from the Nuclear Threat Initiative's Global Health and Security. For more information go to: www.mecids.net.

On the inter-professional side, the Peres Center, based in Tel Aviv, Israel, conducts many programs designed to foster cooperation on a wide-range of public health-related issues, such as biomedical technology sharing to joint clinical training programs. The Peres center has plans for a regional cancer center located in the Jordan Gateway Park along the Jordanian-Israeli border, that will "provide a framework and core facility for enhancing cooperation among autonomous cancer institutions in the region supported by centers of excellence in the U.S. and Europe." It also runs a program for clinical regional cooperation in improving training and delivery of health services, including a Middle East ophthalmology network and a joint Palestinian-Israeli vaccination program for residents of East Jerusalem. For more information go to: <http://www.peres-center.org>. SFCG reports that Another NGO that seeks to build bridges among professionals in the region is the Canadian International Scientific Exchange Program (CISEPO). For over ten years, CISEPO has been working quietly with health care professionals - Arab and Israeli - to foster relationships of trust in their mutual desire to address the

pressing public health emergencies and long-term challenges of the region. It has two main projects up and running: 1) the Middle East Association for Managing Hearing Loss (MEHA) for the early detection of hearing loss in Palestinian, Jordanian and Israeli infants; and 2) the Middle East Association for Mother and Child Health (MEMCHA) for the improved delivery of public health care to women and children in the Middle East through cooperation between Israeli, Jordanian and Palestinian professionals, institutes and NGOs. For more information see the CISEPO website: <<http://www.cisepo.ca>><http://www.cisepo.ca>.

SFCG publishes the *Bulletin of Regional Cooperation in the Middle East*. To subscribe to it and the Common Ground News Service, go to: <http://www.sfcg.org/template/lists.cfm?email>.

SFCG's Summer 2006 Report stated that soccer regularly trumps politics. "In the Ivory Coast, where fighting has raged for several years, the strife literally stops whenever the national team plays. For a few short hours, people think of themselves as Ivorians and take pride in their country - transcending tribe and region. We have long known that sport can be a powerful tool for peacemaking. Thus, in 1998, we sponsored *wrestling diplomacy* between the US and Iran. Another tool in our *toolbox* is TV and radio soap opera, which we produce in a dozen countries. In this year of the World Cup, football and soap opera seem like an unbeatable combination. Thus, in Angola, we are now producing a 26-part, radio soap, which premièred in May. It tells the story of Anacleto and Roberto, footballers from very different backgrounds. Anacleto was born in Huambo, a UNITA stronghold during Angola's long civil war. He dreams of overcoming poverty and playing football for his country. Roberto, in contrast, has led a privileged life in Luanda. But he, too, is inspired by football and the World Cup. The series relates how the players meet and learn on the football pitch how to put Angola's divided, war-torn past behind them." Similarly, in the Ivory Coast, SFCG launched a soap that portrays the adventures of two footballers, Zoukou and Konan, from different regions and ethnic groups. In addition, in the Ivory Coast SFCG continues empowering Ivorians to intervene in local conflicts, providing workshops in skills such as mediating, improving listening skills, reframing anger, and differentiating positions and interests. This has led to many positive developments. For example, in Trogui, a work shop participant supported by an SFCG, determined to bring the two divided communities together, helped develop a peace committee - comprised of Yacouba and Burkinabé ethnic group members, women, and youth. The committee took a leading role in mediating and reconciling the two communities and in helping Burkinabés regain looted property. It spearheaded the construction of a "maison de solidarité," jointly built by the two communities as a meeting space and guesthouse for visitors of all ethnicities.

In February, Search for Common Ground opened its 17th office, in Kathmandu, Nepal, offering tools to promote conflict resolution and reconciliation. "Then, as we were starting up our first projects, a radio soap opera series and a community-organizing effort, *the People's Revolution* erupted.... Thankfully, none of our people were hurt, and there was minimal violence. Indeed, things turned out almost as if we had scripted them. Here is Serena's report. 'The extraordinary turn of events has created an opening for Nepal to enter into a negotiation process and bring an end to the conflict that has crippled the country for the past decade. After almost three weeks of a sustained national strike and protests, King Gyanendra announced the reinstatement of parliament. Almost immediately, the crowds, which had been in a confrontational mode, began demanding something else - dialogue. Civil society, the political parties, and even the Maoists have all called for a constituent assembly aimed at bringing together the political stakeholders to revisit the constitution of 1990. There is a level of unity in Nepal that even a year ago would have been unthinkable. Nepal's problems have by no means been solved overnight. However, there is the opportunity to shift from an adversarial and often violent approach to finding common ground. We are working to sustain the momentum for win-win, cooperative solutions. More than ever, there is a huge need in Nepal for the kind of work we do.'"

The Common Ground News Service, which features solution-oriented articles to help resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and to bridge the gap between the West and the Muslim world, in Arabic, Hebrew, English, French, and Bahasa - to leading newspapers, magazines, and websites, along with 17,000 individual subscribers has had more than 2,300 of its articles reprinted, including 132 in *Al Hayat*, arguably the world's leading Arabic-language newspaper; 124 in the *Daily Star* (Beirut); 54 in the *Jordan Times* (Amman); 42 in *Al Quds* (Jerusalem); 28 in *Arab News* (Jeddah); and 25 in *Ha'aretz* (Tel Aviv). Because CGNS is an international news service, it is often able to place articles by Israeli writers in Arabic papers - and *vice versa*. "We recently published a series on *ijtihad*, the ongoing re-interpretation of Islamic law, in accordance with principles of Islamic jurisprudence. This series resulted in 40 reprints in such places as *UPI*, *Al Arab*, *the Washington Times*, and the website of the Muslim Brotherhood. Indeed, the Grand Mufti of Egypt was so taken with the series that he wrote six additional articles, which answered questions put to him by our Washington Editor, Leena El-Ali, and which highlighted a moderate approach. These articles were published in partnership with *Al Ahram*, Egypt's largest newspaper.

SFCG has been engaged in media outreach and training. In partnership with Prince Hassan of Jordan, sponsoring the Partners in Humanity program, which encourages constructive Muslim-Western contacts. The program held training workshops, this spring, in Beirut and Jakarta to aid 40 interfaith and intercultural dialogue practitioners to reach out to local and international media, to utilize the media as a tool for bridge-building and dialogue.

SFCG's Child Soldier Initiative has forged an alliance with General Roméo Dallaire, the retired Canadian general who saved so many lives in Rwanda and who is now a Canadian Senator, to put the issue of child soldiers squarely on the global agenda and to encourage communication and cooperation in dealing with the problem. "We want the international community - military, diplomatic, and non-governmental - to take on child soldiers as a high-priority, shared problem. With our partners, USAID, UNICEF Canada, and the University of Winnipeg, we are developing new tools for reducing the number of child soldiers. With funding from the Canadian government, we are working in three phases: 1) a workshop in Winnipeg in August to encourage cooperation among the players and develop new approaches; 2) a follow-on *war game* and simulation; and 3) actual engagement on the ground, probably in Africa, using policy options and tools developed in the first two phases". For more information contact Search for Common Ground, 1601 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20009 (1202)265-4300, search@scfg.org, www.sfcg.org or Rue Belliard 205 bte 13, B-1040 Brussels, Belgium, Tel.: (32-2) 736-7262, brussels@sfcg.be.

American Friends of Neve Shalom/Wahat-Salam reported at the end of August, "This summer, the conflict in the Middle East reached new levels of violence, and the region remains tense. Many coexistence projects and Jewish-Arab initiatives are facing significant

challenges as recent events have exacerbated societal divisions between the two communities. Even relations between Israelis and Palestinians and Arabs and Jews that have cooperated in the past are strained. Yet, the community of Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam and its Jewish and Arab residents remain committed to demonstrating that Jews and Arabs can live together. They continue to offer dialogue and education programs that impact others in the region. Various activities and programs were held this summer, even during the highest points of violence, and the residents of the "Oasis of Peace" have been able to continue talking, across cultural and national boundaries, even when virtually everyone else stopped". This summer's programs included a week-long camp for 10-12 year-old Palestinian children from refugee camps. "Oasis of Peace" demonstrated the profound impact they can have on the region by touching the lives of Palestinian girls and boys, who just a few years younger than themselves, had never met someone from "the other side." The School for Peace's "Agents of Change" program engaged four sectors in society in conflict management activities: healthcare workers, media professionals, educators and civil society workers, as part of a year-long program including open and meaningful discussions between the Jewish and Arab participants regarding the renewed violence. Participants organized "workplace interventions" in response to the difficult situation, including Arab and Jewish participants co-presenting a lecture in Ramallah on coping with trauma and a group of Jewish and Arab participants helping with transportation and electricity to villages in need during the conflict. The bilingual, binational Primary School at Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam continued its preparations for a new school year, enrolling 180 Jewish and Arab students primarily (90%) students from outside of the "Oasis of Peace," demonstrating the continued desire of Arab and Jewish parents for their children to learn in a cross-cultural, bilingual, binational environment that stresses mutual respect and understanding between the two communities and builds positive relationships and lasting friendships between its Jewish and Arab students. For more information go to: www.oasisofpeace.org or contact: afnswas@oasisofpeace.org.

Tikkun Community and the Network of Spiritual Progressives (NSP): "We are an international community of people of many faiths calling for social justice and political freedom in the context of new structures of work, caring communities, and democratic social and economic arrangements. We seek to influence public discourse in order to inspire compassion, generosity, non-violence and recognition of the spiritual dimensions of life." The organization publishes Tikkun Magazine, A Bimonthly Jewish Critique of Politics, Culture & Society (6 issues - \$29, 12 issues - \$56, 18 issues - \$83.50). For more information contact Tikkun Community and the Network of Spiritual Progressives, 2342 Shattuck Avenue, #1200, Berkeley, CA 94704 (510)644-1200, community@tikkun.org, <http://www.tikkun.org/>.

The **Institute of Interfaith Dialog (IID)** is a non-profit organization whose purpose is to unite the global communities through interfaith dialogue by sharing the differences and similarities in cultures and religions in an effort to achieve world peace in the foreseeable future. The Institute of Interfaith Dialog came into fruition for the purpose of eradicating the roots of chaos, enmity, and intolerance through conversation and dialogue with people of varying faiths. This was not an easy step to take for as Muslims we understood that by going down the path of forming communities, we would encounter individuals who were quite comfortable with and adept at stoking the fires of hatred, insecurity, and animosity. For more information go to <http://www.interfaithdialog.org/>.

The **Coalition for Work with Psychotrauma and Peace (CWWPP)** moved its headquarters to the next street in Vukovar, in June. The new address, with the rest of the contact information, remaining unchanged, is below. The CWWPP is expanding its program for studying in 2007. In addition to the two and a half month Summer Program which lasts from mid-June until the end of August, 2007, there will be an Introductory Course in Post-Conflict Studies to be given twice, first from mid-January to mid-April, 2007 and again from mid-September to mid-December, 2007. There is also the possibility of assistance for Masters and Doctoral students. More information is available on <http://www.cwwpp.org/Study.htm>.

Unfortunately, since the last writing, the psychological, medical and reconciliation situation in the region has not improved. "There are no reliable figures to document the situation. We believe that most official figures contain at least a moderate amount of bias. However, from what we hear from colleagues, what we see with our own eyes and from the figures that are available, we believe that the amount of psychological distress as a result of the war continues to increase. This includes suicides, domestic violence, lack of competent and complete medical care, high unemployment rates, and virtually no efforts aimed at reconciliation. Further, funding for democratization continues to diminish. Thus, virtually nothing is being done to make the region fit for integration into the European Union. Because this lack of action, we and others within the community of non-governmental organizations believe that further violence at some point in the future, be it in five, ten or fifty years is inevitable and can only be prevented by substantial injections of long-term assistance that will address basic problems". "Whether or not with specific intent, Croatian government regulations continue to hinder non-governmental organizations (NGO's). First, when we recently tried to register a newly bought car, we found that we could not, as the central identification number ("maticni broj") had been abolished for foreign NGO's. Further, although we and other foreign organizations have been told that we have the legal right to register cars, no one (and we have called quite a few ministries and governmental offices) COULD tell us how to do it, even after five weeks of intensive inquiry. We finally got it solved through the intervention of the Office for International Relations of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Another Croatian law still seriously hindering the operation of NGO's, both foreign and local, is the lack of a law on volunteering,... This means that foreigners, except those coming as either "missionaries" or as full-time students, cannot stay in the country for more than 90 days. While we have been told that there is a law that has been put forward by Deputy Prime Minister Jadranka Kosor's Ministry of the Family, Defenders and Inter-Generational Solidarity, no one can tell us when the law will actually be put into the Parliament's (Sabor's) schedule.... A third area in which Croatian law hinders NGO's is in regard to taxes. Unlike many other countries, all NGO's in Croatia are required to pay sales tax at a staggering 22%. Further, there is no regulation on tax-deductible contributions to NGO's, thus hindering corporate and private donations to NGO's. Thus, much needs to change if Croatia is truly serious about encouraging the civil sector..."

In June, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) came out with its semi-annual report on the progress of Croatia during 2005 (available on the OSCE website at: <http://www.osce.org/croatia/> or on the CWWPP website at: <http://www.cwwpp.org/Documents.htm#Other%20Orgs>). "While there has been a great deal of ballyhoo about the large amount of progress that the report supposedly documents, in reality what is said in the report gives rise to only a small degree of optimism. As noted above, Croatia still has a long way to go on many fronts, not the least of them civil society, human rights, reconciliation, discrimination and

economic development. Amnesty International has also come out with its report on Croatia for 2005 (available at: <http://www.amnestyusa.org/countries/croatia/document.do?id=ar&yr=2006>. Unfortunately, this report is also not terribly encouraging".

The CWWPP is involved in the organizing of Interchange, arising out of a conference in June, 2005, organized by a number of people at the University of Toronto entitled Grassroots Peacebuilding in Action and Dialogue bringing together people working in the field in various countries were invited. During the past year, participants developed into the organization known as InterChange, which is registering as an NGO in Canada, with associated with centers in other countries. It will include joint action, research and education projects for professionals and non-professionals. At present, InterChange will have three centers, in Toronto, Vukovar (to be coordinated by the CWWPP initially) and Nairobi, with plans for developing additional centers. A first newsletter from InterChange will be produced later this year.

The Dutch Embassy of Zagreb has given the CWWPP a grant of slightly more than 11000 Euros under the MATRA Program to work with young people in teaching skills in psychological trauma and civil society, assisting the center in re-expanding its work to village level and working from the ground up. CWWPP continues to have about 15 individual clients and five other groups, while continuing work with Marimo, the group of the families of schizophrenics in Osijek. The CWWPP would like to carry out many more projects which are urgently needed, but would need additional funding to do so.

On June 26, 2006, the CWWPP commemorated the International Day for the Victims of Torture by holding a demonstration in the center of Vukovar in orange jump suits, seeking to bring attention to the problems of torture victims all over the world. This is particularly important in this region, where many people from all sides were subjected to torture. The Center completed the first part of a five to six year history of Jews in the Vukovar region, collecting 17 interviews with people who remember Jews from before the Second World War (unfortunately, very few returned), while collecting more than 3000 documents 1100 photographs in Vukovar and Ilok., as part of a project funded by the Hanadiv Foundation of London. For more information contact Coalition for Work with Psychotrauma and Peace, M. Drzica 12, 32000 Vukovar, Croatia, tel. and fax +385-32-441975, tel. only +385-450991, office@cwpp.org, <http://www.cwpp.org>

The **Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue's** 2005 Annual Report, over viewing its peacemaking work in Aceh, Myanmar, Darfur, The Philippines, Nepal, Uganda and the Middle East, as well its work on thematic policy areas: mediation techniques, arms and security, justice, and civilian protection. is available in hard copy and online at: <http://www.hdcentre.org/Annual+Reports>. In addition, HD has opened Regional Office in Singapore to support our work in the Southeast Asia region where most of its operational project activities are located. For more information contact Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, 114 rue de lausanne, Geneva, Geneva 1202, Switzerland, andya@hdcentre.org.

The non-profit **environmental protection organization, LINK**, by bringing together Arab and Jewish residents of the Galilee to participate in environmental protection programs, has brought an improvement in relations between Arab and Jewish residents of the Galilee.

The **first Women's Aman Jirga (peace committee) has been established in the Northern Areas of Pakistan**, after a long and terrible struggle of women rights' activists and on going efforts of NGOs working for women rights. For details go to: <http://www.aghepakistan.org/aghenews.htm#achievements>.

Bill Gellermann has established the **Global Development Strategy Blog "to explore the possibility of developing a widely shared strategy for developing our global community"**. A primary key to developing such a strategy is a shared vision, such as the 'American Dream' or the 'European Dream.' Among other things, we will explore how experience with the European Dream may guide our development of a 'Global Dream which can be shared by people around the world'. Gellerman believes that the European Dream (elucidated by Jeremy Rifkin in his book, *The European Dream: How Europe's Vision of the Future is quietly eclipsing the American Dream* (Penguin Group, 2004), provides an excellent, already emerging, focus for developing a global community. Rifkin says: "...the American Dream ... emphasizes the unbridled opportunity of each individual to pursue success, which, in the American vernacular, has generally meant financial success. ... [A] new European Dream is being born. It is a dream far better suited to the next stage in the human journey--one that promises to bring humanity to a global consciousness befitting an increasingly interconnected and globalizing world. "The European Dream emphasizes community relationships over individual autonomy, cultural diversity over assimilation, quality of life over accumulation of wealth, sustainable development over unlimited material growth, deep play over unrelenting toil, universal human rights and the rights of nature over property rights, and global cooperation over the unilateral exercise of power." {p. 3} Rifkin explores what this means extensively in his book, with a view to "...understanding why the European Dream might be better positioned to accommodate the many forces that are leading us to a more connected and interdependent globalized society." (p. 15) The purpose of the Global Development Strategy Blog is to encourage dialogue (to achieve mutual understanding of our different views) and not debate over whose views are "right" and whose are "wrong." The Global development Strategy Blog is at: <http://global-development-strategy.blogspot.com/>. Gellermann also supports and links to the , Global Network Blog that developed, the Millennium Vision, with participation by more than 1300 representatives of more than 1000 organizations and 100 countries in the 2000. It is at: <http://global-network.blogspot.com>.

The **Genocide Intervention Network** has established a scorecard on Congressional action, and lack thereof, on Darfur. It shows that Congress has not fulfilled its promise in a 2004, joint resolution, which unanimously proclaimed that genocide " perpetrated by the government of Sudan" was occurring in Darfur, and calling for the Bush Administration to continue to take the lead for intrnational action to end the genocide.. The Darfur disaster continues with perhaps 400,000 civilians having died and more than 2.5 million being displaced. The scorecard, available in full at www.DarfurScores.org.

Care2.com has the goal to "Make the world a better place". Its plan is to "Connect people who care (that's you!) with the organizations, responsible businesses and individuals getting results. It's a big plan that touches on health, the environment, women's rights, spirituality, children's welfare, human rights and much more. Our role: we're just here to facilitate and empower all of these amazing,

diverse efforts. It's incredible what individuals and organizations can accomplish when they have the right tools. You are our inspiration". Over a million people joined Care2 last year. For recent positive results of its efforts and other information go to: <http://www.care2.com/>.

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WORLD DEVELOPMENTS

Steve Sachs

The Middle East is undergoing major shifts, accompanied by increasing violence that is also enhancing terror world wide, largely as a direct result of the actions of the Bush Administration. By destabilizing Iraq, which is now in a civil war of growing intensity, and bringing the previously repressed Shiia to the fore through violent struggle (rather than by providing the security for peaceful integration), this is bringing a Shiite revival across the region, with the possibility of its being accompanied by considerable violence, with Shiite dominated Iran moving to assert itself to be the, leading power in the region, using guerilla forces abroad to assist it, as it has long done.

Hezbollah's kidnapping of two Israeli soldiers, which triggered Israel's overreaction (apparently encouraged by the Bush Administration) **in bombarding and then invading Southern Lebanon, was, almost surely, a result of the Bush administration increasing Iran's power in the region,** as the Shiite group – while independent - has long been funded by Tehran, though Israeli's strong repression of Palestinians, including its recent massive and long lasting unsuccessful operation to locate a kidnapped soldier and stop sporadic rocket attacks from Gaza, likely gave Hezbollah a political opening to increase activity against Israel. The Lebanon War, which may well restart at some level, has been a disaster for Israel, and **greatly increased Hezbollah's standing and political position in Lebanon and throughout the Arab world.** While, unquestionably any country, including Israel, has the right to take reasonable, appropriate action to stop bombardment of its citizens and territory, as Hezbollah undertook in the face of Israel's attack's on its positions in Lebanon, in response to, Hezbollah's kidnapping incursion into Israel (and as militants in Gaza have been carrying out into Israel), the extensive Israeli assaults killed and injured far more Lebanese civilians than Hezbollah's rockets did of Israeli civilians, while Israel's operations inflicted tremendous damage to homes, other buildings, and infrastructure, particularly in the South, but also elsewhere in Lebanon, while causing over 200,000 people to flee the south. Amnesty International charged that the damage Israel inflicted was so wide spread, and not targeted to Hezbollah military facilities, that it constituted a violation of human rights. Hezbollah may be blamed for placing its military and other facilities in the midst of civilian structures. but in the minds of many, especially in Lebanon and across the Middle East, that is outweighed by the extensive injury to innocent civilians inflicted by the Israelis. The Israeli assault did destroy a significant amount of Hezbollah infrastructure and equipment (which can be replaced), but it was strategically ineffective, first because Hezbollah was able to launch more rockets into Israel on the last day before the ceasefire than on any previous day, and second because politically Hezbollah is now significantly stronger, and is continuing to increase its stature, as, with financing from Iran, it is playing a major role in reconstruction in South Lebanon. Hezbollah's gains come from two sources. The first is that it did rather well against the Israelis, who could only move its fighters out of positions in the south with considerable effort over time, with significant casualties, while Hezbollah's ability to bombard Israel appeared to be undiminished. Second, Hezbollah gained moral standing as a resistor of Israeli, which it is increasing through its continuing charity work and its newly initiated reconstruction efforts. This can be seen, in part, by the fact that more moderate Sunni governments, who early criticized Hezbollah, soon became silent, or even supportive, in the face of rising pressure from their own and other Mid-East populations, **One indicator of the shift in power and image in the Middle East, brought on by the Bush Administration, is that an annual German Marshall fund public opinion poll, undertaken in June, shows that in Turkey, over the last year public opinion favorable to Iran has increased from 34% to 43%, while pro U.S. feeling has dropped from 28% to 20%, and seeing Turkish membership in the European Union as a good thing has dropped from 73% to 54%.**

It should be noted, that numerous times in the past Israel has undertaken prisoner exchanges, following kidnappings, and that a lesser response might have been more effective here. Indeed, there is **a great deal of evidence that Israel's very strong crackdowns and disproportionate military actions, particularly against the Palestinians, amounting to collective punishment, have only increased the violent militancy that Israel seeks to end. In the long run collective punishment does not work. Palestinian resistance to Israel has grown over the years as the policy of Israeli crackdowns has increased. An effective policy for building peace cannot come from force alone (or a predominant use of force, offering few rewards for peaceful settlement. The use of, and threat to use, the stick has to be balanced, appropriately with offerings of sufficient carrots.** At this writing, Israeli Prime Minister Olmert has agreed that in order to get back the three captured soldiers - one in Gaza, two in Lebanon - he would have to release a considerable number of the ten thousand Palestinian, Lebanese and other Arabs in Israeli jails and prison camps. The Israeli difficulty to remove Hezbollah and stop its attacks, accompanied by high losses of troops, has had set off a political storm in Israel, and could cause the government, and or the public to seek a different, hopefully more diplomatically sophisticated, approach to conflict. Various mediators are already busy helping the negotiations including Reverend Jesse Jackson, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, representatives of the Italian, German and Egyptian governments. The Other Israel believes that "A prisoner exchange with the Palestinians could facilitate a cease fire, and an end to the agony of Gaza, and might also be followed by the creation of a Palestinian National Unity Government which the international community would not want to boycott. A prisoner exchange in Lebanon might entail the removal of the Israeli air and sea blockade which is hampering the Lebanese effort to rebuild their country. And the atmosphere in Israel might be changed to the better by the return of the three soldiers..". Meanwhile, the **Israeli occupation of much of Gaza continues.** As of August 20, it was reported by The Other Israel that since beginning its incursion in late June, the Israeli occupation army had killed 203 Palestinians, including 58 children and 25 women, and wounded 783 others, including 281 children, and 86 women. 72 of the injured have had limbs amputated.

Thus, **on both fronts the Israelis are continuing to feel frustration, being attacked and injured, but having small success in countering the attacks, while suffering significant losses and costs on the Lebanon front in a regional situation that is becoming more hostile.** In this writes view, their are **alternate possibilities of how the Israelis may respond,** at least partly depending on the response with those with whom they are in conflict, as well as the actions of international and internal parties. Frustration is likely to cause the Israelis to change policy, but weather, or to what extent they will take more steps to seek peace directly, and to use diplomatic means,

and/or to increase or use different martial measures, is in question. Somewhat similar factors are involved concerning how Palestinians and Israel's opponents elsewhere will respond. Thus it is important at this juncture for those directly involved and internationally concerned who seek to reduce rather than escalate the violence and suffering to use some wisdom in planning for the long term, to devise appropriate policies with carrots and sticks, providing hope, while shifting fear, and taking steps to favorably impact the perceptions of enough of those involved to move toward peaceful resolution. This includes increasing and publicizing bridge building and confidence enhancing measures. But these will only be successful as part of a larger framework of deescalating policies. Such a course will require perseverance and a patience of long term planning with ongoing reassessment and adjustment. It will take time to overcome the long history of trauma in an areas where many of the cultures are strong on emphasizing feeling in relation to thought (in Jung's and Myer's-Briggs sense).

Meanwhile, **infighting is continuing among Palestinians**, most recently, with several thousand security force members joining a growing strike begun by teachers over unpaid wages, that the funding denied Hamas government is unable to pay. Contributing to the financial problems of the Hamas led government is that local banks have been refusing to transfer funds from abroad to the Palestinian Authority for fear of sanctions from the U.S. treasury, to whom they have a connection. There is a danger that militancy against Israel will grow, and Hezbollah may make an entrance, if the Palestinian Authority collapses. That, in this writers, view will only increase the desperation that continues to deepen amidst the continuing to decline, terrible Palestinian economic and human living situation, that must be improved, with hope for further improvement, if peace is to come to Israel and Palestine, which is a necessity if a more peaceful situation is to be achieved in the entire region. **Palestinian President Mahmoud Abas, in early September, said he was close to forming a national unity government, with broad participation, with the intent of ending the cut off of foreign funding to the Palestinian Authority.**

Dan Bar-On, a social psychology professor at Ben Gurion University in Beersheba, a city in southern Israel, and Sami Adwan, an education professor at Bethlehem University in the West Bank, **aim to change the way the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is taught, by exposing Palestinian students to Israeli history lessons and Israeli students to the Palestinian version of history.** Working with teams of Israeli and Palestinian historians, they have devised a series of booklets that set the competing versions of history side-by-side on the same pages for students, hoping to promote coexistence.

The larger situation in the Middle East is in great flux and requires a major policy examination by all the parties, and the development of new, appropriate diplomatic initiatives that take account of the shifts that are in progress. The situation in Lebanon is more quiet, at this moment, with the government of Lebanon for the first time sending troops, supposedly to number 15,000, and supposedly to be accompanied by 15,000 UN troops to keep the border peaceful, including preventing Hezbollah attacks into Israel. The Lebanese army has neither the ability nor the will to disarm Hezbollah, as called for in existing UN resolutions, and cannot be effective against actions that Hezbollah may wish to take as a matter of firm policy. Only a strong and determined international force could be an effective security against Hezbollah military action. At this writing, European nations, lead by an Italian contingent now arriving in Lebanon, currently are expected to number about 7,000 troops (a good core of an international peace force, but not sufficient by itself) while Israel states that it rejects the international force from containing troops from nations with which it does not have normal diplomatic relations. Unless the international community develops a comprehensive approach to Lebanon, accompanied by commensurate will to act, southern Lebanon will see new eruptions of destruction, that bode ill for the long term wellbeing of the entire region. For more see International Crisis Group report #57: Israel/Palestine/Lebanon: Climbing Out of the Abyss, in "Articles" below, holding that "Only a diplomatic and political approach can defuse the twin crises in Lebanon and Palestine: immediate ceasefires on both fronts, accompanied by steps to restore stability and re-launch a comprehensive peace process. Destructive as the present conflicts are, without strong and immediate international engagement, matters could become far worse".

Among the questions that need reexamination is the issue of Iran's move toward atomic weapons capability, which if completed would further shift the balance of power in the region. To date, U.S. saber rattling has been ineffective, especially when its ground forces are tied down in Iraq, and in any case there is not an international coalition willing to provide the level of force that could make a military action successful, to prevent Iranian nuclear weapons development. The U.S. needs to engage Iran diplomatically, and creatively, which the Bush administration seems both unwilling, and unable to do. Currently, Iran continues to assert that it intends to keep on reprocessing uranium, and it is questionable that the UN actually will impose sanctions, if Iranian policy does not change, as seems exceedingly likely, by August 31. Since it would take 5-to 10 years for Iran to make a nuclear bomb, by intelligence estimates, there is plenty of time for negotiations that need to take place in a quiet, rather than crisis atmosphere. Unfortunately, the Chaney - Rumsfeld Axis in the Bush Administration, along with some Republicans in Congress, including a group on the House Intelligence Committee, are pushing for a confrontational approach, which would be counterproductive.

The situation in Iraq continues to decline, almost daily, with increasing deadly violence. Interethnic fighting continues to rise, bringing an increase of civilian deaths to a reported 3,438 in July, 9% more than in June, and double the January death rate. The rate of attacks against U.S. and government troops has also doubled since January, reaching its highest level in July, but increased provision of the correct body armor has kept U.S. casualties from rising at a corresponding rate. The fighting in the capital has become so severe that the U.S. has been forced to move forces to Baghdad from elsewhere in the country, and to increase, rather than reduce U.S. troop strength in Iraq, despite the urgent need to remove over stressed troops. Training of Iraqi troops continue, but many of them leave the army with their weapons, quite a few of whom join the sectarian militias causing the fighting. Strains are also visible within the supposed government of national unity. If the government fully splinters, the conflict will seriously intensify. The point may well have been reached where peace can only be created through an agreement that essentially divides Iraq into three autonomous regions (whether within Iraq or as separate nations), with an agreed to settlement on the division of revenues from oil (which would have to give the Sunnis, who have no oil in their area, a significant, minority share in oil revenues, to be acceptable to them. But such an arrangement would have to overcome many difficulties, including the mix of populations in many areas, particularly in Baghdad. Unfortunately, ethnic cleansing is already in motion, with thousands of people fleeing mixed population areas for places populated by their own ethnic group, and many fleeing the country, entirely. Meanwhile, in the United States, public opinion has continued to turn against the war in Iraq. A *New York Times*/CBS Poll released August 23, showed that for the first time a majority of Americans (51%, an increase of 10% since June) believe

that Iraq is not related to fighting terrorism, while 46% now think the President focused too much on the war and not enough on terrorism, as opposed to 42% believing the balance is about right. The International Crisis Group stated, July 18, "Unless the international community acts soon to resolve mounting tensions in Kirkuk, the result could well be yet another violent communal conflict in Iraq, risking full scale civil war and possibly outside military intervention (full report: <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4267>).

Amnesty International reported to the United Nations' Committee Against Torture, in May, that Torture and inhumane treatment are "widespread" in US-run prisons in Afghanistan, Iraq, Cuba and elsewhere despite Washington's denials. For more information go to: http://www.truthout.org/docs_2006/050306Z.shtml. The Associated Press reported, in July that Four U.S. soldiers accused of murdering suspected insurgents during a raid against suspected El Quaida insurgents in Iraq said, in sworn statements, they were under orders to "kill all military age males." This is in addition to charges against some U.S. troops, acting independently, for killing innocent civilians. Many experts believe, that the psychological pressures, frustrations and uncertainties of combat, where it is uncertain who the enemy is, increases the likelihood that soldiers will commit human rights violations, as occurred frequently in Vietnam.

U.S. policy and the related developing conditions in the Middle East have continued to affect public opinion in many places. **A Pew poll, released in June, found that both views of the United States and support for an international war against terrorism declined in 15 countries over the past year.** Support for the U.S. dropped sharply in Spain, India, Russia, Indonesia and Turkey. Declines were less steep in France, Germany and Jordan, while the view of the U.S in Chiina and Pakistan rose slightly. In 13 of the 15 nations, most people stated that the war in Iraq was a greater threat to peace than the Iranian nuclear program. A second Pew Poll, the Global Attitudes Project, published in the *New York Times*, June 23, which is too long and the results too complex to discuss in detail here, generally shows a sharp pattern of distrust of the West in Muslim countries, and much distrust of Muslims by non-Muslims in the West. However, the pattern of views expressed is complex, and some polling results are not what many observers might expect, including a drop in support for terrorism in a number of Muslim countries, most especially in Jordan, where more than 50 people were killed in a bombing, November, 2005.

Security conditions in Afghanistan continue to deteriorate, with the US having pulled out significant forces (even with some recent increases in the face of growing violence) because of its preoccupation with Iraq, while failing, along with international partners, to undertake sufficient economic development to make recovery possible. Thus the Taliban have been increasingly resurgent, especially in the south, while lack of alternatives and lack of policing has encouraged the growth of record opium production, strengthening local warlords, at the expense of the national government and national stability. In September, NATO announced that it needed more troops with less restrictions to counter the rising Taliban. One result is that the previously promising government of President Hamid Karzai is facing a crises of confidence and mounting criticism from Afghans over continued lack of security and justice, poor economy, and corruption. Public opinion is turning against the government after months of frustration. Thus, the **International Crises Group's hopeful, May 15, report, "Afghanistan's New Legislature: Making Democracy Work** (<http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=3071&l=1>)" **is now another as yet unfulfilled potential. IGC wrote in May, "The fledgling National Assembly can play a vital role in stabilizing Afghanistan and holding President Karzai's administration accountable but only if it gives voice to the country's diverse population and gets major help from international actors. Its oft-delayed inauguration in December 2005 completed formation of the country's main governing bodies but marked more the beginning of a political transition than its end. The parliament has potential to draw the regions to the centre in a way that has never happened before but if it is considered impotent, citizens are likely to lose faith in democratization. Unfortunately the Karzai administration appears to calculate that a weak, fragmented body would mean more power for itself rather than a loss for the country. The executive and legislative branches must not approach their relationship as a zero sum game"**.

More globally, The **International Crisis Group (IGC)** September news letter (available at: <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?l=1&id=4363>) found that **eight actual or potential conflict situations around the world deteriorated in August. "Sri Lanka saw full-scale military clashes in eastern and northern regions kill hundreds and displace some 200,000. Sudan's Darfur region continued its slide, with the government launching a new offensive and the World Food Program estimating that 500,000 people are now cut off from emergency food aid". After security forces killed a key Balochistan leader, Pakistan experienced violent protests and province-wide strikes. International tensions over nuclear programs in both Iran and North Korea worsened. The situation also deteriorated in Burundi, Kuril Islands/Northern Territories (Russia/Japan) and the Taiwan Strait. Four conflict situations showed improvement in August 2006. Following 34 days of war between Israel and Hizbollah, a UN-brokered ceasefire commenced on 14 August. In Uganda, the government and rebel Lord's Resistance Army signed a truce, though significant barriers to peace remain. The situation also improved in Angola and Togo.** For September 2006, *CrisisWatch* identifies **Democratic Republic of Congo, Pakistan, Lebanon, Somalia and Sudan as Conflict Risk Alerts**, or situations at particular risk of new or significantly escalated conflict in the coming month. A **Conflict Resolution Opportunity is identified for Uganda**". Considered unchanged are the situations in Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Basque Country (Spain), Belarus, Bolivia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Central African Republic, Chad, Chechnya (Russia), China (internal), Colombia, Corsica (France), Côte d'Ivoire, Cyprus, DR Congo, Ecuador, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ethiopia/Eritrea, Georgia, Guyana, Haiti, India (non-Kashmir), Indonesia, Iraq, Israel/occupied Territories, Kashmir, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Macedonia, Maldives, Mauritania, Moldova, Montenegro, Morocco, Myanmar/Burma, Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan), Nepal, Nigeria, North Caucasus (non-Chechnya), Northern Ireland (UK), Papua New Guinea, Peru, Philippines, Rwanda, Senegal (Casamance), Serbia, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, Somalia, Somaliland (Somalia), Swaziland, Syria, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Venezuela, Yemen and Zimbabwe.

Meanwhile, the May-June Issue of the *Defense Monitor*, using information from the Friends Committee on National Legislation, reports that **the number of wars, world wide, and by region continues to decline, with the beginning of 2006 finding 15 significant, ongoing conflicts (1,000 or more deaths), down from 23 at the start of 2005, with 23 other "hot spits," that could become significant conflicts. 2005 saw one of the greatest drops in significant conflicts, and the lowest number, since the index was introduced 17 years ago.** The full report is available at www.worldsecurityinstitute.org.

With the six nation international peace talks remaining stalled, North Korea defied wide spread international objection in test firing seven missiles, on July 5, in the direction of Japan, one of which, when perfected, could reach U.S. territory. Meanwhile, North Korea continues to produce bomb grade plutonium. The International Crisis Group, in its August 9 Asia Briefing #52, "After North Korea's Missile Launch: Are the Nuclear Talks Dead?" (available at: <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4332>), included in its recommendations that, **"The only real chance of breaking out of the downward spiral is for the U.S. to adopt a new approach, including more readiness to talk bilaterally and less rhetorical vitriol, in order to test the North's willingness to return to the six-party talks and work toward a deal". Unless a more appropriate diplomatic approach by the U.S. shows conclusively that Pyongyang is unwilling to give up its atomic weapons program, it will be impossible to gain the needed support of China and Russia to deal effectively with such a situation.** Even though South Korea is in a difficult position, and the North has refused to allow it a meaningful role in the standoff, it should take several steps to improve the situation, including: linking the expansion of economic cooperation to the resumption of the six-party talks; de-linking humanitarian assistance to the North from inter-Korean cooperation, nuclear and missile issues and resuming such aid in response to the severe July floods; supporting implementation of Security Council Resolution 1695 by actively participating in the Proliferation Security Initiative; and refraining from openly criticising other six-party talks participants, especially the U.S. and Japan."

The Government of Pakistan has signed a peace agreement with tribal elders in the restive province bordering Afghanistan, where many Taliban and al Qaeda members are located, which allows militants to operate freely if they cease attacks and infiltration into Afghanistan. It remains to be seen if the agreement will mean anything more than a cessation, or reduction, of Pakistani army operations in the province. In August, there was a **dispute** between U.S. National Security Council officials and independent arms control analysts as to **whether a new reactor being built in Pakistan is unusually large, and would be able to make enough bomb grade material annually for 50 nuclear weapons,** which might signal an Asian atomic arms race following The U.S. nuclear deal with India. The NSC says the reactor will not be that large.

During the summer, a number of **alleged terrorist bombing plots were announced by governments in Europe and Asia** to have been foiled. The International Crises Group reported that **while Police in Indonesia appear to be closing in on South East Asia's most wanted terrorist, the problem of his support structure still needs to be approached,** which is based around an inner circle of Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) members, but expands beyond them, to build a following committed to al Qaeda style attacks, in a network of JI schools, administrative structures, family and business contacts. **Violent events have continued in India,** including in Kashmire, but also elsewhere. Most of these involve Muslim-Hindu tensions (in one case concerning the, now stopped by court order, demolition of a Muslim shrine in Vadodara), but some concerning other ethnic groups. In July, Indian officials warned of deteriorating relations with Pakistan, over charges that their western neighbor was not doing enough to rein in cross boarder militant Islamic groups, following multiple bombings that killed more than 180 and wounded 700 in India's financial capitol of Mumbi. Indian officials have stated that they fear that the popularity of groups using terrorist means is rising.

Nepal has now moved to Democracy with huge nonviolent demonstrations by the democracy movement bringing the collapse of the increasingly authoritarian royal government, leading to the forming of a **new representative government with whom the Maoist insurgents have declared a truce while negotiations proceed.** The International Crisis Group has stated that there is a need for an international contact group, including India the U.S. and Britain, working with the UN, to assist in facilitating a smooth political transition and effective peace talks. IGC also calls for a Peace Support Group to review development aid, with a focus on practical planning to support the peace process.

Sri Lanka continues to move further from its once promising peace process as clashes continue to increase between government and Tamil Tiger forces, and violence against civilians is also occurring. In early September, however, the **Tamil Tigers** stated that they were **prepared to return to the negotiating table, without preconditions.**

The International Crisis Group is concerned that **beneath the calm surface, Central Asia has a potential for unrest and instability, with a high risk of conflict. IGC is calling for the European Union to help create stability in the region** by moving its aid from technical projects to development of infrastructure and public health in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, while, "Engagement with the repressive regimes in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan is unlikely to yield results, and EU policies should instead focus on facilitating their transition from dictatorship" (See "Central Asia: Unrest and Instability" on ICG.s web site). ICG reported in Late August that **"Kyrgyzstan,s badly under funded, neglected prison system threatens to destabilize the fragile state's security and public health unless government and donors launch an urgent process of penal and judicial reform.** Criminal leaders control the 16,000 inmates, not prison administrators. Corruption is rife at all levels; tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS rates are very high. The prisons are a microcosm of problems in post-Akayev Kyrgyzstan - a shortage of funds, collapsed health sector, corruption and influential criminals are all in the civilian world as well. Trouble in prisons has already led to serious conflicts outside their crumbling walls, and without extensive reform, the spillover will be impossible to contain". In September, **Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan agreed to have a joint nuclear weapons free zone,** allowing the peaceful development of uranium. But a **loophole** could allow Russia to bring atomic weapons into the region. There were signs of a **revival this spring amidst the construction of new buildings in the Chechen capital of Grozny, with the decline of attacks and bombings.**

Timor-Leste has been experiencing serious economic, and hence security problems, most notably marked by major rioting in Dili, on April 28-29, following the collapse of the Timor army.. In May the international Crisis Group reported that while fears of violence along and across the Timor-Leste boarder with Indonesian West Timor are "largely unfounded," collaboration between the nations is needed to establish a "soft border regime" and infrastructure for legal cross border trade, while the "two countries work with donors on livelihood and income generation projects, address serious justice issues related to the 1999 violence and devise a lasting solution for ex-refugees."

Amnesty International, and other sources, report that in the **Philippines a campaign, believed to be run by the military, of killing members of legal leftist organizations is increasing**, with 55 murders reported in the first six months of this year, compared with 61 in all of last year.

In Europe, the International Crises Group finds that **Moldova**, which has recently turned toward the West, and away from Moscow, **needs to settle its conflict with its breakaway region of Transdniestria**, an area of majority Russian population, as opposed to the Rumanian majority in the rest of the country, in order to become a stable. That “is still a long way off despite recent EU and Ukrainian initiatives. While a reunited country remains a realistic long-term goal, the immediate priorities should be increasing Moldova’s political and economic attractiveness and confidence-building measures. Given Russia’s export bans, energy cut-offs and the continued deployment of unwanted troops, the EU must do far more with both incentives and pressures”. **Russia has been experiencing expanding ethnic violence against Central Asians**, from isolated assaults to destructive demonstrations and a bombing which killed 12 people, in August. In the former Yugoslavia, ICG reported on July 28, in “An Army for Kosovo” (available at: <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4290>), that **Kosovo** ought to be allowed to be independent of Serbia and have its own small army concentrated on international peacekeeping and developed and managed under NATO supervision”. **Unless the Serbs on Kosovo Albanians are able to finally reach a settlement in their, to date, unfruitful negotiations by the end of the year, the U.N. General Assembly Likely will vote for Kosovo to be independent.** In **Bosnia**, in August, the expression of strong nationalist sentiments, and some related incidents, in the parliamentary election campaign have **raised ethnic tensions to their highest point in several years.**

The Basque separatist ETA, in late March, declared a cease fire with Spain after four decades of gorilla warfare, stating that from now on it will use only peaceful political means to seek Basque independence.

Turkey moved to try 56 Kurdish Mayors, in June, who face up to 10 years in Prison, for a letter they sent to the Danish Prime Minister asking that Danish based Kurdish satellite broadcaster ROJ TV not be shut down. Turkey alleges that the station is a mouthpiece for the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party. Critics claim that this is an other example of counterproductive Turkish action, that violates human rights, to try and stem radical Kurdish nationalism.

Somalia is on the verge of a new war, with Islamic Jihadists, imposing Islamic Courts, having won control of Mogadishu, and attempting to spread their influence to most of the South of the country, while the transitional government has essentially collapsed, and Ethiopian forces, which support the transitional government, have crossed into the country. In the face of a threat from Ethiopia and its allies in Somalia, the Islamic Courts have broken off peace talks sponsored by the Arab league. Meanwhile, Ethiopia’s long time opponent, Eritrea, has been supporting the Courts, making it likely that the conflict between it and Ethiopia will become a proxy war in Sudan. The U.S. fears that the Courts provide a shield for al Qaeda training and operations, but the situation is much more complex. The International Crisis Group states that war can be contained if both sides and the international community take urgent steps to pull together a government of national unity. For the full report of August 10 with recommendations for action go to: <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4333>. The extremely week, UN **supported interim Somalia government held brief peace talks with the Islamic courts in June and resumed them in early September**, including considering inclusion of Islamists in the government. UN negotiators undertook their first talks with the Islamic courts, in June

The situation in Darfur continues to be critical, and may be becoming worse. The UN announced that in July more aid workers had been killed than in the previous three years. The Khartoum government objects to UN peace keepers and has begun sending more of its forces to the region, claiming it will undertake the peacekeeping itself. Khartoum has told the African Union that it must withdraw its forces if UN peace keepers enter Sudan, and the African Union says that it will comply. Without sufficient international action to return Darfur to peace and reconstruction, the peace agreements already achieved in Sudan are likely to collapse, including the .agreement reached earlier this year between the Somalian government and several of Darfur’s resistance groups.

Concerning **Mauritania**, IGC recommends, “The international community must press Mauritania’s leaders who seized power in a coup in August 2005 to respect their promises of democratic transition. The new strong men have made a good start in some ways but some are closely linked to the old regime and may prefer not to redress past injustices. This could fuel political tensions. Deep and controversial reforms cannot be completed quickly, but the government should at least work closely with all national political forces to take initial steps. Until parliament is elected, a framework for regular consultation should be established and unilateral decisions avoided. Contracts should be fairly allocated and rule of law promoted. A law-bound democracy within a reasonable timetable is a common interest. The international community should insist the new leaders promote change rather than preserve the status quo”.

ICG reported in June that **women’s organizations are doing significant work in conflict resolution that has the potential to play an important role in solving some of Africa’s most deadly crises in the Congo, Sudan and Uganda, if the International community will give these groups major ongoing support.** In April, ICG reported that **Liberia’s peaceful democratic development, following years of violent turmoil, is in jeopardy unless the government and donors reform and invigorate the countries shattered justice system** (See “Liberia: Resurrecting the Justice System,” at: <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4061&l=1>).

Nigeria continues to be split by many factions, and much violence, fuelled by poverty in a nation that has the resources for development that could benefit everyone. But corruption and crime remain major barriers to equitable distribution, and hence are an ongoing cause of violence. In the oil producing Delta, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), has become a major insurrectionist force, at times disrupting oil production and causing uncertainty as to the regularity of future oil exports. The International Crisis Group stated, August 3, that, “The Nigerian government needs to forge far-reaching reforms to administration and its approach to revenue sharing, the oil companies to involve credible, community-based organizations in their development efforts and Western governments to pay immediate attention to improving their own development aid.” The full report with specific recommendations is at: <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4310&l=1>. In a deal brokered by the UN, **Nigeria reached an agreement with Cameroon,**

under which Nigeria will follow a 2002 World Court decision and turn the oil rich 400 square mile Bakasse Peninsula to Cameroon, over which the two nations fought for over a decade.

In August, **Uganda and the Lord's Liberation Army signed a peace agreement, ending their long internal war** which drove nearly 2 million people from their homes and enslaved thousands of children. Several thousand people had limbs and tongues cut off by the Lord's Liberation Army. Its leader is wanted by the International Criminal Court for war crimes, but under the agreement, Uganda will not turn him over. The rebel army has gathered at two isolated clearings where they are being protected and monitored.

In the **Cote D'Ivoire**, IGC is concerned **that the international community remain very actively engaged and implement a range of new measures, if the country is to avoid an eventual bloodbath**. "As in 2005, this year's UN deadline for a presidential election, 31 October 2006, will be missed. Without new rules to govern the post-October period or the necessary pressure on the political leaders who attempt to block „clean% elections, no transitional Ivorian government will be able to organize a presidential poll in the foreseeable future. Urgent measures should be implemented, including granting Prime Minister Banny extraordinary executive power for a six-month period". (The September 7 report is at: <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4365&l=1&m=1>).

Prior to **Congo's elections** in July, Members of the UN Security Council advised the government, including warning that election campaigning should use less fiery rhetoric, that was rising tensions in the impoverished war torn nation, while IGC cautioned that the elections could become the root of a new round of violence unless donors increased efforts to promote transparent and accountable government, in all its branches and promoting civil society development. There was significant violence in the course of the elections. In April, IGC encouraged international actors to send a clear message that a military coup in Guinea would be not acceptable, as the Presidents long reign neared its end. The full report is at: <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4067>.

The International Crises Group proposed in late August, that: **"To avoid an explosion in Zimbabwe that could cost thousands of lives and shatter Southern Africa, the opposition may need to launch a risky strategy of nationwide, non-violent protest**. The country is more polarized today than ever, and in many ways, prospects for change seem to be slipping further away. Political reform is blocked, and nearly every economic indicator is heading downward. The political opposition and civil society organizations have yet to tap effectively into the dissatisfaction based on declining living standards, but they could become the spark that finally sets Zimbabwe toward change". For the complete report, "Zimbabwe: Time for Change," go to: <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=3535&l=1>. **Zimbabwe has been in a downward economic crisis of very serious proportions, largely brought on by the President's struggle to remain in power, that now includes the worlds highest, and still climbing, rate of inflation, as even the most necessary items for living have become exceedingly scarce**.

Algeria has calmed considerably since the height of its civil war, but reports indicate that some fighting continues, while the amnesty is imperfect, in part because many people complain that numerous jailed Islamists who killed people have been released from prison, while their victims have been told to keep quiet (for more see Craig S. Smith, "Many Algerians Are Not Reconciled By Amnesty Law," *The New York Times*, June 28, 2006, p. 3).

Australia, which has seen rising prejudice against Middle Eastern People in recent years, suffered two days of serious rioting in Sydney suburbs, and elsewhere, last December, begun when white youths spurred by messages from neo-Nazi groups attacked people they thought were Middle Eastern, and Middle Eastern young men responded with their own assaults the following evening.

Following an **extremely close July presidential election in Mexico**, in which center-left candidate **Andrés Manuel López Obrador charged the victory of conservative Felipe Calderon was fraudulent**, and called for a full recount of the votes, the Mexican Electoral Tribunal discard the challenges as primarily filing errors. **Obrador's supporters have been carrying out nonviolent demonstrations, closing down much of Mexico City, for weeks, and at this writing his coalition is preparing to establish a parallel government or national civil resistance movement, which would leave Mexico deeply polarized**, if new elections are not held, which now seems to be the case. For more see Laura Carlsen, "Chance for Legal Solution Narrows in Mexican Election," on the International Relations Center Americas Watch Program at: <http://americas.irc-online.org/am/3487>. Meanwhile, **in Oaxaca State, a teachers, administrators and other school workers strike, which began in May, with demands including shoes and uniforms for all students, increased scholarships and more money for buildings and equipment, has become a widely supported social movement that has sent the PRI dominated state government into hiding while the mass movement seeks the ouster of state governor Ruiz Ortiz**, a member of the long dominant PRI. State government attempts to use riot police against protestors have backfired, as attacks on demonstrators have brought huge numbers of local people into the streets, forcing the police to flee. On July 2, the organized population, with a parallel state assembly, voted heavily against the PRI's Presidential candidate, which previously had won continuously since 1929, and continues to be the majority party in Oaxaca government. The popular rebellion in Oaxaca is now connected to Obrador's protest against what his party sees, and international election observers from Global Exchange support, as a stolen election, and the parallel government Obrador's supporters are currently establishing across Mexico.

In August, following the collapse of the of the Doha round of World Trade Organization Talks (WTO), the **United States began a new trade initiative in Latin America, attempting to get more nations to sign free trade agreements and to isolate the Mercosur members, Brazil, Argentina, Venezuela, Uruguay, and Paraguay**, who have been having enough troubles deciding among themselves where they are going and how to get along. In addition to pressures from the United States, disillusionment with Mercosur has pushed the smaller countries - Uruguay and Paraguay - closer to the northern camp. For more information see Americas Updater. Vol. 4, No. 12, August 23, 2006, at: <http://americas.irc-online.org/updater/3461>. **Bolivia nationalized its oil and gas fields** in May, giving international production companies 180 days to renegotiate leases or leave the country.

After five years of attempting to eradicate Cocoa production in Columbia, including aerial pesticide spraying that has been extremely injurious to people and legitimate crops, the U.S. effort has failed, as the quantity, quality and price of cocaine in the

United States is virtually unchanged.

It was reported in April that **the U.S. military is developing and deploying technologies to wage the war on terror on the internet, in newspapers and through mobile phones.** Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld has signed off on a report. "The Information Operations Roadmap" involving spending \$383 million by 2009 on an information warfare revolution. The report states that the US military's first priority is the "department [of defense] must be prepared to 'fight the net'". In addition, the U.S. wants to be enabled to take control of the Earth's electromagnetic spectrum, allowing domination of mobile phones, personal digital assistants (PDAs), the web, radio, TV etc.. The plan calls for psychological military operations, known as psyops, on any media, from newspapers, books and posters to the internet, music, Blackberrys and PDAs, to put out black propaganda and false and misleading information. Also included in the information war would be **such vehicles as "Truth Squads" to provide public information to counter negative publicity about U.S. operations.** Last year, Secretary Rumsfeld gave an order stating that **the Pentagon need not continue to gain permission from a U.S. ambassador to undertake an operation in her/his country, but need only inform the ambassador of the pending operation.** New York Times interviews with dozens of **young U.S. military officers and cadets,** in survey results released in April, show **that in classrooms, informal conversations in the Pentagon, in combat units, and in phone and E-mail discussions, there is debate over the leadership of Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, and concern about the way ahead in Iraq,** which are reminiscent of informal debates among military officers late in the Vietnam war.

Russell Mokhiber, editor of the Washington, D.C.-based *Corporate Crime Reporter* (<http://www.corporatecrimereporter.com>) and the *Multinational Monitor* (<http://www.multinationalmonitor.org>) and Robert Weissman reported in July that statistics from recently published *Vital Signs 2006-2007* from the Washington, World Watch Institute and *The Least Developed Countries Report 2006*, issued by the United Nations

Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), show that **neoliberal globalization has been creating huge imbalances in natural resource systems that threaten the stability of nations and the health of the global economy, while the relatively higher rate of economic growth in the 50 Least Developed Countries (LDCs), is "not translating into poverty reduction and improved human well-being."** 10 findings from each of the books in turn support these statements. 1. Global oil consumption in 2004 was 3.7 billion tons, about eight times more than in 1950. Coal consumption was two-and-a-half times more than 1950, and natural gas more than 15 times greater. 2. 2005 was the warmest year ever recorded on Earth. Atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide reached 379.6 parts per million for 2005. 3. Thanks largely to Hurricane Katrina, weather-related disasters caused more than \$200 billion in damage, nearly double the previous record. Three of the 10 strongest hurricanes ever recorded occurred in 2005. 4. More money was spent on advertising in 2005 than ever before -- \$570 billion, about half of which was spent in the United States. The global figure is 11 times more than was spent in 1950, measured in constant dollars. 5. More than 37 million people have died from AIDS over the last two decades. 6. The world's governments spent more than a trillion dollars on the military in 2004, the highest figure since the end of the Cold War. 7. An estimated 20% of the world's coral reefs have been effectively destroyed. 8. 12% of all bird species are threatened. 9. A billion people worldwide live in slums. 10. More than 300 million people worldwide are obese. U.S. obesity levels have doubled since 1990, to about 40%. Chinese levels have doubled during the same period, now standing at 7%. 11. Per capita, for every 100 researchers and scientists doing R&D in rich countries, there are only two in LDCs. 12. In 2004, LDCs had a combined trade deficit of \$6.5 billion. Exclude the oil exporters, and the combined deficit was \$18.6 billion -- more than 50% of the size of non-oil-exporting LDCs' exports. 13. LDCs imported \$7.6 billion in food in 2003, while exporting only \$2.2 billion worth of food. 14. The average years of schooling in LDCs is three years. 15. About one-in-five high-skill workers in LDCs (defined as some college or technical school education) was working in a rich country in 2000. 16. Thanks to International Monetary Fund and World Bank structural adjustment programs, governments in LDCs are only half the proportional size of rich country governments, with LDCs devoting only 3.5% of their national economy (GDP) to state administrative services. 17. Between 1991 and 2004, only 20 U.S. patents were granted to citizens from LDCs, compared with 14,824 from other developing countries, and 1.8 million to citizens of rich countries. 18. Labor productivity in LDCs is one-ninety-fourth the level of rich countries. 19. There are 3% the number of phone lines per person in LDCs as in rich countries. 20. LDC energy consumption is 1.6% the level of rich countries. On the positive side, malnourishment is declining quickly in about a third of LDCs, while infant mortality is at a record low --although gains are coming very slowly in the poorest countries, while only four LDCs are on target to meet the Millennium Development Goal target of reducing under-five mortality by two-thirds by 2015. Bicycle production is rising rapidly, with 101 million bikes manufactured in 2003 (the latest year for which data is available), nearing record levels. Global production of photovoltaic cells -- which generate electricity from sunlight -- increased 45% in 2005, with current levels six times the amount produced in 2000. Mokhiber and Weissman say, that, "Overall, however, there's no way to look at the data in these two books and conclude anything but that the current way of doing things is not working". For more see the article at: <http://lists.essential.org/pipermail/corp-focus/2006/000251.html>.

A recent study shows that **some of the effects of global warming are self-increasing. As permafrost melts in arctic areas, methane (which molecule for molecule is 23 times more heat trapping than carbon dioxide) and carbon dioxide are released into the air. It now turns out that the release of methane from melting permafrost in Siberia is five times greater than previously calculated, and could cause a devastating increase in warming.** In this writer's view, an excellent, concise and clear presentation of the problem of human influence on global warming, and what to do about it, is **Al Gore's film, *An Inconvenient Truth*.** One aspect of the problem that the film does not develop, is the concern that if even a sizable portion of the Greenland ice cap (which has been showing signs of becoming less stable) falls into the Atlantic Ocean, it is likely to bring about the release of very large quantities of methane from the ocean bottom. Should that ice cap, or half of one glacier in Antarctica that is becoming less stable, fall into the ocean, it would raise sea level by 20', which would have catastrophic effects for low lying areas around the world. Meanwhile. Recent studies show that, contrary to previous projections that saw Antarctica as gaining ice from increased snow fall coming with global warming, **Antarctica is now losing 36 cubic miles of ice a year, significantly increasing sea level.** Around the North Pole, the Arctic Ice Pack declined for the second straight winter -- a smaller ice pack increasing global warming by reducing reflection of sun light back into space, and providing more open water that absorbs sun light and heat. A shift toward mild winters and dry summers in **British Columbia, now 4 degrees warmer over the past century, have increased infestations of lodge pole pine trees by bark beetles** to over 33,000 square miles, and the Canadian Forest Service Predicts that **80% of the province's pines will be dead in 7 years.** Last year **4 million acres of spruce were killed on Alaska's Kanai Peninsula because of global warming.** A study released in June by the National Academies confirms a 1999 report that

Nearly a year ago (21 August 2005) I published a paper: **Terrorism or Dialogue and Justice?** I offer this as my humble contribution to the on going debate on the current situation in the Middle East. I will be delighted to receive your kind and considerate comments. To see the paper please see: <http://www.islamonline.net/English/contemporary/2005/08/article02.shtml>

With warmest regards,
Kamran Mofid

Kamran Mofid PhD is the Founder, of Globalisation for the Common Good Initiative, www.commongood.info, and Co-editor of *Journal of Globalization for the Common Good*: www.commongoodjournal.com.

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FALL 2006 LETTER FROM SEARCH FOR COMMON GROUND PRESIDENT JOHN MARKS, www.sfcg.org

Dear Friend of Search for Common Ground,

The Middle East seems on the brink of overwhelming disaster. Iraq is wracked by insurgency and sectarian warfare. Israel and Hezbollah have fought to a bloody standstill. The Israeli-Palestinian struggle festers like a raw sore. There is great controversy over Iran's nuclear ambitions. In times like these, it is easy to despair. But somehow, the cycle of violence must be broken. As Martin Luther King said:

Force begets force; hate begets hate; toughness begets toughness. And it is all a descending spiral, ultimately ending in destruction for all and everybody. Somebody must have sense enough and morality enough to cut off the chain of hate and the chain of evil in the universe.

Transformative Voice. With those words, Dr. King was reflecting the overwhelming desire that almost everyone shares - in the Middle East and elsewhere - to live in peace. And what does this mean for an organization like Search for Common Ground? We see our job as laying groundwork for a less violent, less adversarial world. We give concrete form to alternative models, and we are committed for the long haul. As Ted Koppel, then of ABC-TV, said about us, we provide a "voice of hope."

Middle East. While news from the Middle East is grim, we still believe there is opportunity to create positive outcomes. As we have for 15 years, we keep trying to build bridges among Israelis, Arabs, and Iranians. While we fervently wish our work had taken deeper hold and accomplished more, we know we have made a difference.

Iran and the United States. Since 1996, we have sponsored high-level, unofficial meetings between Iranians and Americans. These continue. The most recent one was held in July 2006 in a European capital. We provide an active channel for dialogue and communication, and we use our connections to seek peaceful solutions and implement projects on the ground.

I believe you saved our negotiations. Your ideas kept the negotiations going... If there is any outcome of the negotiations that is to the satisfaction of both sides, it will be a derivative of the discussions of this group - with conditions that will make it possible for both sides to accept. - current Iranian ambassador

What this group has been doing has had a profound effect on the psyche of both the public and the elite ... No other activities have had such an effect. - Iranian professor

MECIDS. In partnership with the Nuclear Threat Initiative, we sponsor the Middle East Consortium for Infectious Disease Surveillance, a regional body to promote cooperation in detecting deadly diseases, such as anthrax and avian flu. MECIDS' unofficial motto is, "Viruses do not stop at checkpoints." At a time when Arab and Israeli officials have little contact, this is one of the very few places where they meet and solve problems together.

CGNews. This activity brings together the expertise of organizations working in peace-building, traumatic medicine, community organizing, and human rights advocacy. It promotes psychological healing, furnishes legal assistance, and aids in reintegration of victims.

The articles of the Common Ground News Service give hope that there are people out there who work on solutions inspired by the need to co-exist in tolerance and by the hope for a better future. - Christopher Patten, former External Affairs Commissioner, the European Union

Palestinian Independent TV. Since 2002, we have co-produced with the Ma'an Television Network two round-table discussion series; a twice-weekly news magazine; televised meetings of the Palestinian Legislative Council; and two dramatic series. All of these promote non-violence and conflict resolution.

[Programming] shatters Palestinians' stereotypes about themselves. - USA Today

Documentary Series. We produced *The Shape of the Future*, a series of documentary films on how the Israeli-Palestinian conflict might actually be resolved. In 2005, the programs were simultaneously aired - the first time this had ever happened - on Palestinian, Israeli, and Arab satellite TV.

This documentary series examines the fears and aspirations of Israelis and Palestinians in an even-handed way. It shows how a negotiated agreement could address those fears and aspirations without threatening the national existence of

either side. Israel and Egypt were able to accomplish this task at Camp David more than 25 years ago and this series supports the belief that Israelis and Palestinians can do the same. -former US President Jimmy Carter

Nigeria. Altogether, we currently produce TV and radio programs in a dozen countries. Our biggest project is in Nigeria where we are making two TV series, *The Station* and *The Academy*. *The Station* is a 52-part dramatic series that centers on a fictional Lagos television news channel. The reporters reflect Nigeria's ethnic, religious, regional, and gender diversity. Indeed, the boss is Aisha, a strong Moslem woman from the North. Our series producer, Allen Scheid, has done a masterful job in assembling and directing an all-Nigerian crew of writers, producers, actors, and technicians. Our local NGO partner is Academic Associates/PeaceWorks.

Première. In August on NTA, Nigeria's largest TV network, *The Academy* began to air. This is a 15-part, reality series about selecting and training the cast for the dramatic series. The Academy portrays how we advertised for Nigerians who wanted to be actors and actresses; how 56,000 people replied; how we winnowed the number down to 20 finalists and took them to an undisclosed location where they were trained for a month; and how, in the end, five people survived and won parts in the dramatic series, which will start to air in November.

Clinton. The commercial sponsor for our Nigerian TV shows is Nestlé, which announced its commitment at the 2005 Clinton Global Initiative in New York. In a recent speech, former President Clinton had this to say about the series:

This, by the way, is really exciting. I might like to see one of these [programs] in America. Think about what it could be: If people actually could turn on television and see real people with whom they could identify having serious conversations about both their religious convictions and how they do or don't translate into their daily lives.

Music. We find music to be a powerful tool for conflict resolution. In Macedonia, we produced a music video that rose to number one on the charts, and in Angola our peace song became the unofficial theme of the negotiation process. Our latest song has just appeared in Nepal. It is the theme for our new radio soap opera, which aims to empower young people to play a constructive role in the peace process.

Treading upon A New Path

Youth that we are, with the courage that we've got, treading upon a new path Polite, soft spoken with a heart full of love, We're building our own future, working hard, With the message of love, we dare to change this world... treading upon a new path.

We live in a society made up of both the yin and the yang, We've learnt to move forward with joys and sorrows, Striving to do better, learning and understanding more each day, We will build the peace that we all dream of... treading upon a new path.

Flirtatious we are, we love to joke and have fun, enjoying ourselves, We don't tolerate discrimination and do not practice it either, Energy, zeal, youthfulness and faith are what we have, Mountains may crumble if we want, After all nothing is impossible ... treading upon a new path.

Radio. In many parts of the world, radio is the most effective way to reach a mass audience. Francis Rolt heads Common Ground Radio and directs our *Radio for Peacebuilding in Africa (RFPA)* project, which includes workshops, an online course, manuals, guidebooks, a database, and a website. 1500 African and international radio professionals have registered on the website (www.radiopeaceafrica.org). In an e-survey, we found that 72% of respondents believe that the project totally changed the way they see their job and the influence they can have on conflict in their country. Here is an email we received from a producer from South Africa's Bush Radio who had just attended an RFPA workshop:

I went in to work today because we have a weekly staff meeting and I had to give a report on my trip. Well, that wasn't hard - I couldn't stop gushing!!!! ... I have informed our [Managing Director] that I'm revamping the Children's Radio Education Workshop - I'm basically re-designing it with all that I learnt in Accra. This really was an amazing experience.

Monitoring & Evaluation. We are proud to announce the on-line publication of a 230-page manual, called *Designing for Results: Integrating Monitoring and Evaluation in Conflict Transformation Programs*. Written by ex-Searchers Cheyanne Church and Mark Rogers and produced in partnership with the US Institute of Peace and the Alliance for Peacebuilding, the manual provides insights, practical tips, and examples of how practitioners can measure and increase the effectiveness of their work. It can be found at www.sfcg.org/programmes/ilr/ilt_manualpage.html, and it has already been downloaded almost a thousand times. For more information about how we are increasingly integrating monitoring and evaluation into all of our programs, please click on www.sfcg.org/programmes/ilr/programmes_ilt.html.

Awards. On November 1 at the United Nations in New York, we will hold a dinner to honor the 2006 Common Ground Award winners. Actress Kathleen Turner will be the host, and awards will be given to Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, Pulitzer Prize-winning author Taylor Branch, Lower Manhattan Development Corporation founding chair John Whitehead, Sesame Workshop, Israeli singer David Broza, and Palestinian musicians, Wisam and Said Murad. This will be a fundraiser to support our work around the world, and tickets are \$500. We hope you will be able to come and/or contribute. For information please contact Susie Dillon at sdillon@sfcg.org.

Thank You. Once again, I would like to express my thanks to people like you for your support. Such assistance makes our work possible, and I am extremely grateful.

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**EXCERPTS FROM, "WE SHALL ALL LOSE"**  
**ADAM KELLER'S DIARY REPORT A DAY AFTER THE JERUSALEM RALLY, August 6, 2006**

Distributed by Gush Shalom, info@gush-shalom.org, www.gush-shalom-org.

"Is this the last week?" people asked each other. Since the jets went streaking northwards to rain death over Beirut and the missiles came shrieking back southwards to an ever-widening number of Israeli communities, Israeli activists had been gathering every Saturday evening and marching in protest through the streets of Tel-Aviv.

According to the confident predictions emanating from Condoleezza Rice's entourage at the beginning of the week, by today a ceasefire should have already been in place. But Saturday was at least as bloody as the preceding days, with the end of the killing seeming an ever-receding horizon. As thousands streamed to the rendezvous at the end of Ben Tzion Boulevard (accustomed place of the weekly Women in Black vigil) the prospects of a ceasefire were a major subject of conversation. "To us, 'ceasefire' and 'cessation of hostilities' seem the same, but the diplomats hide a hell of a lot of meaning between nuances of this kind. It could make a life or death difference on the ground afterwards, we have to look very carefully at what the Americans and French are up to, over there in New York" said a white-haired man with a big sign reading "We are not Bush's puppets!"

To the mother and her two daughters, killed this morning at Arab el-Aramskeh from the direct hit of a Katyusha missile, it will no longer make any difference. (Like nearly half the Israeli civilian casualties, they were Arabs, in whose community the government never thought of installing air-raid shelters or alarms). And whatever the final formulation of the UN resolution, it will also come far too late for the 33 farm workers (35 in other accounts) killed by a single Israeli bomb near the Lebanese-Syrian border (most of the Israeli media did not even bother to mention it).

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A sign of the ferment in the political system was provided by members of Meretz, who took part in spite their party's pro-war position. They were led by former MKs Naomi Hazan and Ya'el Dayan. Dayan at first got wild applause when she called for the immediate return of the invading troops arrived."

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"I should have thought that the photo of a man playing the piano in a ruined house should have sent a message of peace. But I saw the photo with all kinds of very warlike captions, which implied that I want revenge from the inhabitants of Lebanon. I called the press and protested and told them I had participated in the anti-war demonstration. They said: oh, but did you not change your mind when your house was bombed? Change my mind? I have protested against the stupid wanton destruction of war, and then the war and destruction came to my own home. Should that make me change my mind?"

"Olmert, stop this madness!" cried Uri Avnery of Gush Shalom. "The war has gone to your head. You are war drunk, a war junkie. Nothing good will come of this war. Stop it, before it is too late! And you, Amir Peretz - you have lied to your voters and cheated them. Some people in this rally have voted for you, or at least seriously considered doing it. People who would otherwise have never thought of voting Labour supported you because you presented yourself as a radical social reformer, because you promised to divert a large part of the defence budget to education and health and social improvement, because you said you were a dove and a peace-seeker. What is left of that? You have become a monster, a real monster!"

"Jews and Arabs pay the price in blood, the price in dead and wounded, of this miserable criminal war. We are in this together. Jews and Arabs together stand here in this square, stand together and protest together and demand together the immediate end of this terrible carnage" said Shauki Hatib, Head of the Arab Monitoring Committee, the leadership of Israel's Arab citizens, and the audience responded with prolonged chanting of "Jews and Arabs Refuse to be Enemies!"

"The main victims of this war are the poor. The well-to-do can afford to run away. The poor stay, exposed to the bombs and the missiles. The poor in Northern Israel and the poor in South Lebanon. This is the war of the rich and the generals, and the poorer you are the higher the price you pay" said Prof. Gadi Elgazi, historian and central activist of Ta'ayush.

"This war must stop. We here have to stop it. It is a war for Israel's control and domination of the Middle East, a completely unjust war. There are people who like to oppose a war after it is over, after they have cheered the soldiers on. I say: the time to oppose the war is now - now when the blood is flowing, when the bodies are buried, when the war crimes are committed and perpetrated. The time is now!" was how anarchist Adar Grayevsky, veteran of the prolonged struggle at Bil'in, put it.

After her, a young man mounted the podium. "My name is Zohar Milgrom. I am 26 years old, an activist in Yesh Gvul. I have got an emergency call up order. Tomorrow I have to show up at the army and get sent to Lebanon. I will go there to declare that I am refusing. This is the only thing I can do in face of the public silence, in face of the war crimes committed in our name, in face of the leaders who have sent soldiers again into the Lebanese swamp. I will dedicate my time of imprisonment to all the people who suffer in this war, the Jews and the Arabs, the Israelis and Lebanese and Palestinians, to stopping the madness and saving their lives. Before I finish I would like to read to you the words of my friend, Isma'il abd-el Hal of Gaza, who would have liked to stand here in Tel-Aviv and address you, were it possible. This is what he asked me to tell you: Stop this war now! This war is the mother of terrorists and extremists! We are all in danger! We have to struggle together, to end this horror, to live together in peace, in two states!"

Epilogue: we dispersed last night with a rather uplifting feeling - even though when most activists dispersed, the right-wingers seized the chance to attack the podium and cause some damage (once again unstopped by the police). This morning we got up with the diplomatic arena taking the center, following the agreement between the Americans and French on the ceasefire terms, and commentators endlessly analyzing and dissecting it and most coming to the conclusion that it was "good for Israel". Then, at noon came the news of twelve Israelis being killed by rocket fire in the north, the largest number of casualties Israel suffered in a single day of this war (though for Lebanon this number would be rather below average). It took many hours before the confirmation that the twelve were reserve soldiers, called up in preparation for a possible extension of the ground offensive into Lebanon and encamped - by the height of folly - under the open sky in a daily targeted area, though the nearby Kibbutz offered them its air raid shelter. And towards the evening, the new missile attack on Haifa, covered live on TV, with the commentators visibly goading each other into greater and greater frenzy: "Four falls detected in Haifa"; "Seven falls"; "Do you see these clouds of smoke?"; "A house has collapsed"; "There are children there, small children, a woman was giving birth just when the missile hit!"; "This is an Israeli Qana, now the international public opinion will see that our civilians are also suffering, all these Europeans who demonstrate and accuse us of destroying Lebanon!"; "What do you say, gentlemen? You in the studio here are all ex-generals with a lot of experience, what would you advise the government to do?"; "I say we must send the tanks forward, immediately, if possible already this night, take all the territory until the Litani river and perhaps beyond, clean up all the hidden missiles in the villages"; "No, no, that's wrong, Hizbullah will then ambush our soldiers, they are guerillas. I say use our air power really to the full, every village from which missiles are shot should just be totally destroyed, totally! No more humanitarian considerations!"; "But what about the ceasefire, gentlemen? The Security Council will convene tonight or tomorrow!"; "What ceasefire? Do you think we can let the war end this way, to give them the last word?"

The last which we heard on TV, about ten minutes ago. (9.15 pm Israeli time) was unconfirmed rumors about an emergency cabinet meeting, to authorize the army to do...what?

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### **THE ILLOGIC OF IRAQ: A DOZEN QUESTIONS**

Neil Wollman and Daniel Jordan, "The Illogic of Iraq"

As the civil war in Iraq has become more overt this past week, the administration would still tell us that we invaded a country three years ago and continue to fight, kill and die there, for good, sound reasons. But somehow those reasons oddly seem not to add up to anything that makes much sense. The illogic seems to permeate the war and the rhetoric surrounding it in so many ways. We offer but a few questions about the illogic of our invasion of Iraq and continued killing of its citizens, and our own Americans.

1. Why is it that when insurgency attacks go down we are winning the war; but when they go up, the insurgency is desperate?
2. Why is it that if Iraqis are so pleased by their new democracy that we are so generally disliked there?
3. Why is it that in a country with so much oil in the ground that Iraqis cannot buy gasoline at any price and must fill their gas tanks after we do--- even when it's their oil?
4. Why do we say when insurgents bomb mosques that it is "intended to foment sectarian violence and civil war" -- when it already is sectarian violence and civil war?
5. Why is it that we are to honor those who died in Iraq, but our government and our media will not allow us to see those being honored in their flag-draped coffins?
6. Why do we support the Iraqi government and praise them as saviors and bastions of freedom, when they allow their country to be dominated by a foreign invader?
7. Why is the future U.S. Embassy in Iraq the only major construction project that is going well there?
8. Why does the Administration oppose religious control in Iraq but embraces it in our country?
9. Why is freedom to vote and have public discourse more important than freedom from crime, hunger, and disease?
10. Why when "they" kill innocent women and children, it is a matter for outrage, but when we do it, it is "collateral damage" or just part of the price of "liberty"?
11. Why do many U.S. citizens want to end the war because about 2,600 Americans have been killed, rather than because many thousands of Iraqis have been killed?
12. Why do we send more soldiers to be wrongly killed so that previous soldiers did not "die in vain."? Do we honor those killed by drunk drivers by sending more drunk drivers on the road to kill further?

## **IN DEFIANCE OF MR. BUSH**

Alon Ben-Meir\* – April, 18, 2006

Iran's success in developing enriched uranium, even if this achievement is limited in scope, obviously could have serious regional and international implications. Sadly, the failure of the Bush administration to pursue a coherent strategy toward Iran and its willy-nilly approach for the past five years has made it possible for Iran to reach this milestone. Now that it has defied the West, in particular, the United States, and crossed a critical threshold on its way to nuclear development, Tehran may be more willing to make a deal if faced with two choices: receive either major economic and financial help or punishment of a kind that threatens the foundation of the regime.

First, for such an approach to succeed, the Bush administration must abandon its obsession with regime change in Iran. As long as the clergy in Tehran believe that the United States is bent on regime change, discussions with Iran, as in the past, will go nowhere. If the White House genuinely seeks a diplomatic solution, which it has repeatedly asserted to be its goal, it should not at the same time attempt to undermine the regime and in the process erode its own credibility. Yet, a State Department office for Iranian affairs was recently created to focus on changing the political system in Tehran. And as a sign of the importance of its mission, it is headed by the deputy-assistant secretary of state, Elizabeth Cheney, the daughter of the vice president, whose own office is known for advocating the use of force of against Iran.

Second, the United States must negotiate directly with Iran. Until now the administration has left it to the Europeans, notably Britain, France, and Germany, to do the negotiating. But Iran is fully aware that it's the United States that really matters, not simply because it's the only country (besides Israel, which still needs America's acquiescence to any action it takes against Iran) that can seriously threaten Tehran, but because the United States holds the key to the implementation of any future agreement. Thus, if this administration truly wants a peaceful solution to the current impasse, it must be willing to negotiate directly with Iran.

Third, the Bush administration in concert with the EU must present Iran with two alternatives from which to choose. The first would be in the form of a comprehensive economic aid package, which Tehran will find extremely difficult to refuse. Iran is in dire need of investment and must rebuild its crumbling infrastructure. Only substantial infusions of foreign capital could brighten its economic prospects. In return, Tehran will need to agree to abandon its nuclear program and allow rigorous and unimpeded inspection by the IAEA. It should be noted here that the Iranian leadership is not entirely united behind pursuing a nuclear program in defiance of the international community, and those willing to settle for a trade off could prevail if the United States appears genuine in pursuing a policy of non confrontation.

The second alternative would be that the administration makes a credible threat—that is, one that the Iranian clergy believes it will follow through on—should negotiations fail. Even more critically, the threat should also appear credible to Russia and China. Because only if they believe in the U.S. determination to take action will they lean on the Iranian clergy to change course and so prevent an international crisis, one that does not serve either their political or economic interests. For this to happen, the United States should also demonstrate some patience, even allow Iran to revel in its success, which will help show the international community that the administration has made every effort to reach a diplomatic solution. The administration should also make it clear that the negotiations will not be allowed to drag on for years: six months to a year should be the timeframe for an agreement.

Fourth, how soon the conflict with Iran is resolved is especially important for Israel, which has stated it will not tolerate a nuclear Iran. More than once, Iran's president Ahmadinejad has threatened Israel's very survival, and the Israelis have no reason to doubt him when he says that he believes Israel should be wiped off the face of the earth. Israeli defense experts, including former directors of Mosad, told me that while Israel would certainly prefer that the international community deal with Iran's egregious behavior, it will not wait indefinitely for this to happen, specifically to the point of allowing Iran to acquire nuclear weapons or master the technology to build them. Iran, from Israel's perspective, has already crossed a critical threshold by successfully enriching uranium, a feat that shortens the time needed (perhaps less than a year) for Iran to reach, what Israel considers, a point of no return. For this reason, Israel believes Ahmadinejad, when he recently announced that Iran is "presently conducting research" on the P-2 centrifuge, which if successful, would potentially quadruple Tehran's enrichment power and present a more immediate and ominous challenge to Israel.

With the quagmire in Iraq, this administration can ill afford to continue pursuing a policy of regime change in Tehran when such a policy has so far been a complete failure. Having successfully enriched uranium, Tehran may be more inclined to make a deal now because with this achievement it has secured a face-saving way out and can negotiate from a stronger position. The Bush administration must recognize this new reality and change course if it wants to prevent setting half of the Middle East on fire.

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## **DEADLY ILLUSIONS**

Alon Ben-Meir – April 10, 2006

Tragically, the Bush administration has been engaged in a deadly game in Iraq from the day of the invasion more than three years ago. It has broken Iraq into pieces and now is trying, hopelessly, to recast it in its own image. Assisted by a healthy dose of arrogance, a

combination of tragic errors, terrible miscalculations, and misuse of intelligence, especially by Vice President Cheney and Defense Secretary Rumsfeld, has brought us to this very sorry day. Iraq is already in a state of civil war, and the country will further disintegrate unless the Bush administration changes course immediately.

One might think that the architects of the war in Iraq would have had a very clear picture of that country and its people before the invasion. As it turned out, the administration knew little about the Iraqi people, their culture, and national characteristics. The Bush team seems to have misassessed the profound impact of Islam not only as a religion but as a way of life for every Iraqi, and has demonstrated utter ignorance of Iraq's factionalism, tribal traditions, and its long history of sectarian division. The administration was searching for Weapons of Mass Destruction when Saddam's real WMD's were his Jihadis, and Ba'athists, who were lying in wait for their day to come. The planners of the war never understood that the Iraqi society was a tapestry stitched together by the iron hand from above. Thus, they did not understand that after more than eight decades of existence as a unified state, and in spite of the people developing a coherent sense of Iraqi nationalism, Iraq's social fabric remained factional, and a distinct line of separation was ardently adhered to in order to retain each faction's separate identity and the loyalty of its members. But President Bush and his defense chief charged into Iraq like bulls into a china shop (forgive the cliché), and with shameless arrogance (the attitude of we know better) have shredded the stitches that held together this delicate tapestry.

Regardless of how the current struggle for power is resolved, Iraq will remain in turmoil for years to come. Administration officials involved in the war efforts never understood that the collective stake of the Shiite, Sunnis, and Kurds in Iraq's future is far less compelling for each of the three major factions than the outcomes they believe they can independently secure for themselves. As a result, millions of Iraqis representing the entire social spectrum see the sectarian fight as existential, and they will spare no resources or efforts to safeguard what they view as their long-term legitimate interests.

It is a deadly illusion for the administration to assume that the insurgency will subside once an inclusive government is formed, especially with Sunnis playing an active role in it. On the contrary, the insurgents view American pressure on the Shiite majority to include the Sunnis as vindication of their own campaign of indiscriminate violence. There is simply no reason for Jihadis, Ba'athists, and other Iraqi nationalists to give up the fight. From their perspective, no matter how large the Sunnis' share in government would be, the Sunnis have lost power and will remain indefinitely powerless unless they now carve something substantial and permanent for themselves. The insurgents have widespread local support; access to nearly unlimited financial resources pouring in from American allies, such as Saudi Arabia, and a huge cache of weapons and explosives, enough to terrorize Shiites and American forces for the indefinite future.

The other critical aspect of the Iraq war is that this administration has never understood the ultimate intentions of the Shiites. Although there is intra-sectarian conflict among the various Shiite factions, they will in the end stick together because they know that unity is their ultimate source of strength. Guided by their spiritual Leader, Grand Ayatollah Sistani, Shiite leaders have from the very beginning of the invasion determined to cooperate with the Americans, knowing full well that this is the only way they can secure national power. Their resolve to tolerate the bloody campaign against them, that is, until recently, forms the core of a three-part strategy. First, they seek to consolidate their power by building a loyal military, internal police, and security apparatus. Second, they seek to keep their tens of thousands-strong militia forces intact, ready to do battle when called on. Finally, once they have achieved and consolidated power, they want to be the first to ask the Americans to leave Iraqi soil and to let them handle the situation in Iraq as they see fit. Decade's long suppression and forced incubation left very little trust between Shiites and Sunnis, and both are seeking security in areas where they demographically predominate. This explains, among other reasons, why a self-imposed sectarian cleansing is currently in progress. Iraq is being divided and may eventually disintegrate into several provinces unless a strongman, most likely a Shiite, who will amass dictatorial powers into his hands but hopefully someone more benevolent than Saddam Hussein, emerges in the near future to stitch it back together.

Mr. Bush and some other top administration officials are finally admitting to making many mistakes in the execution of the war. These admissions, however, are disingenuous not only because they are too little and too late, but because they come at a time when the President feels beleaguered, is running out of options, and is desperate to improve his all time low ratings before the mid-term elections. What the United States needs instead is an exit strategy that is independent of the developments in Iraq and can be executed by a predetermined date within 12 to 18 months. Otherwise, thousands more of Iraqis and Americans will die needlessly, victims of a terrible misadventure with no end in sight.

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## FUTILE DEBATE

Alon Ben-Meir – June 26, 2006

In the recent U.S. Senate debate over a timeframe for troop withdrawal from Iraq, both sides of the aisle seem to have missed the point. Neither the Republicans' "stay the course" approach nor Senator John Kerry's proposal to establish a specific time-table addressed the reality of post-war Iraq. And applying a more flexible timeframe, as advocated by other Democrats, failed equally. Irrespective of how and when American troops are withdrawn, Iraq will gradually edge closer to an all-out civil war unless the country is first divided and then put back together in some kind of confederation.

Although the Democrats were defeated on the Senate floor, the flaws in both approaches remain relevant, because the issue of troop withdrawal will continue to be publicly debated as long as American forces continue to die. But the arbitrary establishment of a time-table for withdrawal will lead not only to genocidal sectarian killings affecting group survival; it will plunge Iraq into anarchy and also inflict irreparable damage to America's already tarnished global image. Moreover, it could endanger the political stability of U.S. allies in the

region, dramatically disrupt oil supplies, further entrench Iran's influence, and engulf other mixed Sunni and Shiite communities in neighboring states in deadly conflict. Of course, the insurgents will await such a departure date, seeing it as their time to have their heyday in Iraq.

The more flexible timeframe approach, as indicated, does not fair much better. As long as the pace of troop withdrawal is influenced by how well Iraqi security forces can battle the insurgents and maintain order, the viability of any planned pullout, flexible or otherwise, is speculative at best. It can also send a negative message to the insurgents that the U.S. staying power is running out, and further allow them to develop a strategy to outwit the Americans by creating a temporary false calm. In addition, a flexible approach cannot work in a climate of uncertainty or depend on prospective power sharing when the Shiites are too strong to want to share power. The absence of any trust between the three main rival communities, of there being any real prospect of their living safely beside each other, makes it even more impossible to achieve at present or in the conceivable future.

The Bush administration's approach to stay the course remains as thoughtless as the way the Iraq war has been conducted from the beginning. Suggesting that America cannot simply cut and run is hardly a substitute for a well-thought out and carefully coordinated plan. The staying-the-course approach presupposes that the creation of a national unity government will automatically solve other daunting political problems; the Iraq government will agree on a constitutional amendment to reflect greater Sunni interests; internal security forces will be well trained and effectively deal with the growing insurgency; these forces will be purged of Saddamists, Ba'athists, and Shiite militants; Shiites and Kurds will agree to disband their militia, and reconstruction of Iraq will proceed, creating the renewal to which most Iraqis aspire. Unfortunately, all these prerequisites to success are unlikely to develop because: a) they run contrary to the long-term interest of the Shiite majority who also control 80 percent of Iraq's oil, b) the Kurds already enjoy complete autonomous rule, with a 20 percent share of Iraq's oil, c) neither Shiites nor Kurds are willing to dismantle their militia, d) wide-spread ethnic cleansing is already a reality throughout the country, consolidating communities by ethnicity instead of by reconciling their differences, e) the Bush administration has decided to end assistance for economic reconstruction, and without it, there is no way the insurgency can be defeated, and f) Washington has reduced funding for the democratic institutions in Iraq. In short, nothing on the ground suggests that the Bush administration is serious about its own "staying the course" notion. While Mr. Bush claims he is pursuing victory (very appropriate in an election year), all he really seeks is to avoid outright defeat and to leave the mess for the next administration to clean up.

Iraq has been broken, and this administration can do nothing to put it together again short of a constitutional amendment that provides independent autonomous rule for the three main factions. For this to happen, the Sunnis must be granted true constitutional control over their destiny and land, as well as an equitable share of Iraq's oil, and each of the three groups needs to have political, religious, cultural, and economic freedom. Once self-ruled regional governments are established, the three groups should then be willing to move toward federalism, with vested powers in foreign policy, national security, and equitable distribution of oil and its revenues. Each might find this option preferable to an otherwise inevitable civil war that will devastate the country and leave behind no victors. In my view, this is the only way to maintain Iraq's territorial integrity and so prevent it from falling prey to neighboring states and other unfriendly outside influences.

American and Iraqi stakes are too high to be subject to politics as usual. To achieve a more peaceful transition in Iraq, the Bush administration needs and may now be able to secure the assent of the United Nations and the European Union to play significant roles while enlisting the cooperation of Iraq's neighbors. Only in this context can Mr. Bush decide on the pace and the level of an orderly and honorable troop withdrawal. Alon Ben-Meir is a professor of international relations at the Center for Global Affairs at NYU and is the Middle East Project Director at the World Policy Institute, [alon@alonben-meir.com](mailto:alon@alonben-meir.com) [www.alonben-meir.com](http://www.alonben-meir.com).

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## **BACK TO STEP ONE**

Alon Ben-Meir—June 19, 2006

The news that Hamas and Fatah may conclude an agreement and avert not only more deadly clashes but reach a consensus on a national political agenda would be the best thing that can happen to the Palestinian people. Fed up with internal infighting, political disarray, corruption, and now, political paralysis, the public is crying, "Enough!" Maybe, just maybe, Palestinian leaders of all political, religious, and ideological leanings will finally set aside immediate narrow self-interests to answer their people's call for an end to violence and suffering.

Having just returned from my sixth visit to the Middle East in less than a year, I certainly do not feel as optimistic as my natural inclination is to be. But then, I ask myself, what does it really take for the Palestinians, and especially Hamas, to comprehend what their real options are? If they are bent on self-destruction, then they should simply continue along their current road, isolated and shunned by the international community while locked in a deadly power struggle with Fatah, leaving scores of fighters and innocent people injured and dying. So what if their treasury is bankrupt, government employees have not been paid for months, violent demonstration have become routine, lawlessness is rampant, personal security is nonexistent, and the public is increasingly hopeless and despairing? To be sure, unless a modicum of stability and security is quickly established, the Palestinian leaders by their own hand will map out the road to national disaster.

So it is not a minute too soon for Fatah, Hamas, and other groups to come to grips with this bleak reality and choose another path. Whichever they select, however, the way will be treacherous and demanding, constantly testing their political will and requiring compromises and sacrifices to maintain a united forward course. Obviously, the situation would have been much easier had Hamas accepted certain political realities that led them to recognize Israel, renounce terrorism, and honor prior Israeli-Palestinian accords. But that is not what happened. Following meetings with scores of top officials in Egypt, Israel, Turkey, and the Palestinian territories, I have concluded that only a single event can introduce some degree of sanity into the dangerously deteriorating situation—a comprehensive ceasefire between Israel and the Palestinians. Not having the liberty to elaborate or to identify my contacts, I can only say that our track-



two effort, which focused on ending the violence on both sides, has made some headway. This prospect has replenished some of my optimism.

Ending the violence will benefit *all* players involved directly and indirectly in this conflict. It will stop Israel's punishing retaliatory strikes and permit negotiations to proceed in a calm atmosphere. Maintaining law and order is absolutely necessary to restoring a semblance of normalcy to the shattered lives of the majority of Palestinians. Despite Cairo's misgivings about Hamas, stability in Gaza would also serve the interests of Egypt, by virtue of the long border it shares with Gaza. Stability should also assuage American concerns about the potential for anarchy, a development that would effectively destroy what is left of the administration's Road Map.

In addition, ending hostilities now will benefit the Palestinians, because of changing sentiments in Israel about unilateralism. While the Olmert government remains committed to territorial realignment, which calls for withdrawal from most of the West Bank, public support in Israel for a unilateral pullout seems to be ebbing. This erosion has been precipitated by international pressure on Israel to pursue a negotiated settlement and by the perception that unilateral disengagement from Gaza did not produce the desired calm. In this regard, the Palestinians may have won the international public relations campaign. If so, this "victory" gives them a golden opportunity to begin negotiations with Israel as long as calm prevails. And, should Hamas and Fatah agree on a united national agenda, there will even be no need for a referendum. President Abbas's credibility in the eyes of his Israeli counterparts at the negotiating table will be greatly enhanced, however, only if all factions fully adhere to a comprehensive ceasefire. Then, Israel will also take critical steps to strengthen Mr. Abbas, such as ending targeting killings, removing many road blocks, releasing prisoners, and making public statements supporting his efforts.

Seeking an end to violence as the base on which all parties can build layers of confidence has been so far elusive. Yet, nothing other than both sides ending every form of violence offers the possibility for an agreement. Hamas and Fatah must now agree on the one prerequisite to reach national reconciliation that lets them begin the arduous negotiating process with Israel. Their commitment to ending hostilities must remain steadfast, regardless of how insurmountable the obstacles at times may seem.

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### **BOLD STEPS FOR PEACE WILL PAY OFF**

Christian Saade\*

Source: *The News and Observer* (www.newsobserver.com), 21 August 2006. Distributed by Common Ground News Service with permission to republish,

A long-term and viable solution to violence emerging from the Middle East is crucial. Peace in the Middle East is necessary for all of us, because the region has become, in its drawn-out suffering, a breeding ground for religious radicalism and terrorism. Yet we need a plan that will work, one that will not further the cycle of violence. Waging war on civilians to uproot radicalism does not work.

Lebanon now has an estimated million refugees, more than 1,000 civilian dead (many of them children) and thousands of wounded and crippled -- not to speak of its devastated infrastructure and the innocents killed in Israel. Collective punishment only deepens the cycle of resentment and revenge.

I have suffered from the onslaught of religious radicalism and know first-hand its dangers. I am an American citizen. I was born in Beirut as a Christian. My family, in the late 1970s, lost its home and business to a radical religious group.

If it was not for the grace of God and an unexpected truce, we would have been executed. Thousands of democratically inclined Arabs, be they Muslims or Christians or Jews, have been killed at the hand of extremists. Extremism has to be stopped, but how? Is it by bombing and burning the areas where some extremists operate? Obviously not, since the horrendous civilian deaths that follow bring more hate and swell the ranks of insurgents.

The great Napoleon, who defeated powerful opponents on the battlefield, was bitterly humbled in Spain by simple insurgents. His policy of reprisals against the towns from where those insurgents struck played into the hand of his enemies. Ten insurgents killed engendered 20 more, and 20 became 100. This approach to insurgency has consistently failed.

Instead, two very efficient steps:

1) Win the hearts and imagination of the population. Build friendly relationships, not only with governments but with the people directly.

Flood the area with humanitarian aid: hospitals, clinics, schools, etc. By diverting only a portion of the billions spent on mega-weaponry we could achieve miracles for the people and win their friendship. They in turn will oppose the spread of violent philosophies. They are the only ones who can.

This is not about symbolic gestures of aid, but a tidal wave of American generosity that will transform the ground on which extremism develops. Why should we have to spend the money? Because it will bring success to our aims: ending violence and extremism. We succeeded in reversing hate and cynicism in Europe and Japan after World War II. We did it then, and we can do it now, winning the hearts and minds of the Arab world. Doing so is to act ethically and smartly. Success would be worth the monetary price, and our generation will see the defeat of extremism.

2) Take a leadership role in demanding a peaceful resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian issue. Let the whole world, especially the Arab countries, know that America will not rest until there is an agreement that provides safety for the Israelis and a state for the Palestinians. We are closer to a resolution now than ever. However, a solution will demand big sacrifices from Palestinians and from Israel. Only our government can "midwife" this.

Granting security to the Israelis and the dignity of a homeland to the Palestinians is essential, now more than ever, to the Jews, the Palestinians, the Arabs and the world. On it rests the elimination of a breeding ground of terrorism.

The plight of the Palestinians is one of the highest priority issues for Muslims all over the world (more than a billion people). Jerusalem is as holy for them as for Judaism and Christianity. Let the U.S. administration be known as the great peacemaker of the century. Settle that issue peacefully and terrorism will become anemic.

Leadership for Israeli-Palestinian peace will give us the victory over terrorism we long for. It will be the greatest gift for the suffering people of Lebanon, the troubled civilians in Israel and all of us, here and abroad, anguished about terrorism. Once we comprehend that such a peace can pull the carpet from under the feet of extremism, we will provide the leadership to achieve it.

\*Christian Saade was involved in peace dialogues and negotiations between Christian Lebanese, Muslim Lebanese and Palestinians during Lebanon's civil war. He is currently Director of the non-profit Institute for Life-Leadership coaching NC, and works as a life-coach.

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## LEBANON FOR THE GOLAN

Marc Gopin\*

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In the past Syria has used Lebanon as a card to be traded against Israel. It maintained quiet on its own border with Israel while it kept Israel's Lebanese border a nightmare in order to get it to give back the Golan. Israel can no longer tolerate proxy warfare in Lebanon, especially now that the next stage of modern warfare, rockets on cities, has traumatized the Israeli population. Something utterly new must happen politically.

The long-term goals of those who want a lasting peace in the region are a Lebanon freed of a militarised Hezbollah and the influence of external states, a full normalization of relations between Israel, Syria and Lebanon, and the Golan returned to Syria.

Here is how the liberation of Lebanon and the return of the Golan work in steps pursued simultaneously:

Western and Muslim states provide a security force for South Lebanon with Syrian collaboration.

Western and Muslim states provide a massive aid and reconstruction package for all of Lebanon (to which Israel should heavily contribute as a gesture), including the largest fund specifically for the South to be administrated by Shi'ites.

Syria quietly cuts off the military Iranian supply line to Hezbollah. Syria quietly pushes Hamas' military in Damascus over the next year toward the PA's posture. Israel publicly places the Golan on the table of a renewed peace process over the next year that will include cultural confidence-building gestures. The West rehabilitates the Assad regime in stages, but only contingent upon steady evidence of return to the Damascus Spring and a decline in threats to various Lebanese political figures.

Here are the objections:

There is a wing in Syria that wants to keep the wars going so that it can hold on to power. Answer: There is decisive evidence, which I have personally witnessed, that there is a range of opinion, and that the more militant and corrupt are driven into the shadows when moderates demonstrate visible gains for Syria by engagement with the West.

The Israelis will never be able politically to give up the Golan at the same time as unilateral withdrawal from the West Bank, which means that the Palestinians will be excluded. Answer: Real evidence of peace with Syria and a Syrian withdrawal of support for Arab movements that seek Israel's destruction will change the Israeli poll numbers dramatically in favour of diplomacy and an eventual deal on the Golan and other territories.

Iran will keep the wars and radicalism going because the mullahs will have to give up power otherwise. Answer: there is strong evidence of considerable dissatisfaction with the regime, including even among leading clerics. Serious gestures by the West toward Lebanon, Iran, Syria and Palestine outlined above will strengthen moderate Shi'ite thinking even in Iran and discredit Ahmadinejad's apocalyptic interpretations of Shi'ism. This will be coupled with a re-assertion of a generous energy deal for Iran and an invitation to a more moderate Iran to join the Lebanese reconstruction project. Khomeini, the cautious survivor, will soften and abandon his extremist president.

Sunni or Shi'ite extremist movements will find some way to blow up the future in Lebanon and Syria. Answer: Political consensus by large numbers of states and major powers has always been the most stabilizing force of human civilization, and this consensus can survive isolated spoilers. But no one can survive the current situation of chaos, festering hatreds and injuries, because the major powers are impotent and divided. The key defence against extremism is determined coalitions. That is why the democracies, especially Israel, must rise to the occasion and present honourable, generous alternatives to war to the Arab populations of Lebanon, Palestine and Syria. This is what will make the tides shift.

The Neoconservative grip on the White House will never allow this soft approach to occur. Answer: The U.S. will not stand in the way of a movement for change within the region because the U.S. position is moribund and everyone in Washington, and Texas, knows it. Gone is the fanatic confidence of Neoconservative ideology, and it is certainly not so strong as to go up against a determined position by the parties themselves. If Israel reaches out strategically to the region, it will pay no price in Washington for doing so because the Israel Lobby will defend it no matter what.

Israel, Jordan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and, yes, Syria, must make a bold decision to begin this movement for change on their own, goaded by third party states in Europe and Asia. Israel, in order to survive in the long-term, just might be ready to extricate itself from ideological confusion in the United States and go for a political alternative to un-winnable wars against terrorists.

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## THE SYRIAN OPTION: THERE IS SOMEONE TO TALK TO

Ron Pundak\*

Source: *Yediot Ahronot* (www.ynetnews.com), August 10, 2006. Distributed by the Common Ground News Service (CGNews: <http://www.commongroundnews.org>) with permission to republish.

Tel Aviv - Israeli state thinking at the end of military operations between Israel and Hezbollah must take into account Syria as a stable partner, even if this doesn't suit the American administration. The neoconservative approach presents Syria together with Iran as part of an axis of evil that the Bush Administration created, but the cost of America's stance against Syria is likely to be paid here in Israel. Syria, today, is the potential anchor for stability and peace in the region.

There is hardly anything in common between Syria and Iran. The ruling Baath/Syrian party is in essence a secular one whilst the governing party in Iran is religious and fundamentalist. Most of the Syrian population is Sunni, whilst in Iran they are Shiite. The Iranian leadership is interested in a religious state whilst the Syrian governors belong to the Alawi sect, which mainstream Shiites and Sunnis both consider unorthodox, because they do not keep even one of the five pillars of Sunni Islam or the six Shiite pillars. The two states do not have a common border or common natural resources. It's almost strange to say, the only thing unifying these two states is the American government's stand against them.

However, Syria, in contrast to Iran, does not call for the destruction of Israel. In fact, to the contrary, the Syrians call for Israel to return to the negotiation table and sign a peace agreement in the spirit of the Saudi and the Arab League Peace Initiative of 2002 that calls for an Israeli withdrawal from all territories captured in '67; the establishment of a Palestinian state; an agreed solution to the refugee question; the signing of a peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians, the Syrians and the Lebanese; and normalization of relations between Israel and the Arab world.

Peace with Syria will weaken Hezbollah. The supply lines of Iranian and Syrian weaponry will be cut off. The Syrians won't have a need to use Hezbollah in their conflict with Israel and the Syrian economy will enable it to let go of its grip on Lebanon. Without Syrian support and without a conflict with Israel, Hezbollah is liable to return to its natural dimensions as an extremist organizational faction that is not even supported by most of the Shiite population of Lebanon.

There is a clear, painful price to pay for peace between Israel and Syria: withdrawal from all of the Golan Heights. This move seems very far from reality today; however, in practice, it is what Yitzhak Rabin deposited as a commitment in the hands of the Americans. Ehud Barak also agreed to a similar deal, but at the last minute repented of it, and, with this, seemingly prevented President Clinton from getting President Assad, the father, from signing onto the details of the agreement.

Will the Israeli public agree to a deal which will hand over "total territory for total peace", between Israel and Syria and for an agreement using the formula of Clinton/Geneva between Israel and the Palestinians? Here again is a question of trust. A state like ours that yearns for life needs to look at the Egyptian/Israeli and the Jordanian/Israeli peace model and understand that a peace agreement can bring quiet to a border, good neighbourliness and economic development. Therefore, two-dimensional thinking, in terms of bad and good, of Islam against the rest of the world, is not helpful.

Reality can still change and look different -- and it can happen according to parameters and drafts of agreements that already exist: a peace with Syria that will limit Hezbollah's strength; a solution to the Palestinian issue through an agreement that will bring to an end both the conflict and the historical, religious argument over Jerusalem -- and will also weaken Hamas' hold on the public; peace on the Lebanese border; and a chain of peace agreements and normalization with the rest of the Arab states from Saudi Arabia to Libya. If this becomes a new reality, the Islamic militant threat will diminish and will be totally different.

\*Ron Pundak is the director general of the Peres Center.

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## A FAREWELL TO DREAMS

*Forward Editorial\**

Source: *Forward* (<http://www.forward.com/>), June 3, 2006. Distributed by the Common Ground News Service with permission to republish

It might not be apparent at first glance, but something important has shifted in the Middle East in the past few weeks that could, with wisdom and luck, change the dynamic of Israeli-Palestinian relations for the better. For the first time in years, the top leaders on both sides have come out with forceful diplomatic initiatives that challenge their own constituencies to bend on a matter of cardinal importance to the other side.

The concessions they propose are concrete and fundamental. Ehud Olmert, Israel's prime minister, has announced plans for an Israeli withdrawal from most of the West Bank, aiming to end Israel's rule over the Palestinians. Mahmoud Abbas, president of the Palestinian Authority, has challenged his people -- specifically his legislature, controlled by the rejectionist Hamas -- to accept a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders, alongside Israel.

Their words hint at their initiatives' magnitude -- and their similarity. Olmert, addressing Congress last month, declared that Israelis "have to relinquish part of our dream to leave room for the dream of others." Abbas delivered the same message to the Palestinian legislature the next day. "This is what we have", Abbas said of the post-1967 territories. "We cannot talk about dreams."

Each man has taken considerable risks, stretching his nation's consensus as far as politically possible and then some. Each faces furious opposition from both front and rear. Each is challenged from behind by religious rejectionists who insist the entire land is holy and cannot be divided. In front of them they face -- well, each other, and the weight of the other side's public opinion.

Each finds his concessions denounced on the other side as hopelessly insufficient, even fraudulent. Palestinians deride Olmert's realignment plan as a thinly veiled land grab, since it would keep some settlements. Israelis view Abbas's initiative as a warmed-over version of the old 1974 "stages" plan, in which the Palestine Liberation Organization accepted statehood within the 1967 borders as a first stage toward Israel's destruction.

Both dismissals are overstated. Olmert's realignment is a starting position, the best arrangement Israel can make for itself in the absence of a Palestinian partner. If Israel could expect a peaceful neighbor on the other side of its new border, it could be far more flexible in drawing the border. Abbas, for his part, has made plain that the plan he is promoting, the so-called prisoners' document, is the closest he can get to his preferred starting position, the 2002 Arab League plan, which promises Israel full recognition in return for full withdrawal. Indeed, as the PLO's 1974 "stages" plan was the first step toward Oslo, the prisoners' document is meant to drag Hamas onto the slippery slope toward accepting Israel. That is why Hamas fears it so.

Of course, the analogy between the two men's positions is far from perfect. The opposition that Abbas faces from a ruling Hamas is far more formidable than anything Olmert faces from a defeated, demoralized settler movement. Nor do settlers, with their overzealous real-estate schemes, pose a moral threat anything like the murderous tactics of Hamas.

And yet, the differences can be overstated. Hamas, it must be recalled, won power with just 44% of the popular vote, thanks to the quirks of the electoral system; of that 44%, at least half voted not for Hamas rejectionism but against Fatah corruption. Most Palestinians accept coexistence. Abbas's challenge is to reach over the heads of Hamas to mobilize his silenced majority. It is tough, but not impossible.

As for Olmert, his opposition is gravely underestimated. Dislodging the 8,000 settlers of Gaza last summer was one of Israel's largest and most wrenching military operations. The planned West Bank withdrawal will be seven times larger and many times more wrenching. The stage is set for a massive civil confrontation, a prospect that daunts even moderate Israelis.

Cautious heads on both sides are holding back, waiting to see how far the other side will go before taking a leap. That is precisely the wrong move. Each side sees the other side's step as insufficient, and vows it will offer no more, reinforcing the other side's reluctance to give. Each expression of derision reinforces the other side's feeling that no concession is ever appreciated. Each side is waiting for the other side to show some optimism.

This is a moment when ordinary people on both sides can make a difference by giving voice to that optimism. Israelis and Palestinians have taken important steps to demonstrate that they can be partners. What's needed now is some applause.

\* *This article is distributed by the Common Ground News Service (CGNews) and can be accessed at*  
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## THE NEED FOR A REFERENDUM

Daoud Kuttab,\*

Source: *The Jordan Times* (<http://www.jordantimes.com/>), June 2-3, 2006. Distributed by the Common Ground News Service with permission to republish.

The assignment the editors at Al Quds Educational television gave their reporter seemed simple: go out and assess the public's reaction to the suggestion by President Mahmoud Abbas to hold a referendum based on the Palestinian prisoners' agreement.



Source: *The Daily Star* (<http://www.dailystar.com.lb>), July 11, 2006. Distributed by the Common Ground News Service with permission to republish.

It has been five months since employees of the Palestinian Authority (PA) received their salaries. However, the financial siege imposed by the West on Palestinian areas is not affecting Hamas employees, but mostly those of Fatah and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), since they make up the majority of PA employees. Hamas members, including those in the Legislative Council, receive their salaries through their own institutions. Just a few weeks ago, Palestinian Foreign Minister Mahmoud Zahhar, a Hamas leader, returned to Gaza from a trip with \$20 million given to him by Iran to finance the movement's activities.

The PLO is under duress economically and politically. The kidnapping of the Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit by Hamas and the subsequent Israeli invasion of Gaza have created a dilemma for Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas: He wants to resume negotiations with the Israelis, but finds no counterpart on the other side. Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert does not consider him a partner. During a conference of Nobel laureates in Petra, Jordan, a week before the kidnapping, Olmert declared he would meet Abbas within two weeks, but now everything has changed.

The fact is that the idea of strengthening Abbas or the PLO vis-à-vis Hamas never seemed to be a serious option for the Israeli government. In Petra, Olmert did not even refer to Abbas as the "Palestinian president", but only as the "PA chairman". Furthermore, he stressed that Abbas was not the Palestinian prime minister, reminding everyone that as long as the Palestinian government consisted of Hamas members, Israel would not have a partner for negotiations.

Olmert also explained his reasons for pursuing a unilateral withdrawal policy in the Occupied Territories: the United States, France, and the United Kingdom supported his position of not holding official bilateral meetings with the Palestinians until Hamas recognized Israel and the PA disarmed terrorist groups as required by the "road map". Olmert also reiterated his objection to Israel's withdrawing to the 1967 borders.

Without support on the Israeli side, Abbas faces a dilemma. Even PLO members are now saying that, thanks to Israel's offensive in Gaza, all Palestinian factions support Hamas' resistance. Indeed, press reports early this week affirmed such a change in mood, with the popularity of Palestinian Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh reportedly on the rise. The PLO members argue that Israel's attacks in Gaza are not the right strategy for preventing terrorist attacks and the launching of Qassam rockets, and that, by failing to support Abbas, Israel and the West have deprived themselves of a partner for negotiations. Abbas' witticism, "they never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity", repeatedly used to describe the Palestinians, now seems to apply more accurately to Israel.

During the Petra conference, Abbas showed his willingness to compromise. The portrayal of Abbas as a non-charismatic, weak leader was belied by his self-assurance. Sitting next to Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel, he answered the latter's pointed questions on his position regarding terrorism, the Holocaust, negotiations with Israel and the Hamas government. Abbas stated that he considered attacks against civilians to be a crime against humanity. He said that he felt empathy with Jews over the Holocaust, explaining that was why he looked forward to a two-state solution that would provide safety and hope for both Jews and Arabs.

Abbas said that he was ready to negotiate on all issues, including Jerusalem. Abbas also stressed that he was fighting terrorism in Gaza every day and trying to stop armed groups from launching Qassam rockets against Israel. Despite his newly acquired self-assurance, however, Abbas still does not seem to be well understood by the international community.

Abbas' trip to Tunis at the end of May, where he sought to reunite the PLO by reconciling with Fatah general secretary Farouq Qaddoumi, did not capture much attention. His desire to establish a valid political alternative to Hamas among the Palestinians, and Qaddoumi's consent to become the PLO foreign minister under Abbas, was not regarded by observers as particularly important. Yet the PLO has shown willingness to move toward peace, if Abbas can only be given an opportunity to do so.

The future now seems uncertain for both the Palestinians and Israelis. Iran is now inciting the Muslim world against Israel, so an escalation by the Lebanese Hizbullah should not be ruled out. According to PLO members in Tunis, a new generation of Palestinians is unhappy with the PLO leadership's policy of negotiating with Israel, since this seems to lead nowhere. Therefore, while Abbas is now willing to make territorial compromises, younger PLO members may be unwilling to accept this.

There is much frustration and pressure inside the PLO. Members do not know which measures to adopt in order to stabilize the PA. If prior to the Israeli invasion of Gaza Palestinians were on the verge of civil war, now they are united. The PLO therefore feels that it cannot afford to confront Hamas and has no real chance of resuming talks with Israel, since the population will not support such a policy.

During a visit to Malaysia, Zahhar asked the PLO ambassador there what he has done for the Palestinian people during the last 40 years. The ambassador answered that the question was indeed appropriate, since, if the Palestinians ended up with someone like Zahhar in a position of responsibility, the PLO must have been utterly incompetent.



Source: *BBC News* (<http://news.bbc.co.uk>), July 5, 2006. Distributed by the Common Ground News Service with permission to republish.

When it comes to the Palestinians and the Israelis, it is usually a tale of two stories. They are able to take the same set of events and draw utterly different conclusions about how they got to where they are, what is happening now and what to do next.

When it is not a tale of two stories, it is a tale of more than two, when one side cannot even agree with its confreres what is happening. For people who live under the same sun and breathe the same air, empathy is a foreign land.

In that sense the crisis in Gaza is business as usual. The Israelis and Palestinians are levelling the same accusations against each other, accusing each other of terrorism and oppression. Both believe that they are acting in self defence. Forget whether one version is true and the other false. The important thing is that the people who hold these views believe that they are true, and their leaders make decisions based on them.

Maybe that is entirely reasonable. After all, there is no political process of any sort between the Palestinians and Israel, and to talk of a "peace process" is a bad joke. At times like this, when leaders are under intense pressure, they fall back on some of the old formulas that have been tried -- and which have failed -- many times before.

Ehud Olmert, an experienced Israeli politician who is still low down on the learning curve of being a prime minister, has fallen back on traditional responses to a security crisis with the Palestinians. He has taken a tough line and backed it with Israel's armed forces. He and his staff would argue that they are using force sparingly, that they are taking care to avoid unnecessary Palestinian casualties and any risk to the missing soldier, Corporal Gilad Shalit. And they would also say that they have no alternative, that they did not start it, that force used by the Palestinians must be answered with force.

The two leaders of the Palestinians who live in the land that they want for a state, Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh of Hamas and President Mahmoud Abbas of Fatah are under pressure, too. Mr Haniyeh is in a particularly uncomfortable position. Unless Hamas puts down its guns (at present highly unlikely) and releases its prisoner (very unlikely without the release of Palestinian prisoners), he could end up being killed by Israel, like other Hamas leaders. But he argues that the Palestinians did not start this crisis, that Israel has used its power recklessly in Gaza in the last few months, without regard for the lives of Palestinians.

This is the first big armed crisis since Palestinians voted Hamas into power in January. It is not quite the same as the standoffs and clashes that Israel had over the years with Fatah, the rival Palestinian faction. After the Oslo peace process started in 1993, Fatah had an ambivalent attitude to the armed struggle. Hamas does not have that problem. It has a political strategy, and even though until recently it was observing a long ceasefire, but it has never promised to put down its weapons. So now it is using them, and will fight as Israel pushes further into the Gaza Strip. But in the 39 years since Israel occupied the West Bank and Gaza, history has delivered a few fundamental lessons, which neither side at the moment is in any mood to absorb.

The most important lesson for Israel is that force does not work. It can deliver some tactical advantages. The assassination of many of the leaders of Hamas, for example, was a severe blow to the movement. But did it kill it? Not even slightly. Hamas can still kill Israelis, and it has expanded its operations to winning elections.

The most important lesson for the Palestinians is that force does not work. It can deliver some tactical advantages. Resistance to occupation, at the moment, is popular. But has it ever threatened the existence of the Jewish state? Not for a second. And is it bringing the creation of an independent Palestinian state any closer? Not by an inch.

I can already hear supporters of the Palestinians and the Israelis protesting that they have tried making political concessions and have had them hurled back on a tide of blood. But the alternative to not trying again could be another generation of bloodshed, and who wants that? If this crisis escalates further, Israel may well be tempted to topple the Hamas government. But what will happen after that? Would there be more or less chaos in the territories? And Hamas may be tempted, if this crisis escalates, to kill Israeli civilians. But would that make the Israelis get out of Gaza? No: it would encourage them to stay longer, and to use more force.

Even if the leaders of Israel and the Palestinians agreed with this interpretation of the use of force over 40 years, it will not help this time round. The Gaza crisis is doomed to run its course, in the same way that Palestinians and Israelis are doomed to live alongside each other. But eventually, their only chance of creating a decent future for their children is to make a political agreement about sharing the land between the River Jordan and the Mediterranean that is acceptable to both sides. To do that they will both have to recognise that peace has a price. Up to now, in all the years of negotiations, neither side has been prepared to pay what is needed in lost dreams and hard choices. You cannot do peace on the cheap. But the alternative is much more costly, for everyone.

\*Jeremy Bowen is BBC News Middle East editor in Jerusalem This article is distributed by the Common Ground News Service (CGNews) and can be accessed at [www.commongroundnews.org](http://www.commongroundnews.org).



## WHAT WE THE READERS ARE ABOUT





be enough – together with a reciprocal and monitored ceasefire – to trigger a different approach by the international community or, if the U.S. is not yet prepared to go along, at least by the EU and other Quartet members.

**Thirdly, an immediate Israeli-Lebanese ceasefire is necessary: pursuing a military knockout is unrealistic and counterproductive.** The Lebanese case is far more complex. What potentially might have been yet another chapter in the ongoing tit-for-tat between Israel and Hizbollah has become something very different. The brazen nature of the initial Hizbollah operation, coupled with the fact that it closely followed Hamas's capture of one of its soldiers, lent it, in Israeli eyes, an entirely new meaning. Fearing a dangerous erosion of its military deterrence on two fronts simultaneously, the new government quickly escalated in an effort to achieve decisive outcomes against its adversaries. Hizbollah followed suit, for the first time launching rockets deep into Israel. Step by rapid step, the stakes and nature of the conflict have shifted: Israel increasingly sees it as a battle for its and the region's future; Hizbollah – torn between its identity as a Lebanese/Shiite movement and a messianic Arab-Islamist one – has increasingly slipped into the latter. On both sides, a tactical fight is metamorphosing into an existential war.

The key to managing this conflict, therefore, is to ensure it reverts to more manageable size by producing a ceasefire that puts an immediate, reciprocal end to attacks. To achieve that goal will require agreement on two steps that would rapidly follow: a prisoner swap and an understanding between all parties (Hizbollah included) that the current UN presence in South Lebanon will be strengthened with a multinational force. Injection of such a force carries considerable risk, as Lebanon's history suggests: given the depth of confessional divisions in Lebanon, it could trigger a deadly civil conflict. But in the absence of a strong Lebanese army, and given legitimate Israeli concerns, it has become a regrettable necessity. Bearing all this in mind, and mindful too of sobering lessons from Iraq, any such force should have a limited mandate (principally verifying adherence to the ceasefire), be authorised by the UN Security Council, work closely with the Lebanese army, and ensure it does not become an unwitting party to Lebanon's sectarian battles.

Anything more ambitious at this time – including Israel's desire to prolong military efforts until Hizbollah is crippled, and dispatch of a force charged with disarming the movement or full implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1559 – could bring Lebanon to breaking point, risking more loss of life and serious escalation. Israeli and U.S. hopes that Hizbollah can rapidly be cut down to size, that the Lebanese government will confront it and its civilians rise against it, fly in the face of history. Hizbollah has not been significantly weakened nor, despite broad anger at its action, has its position on the Lebanese scene markedly eroded. In the past, Israeli military operations have only bolstered militant elements and, over time, rallied domestic opinion around them. The central government is not now, nor will it be soon, in a position to act against a movement that represents a critical domestic constituency and is present at all national levels – the government included. Should Hizbollah and its allies be pushed in a corner, they are liable to react, even at the cost of destabilising the country as a whole, disrupting its precarious inter-confessional balance and plunging it into a new round of sectarian strife.

Achieving the desired outcome while minimising risks to Lebanon's stability will require the EU and UN to continue talking to Hizbollah despite pressures to cease. It also will require engagement with Syria, preferably by the U.S. Damascus repeatedly has demonstrated its nuisance capacity in Lebanon; it needs to be given incentives to cooperate, along with clear warnings if it does not.

**Fourthly, to be sustainable, the ceasefire needs to be urgently followed by intensive diplomatic efforts to tackle root causes – all of them.** A ceasefire by definition will be fragile and at best temporary, for it does not meet core concerns. Israel would be left with a hostile, armed force to its north; Lebanon with the reality of an autonomous militia and a southern neighbour eager to eradicate Hizbollah; and both the latter and its Syrian ally with unaddressed political issues. The U.S. is correct in asserting that "root causes" need to be addressed, but this cannot be done selectively nor should the international community stop half-way by focusing exclusively on Hizbollah's status.

Recent history should serve as a guide. The international community has identified important goals but gone about achieving them in all the wrong ways: UN Security Council Resolution 1559's fundamental flaw was that it aimed at internationalising the Hizbollah question without regionalising the quest for a solution. It is not possible to remove Hizbollah's arms without dealing with the justifications it invokes for maintaining them; to remake Lebanon by focusing on Hizbollah at the expense of broader questions related to the confessional distribution of power; and to do all this by isolating and targeting Syria, not involving it. Instead, continuous, robust and comprehensive diplomatic effort is required on several levels simultaneously:

- resumption of an urgent internal Lebanese dialogue on full implementation of the 1989 Taif Accords and Resolution 1559 items;
- swift return of displaced persons to the South as prolongation of the current untenable situation risks producing an internal explosion;
- urgent donor and especially Arab commitments to help with Lebanon's reconstruction;
- resolution of pending Israeli-Lebanese issues so as to dry up the complaints that feed Hizbollah's militancy;
- engaging Syria and Iran as a means of inducing Hizbollah cooperation; and
- reinvigorating the whole Israeli-Arab peace process.

This last point is key. The accelerated plunge into the abyss is the price paid for six years of diplomatic neglect; without a negotiating process, regional actors have been left without rules of the game, reference points or arbiters. In this respect, although their dynamics are different and they need separate solutions, the Palestinian and Lebanese crises clearly intersect. Only through a serious and credible rekindling of the long dormant peace process can there be any hope whatsoever of addressing, and eliminating, root causes.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

To the Quartet (U.S., EU, Russia, UN), the Governments of Lebanon and Israel, the Palestinian Authority, Hizbollah and All Other Relevant Parties:

1. Deal with the Gaza and Lebanon crises separately.
2. Address the Palestinian crisis by pursuing a deal including the following elements:
  - (a) Hamas must release the Israeli soldier it holds and reinstate the truce while the Palestinian Authority must seek to stop all militias from firing rockets;
  - (b) simultaneously, Israel must end its Gaza incursion, cease offensive military operations in the occupied territories and release recently jailed cabinet members and parliamentarians as well as other Palestinian prisoners (such as those who have not been charged with an offence, have been convicted on minor charges or are seriously ill or underage); and
  - (c) the international boycott of the Palestinian Authority government should end.
3. Seek an immediate Israeli-Lebanese ceasefire with clear understandings that it will include the following elements:
  - (a) an immediate, reciprocal cessation of attacks;
  - (b) an early prisoner swap; and
  - (c) agreement by all parties on strengthening the current UN presence in South Lebanon with a UN-mandated multinational force charged with verifying adherence to the ceasefire and working closely with the Lebanese army.
4. Follow the ceasefire with urgent and intensive diplomatic efforts to tackle all relevant root causes, with efforts focused simultaneously on:
  - (a) an internal Lebanese dialogue on full implementation of the Taif Accords and Resolution 1559 items, including:
    - i. eventual disarmament or integration into the army of Hizbollah;
    - ii. reforming the political system; and
    - iii. establishing a more credible, national army and security doctrine that can ensure the country's defence;
  - (b) prompt return of displaced persons to the South;
  - (c) donor and especially Arab commitments to provide significant and urgent financial assistance to help rebuild Lebanon and alleviate its public debt;
  - (d) resolution of pending Israeli-Lebanese issues, including:
    - i. the fate of the contested Shebaa farms, with formal agreement by Syria that Shebaa is Lebanese and by Israel that it will withdraw;
    - ii. Israeli incursions into Lebanese water and airspace; and
    - iii. cooperation on demining efforts;
  - (e) engaging Syria, reintegrating it into the regional equation and discarding any agenda of externally-imposed regime change in exchange for its commitment to halt destabilisation efforts in Lebanon and for support on Hizbollah's gradual disarmament or integration into the Lebanese army;
  - (f) engaging Iran by addressing a broad array of issues, including the nuclear question, Iraq, and the region as a whole; and
  - (g) reinvigorating the Arab-Israeli peace process in both its Palestinian and Syrian tracks.

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**NEVA SHALOM/WHAT AL-SALAM  
THE ISRAELI/ARAB COMMUNITY THAT IS MAKING THE IMPOSSIBLE POSSIBLE**

Dr. Frank Cardelle\*

„The age of nations is past, the task before us now,  
if we are to survive is to shake off  
our ancient prejudices and build the earth.”

*Teihard de Chardin*

In the Gaza Strip in March of 2006 an Israeli T5 Stinger missile slammed into the side of a car carrying five Palestinian militants and their leaders five year old daughter. All were killed instantly as the car was engulfed in a horrific ball of fire. Soon after a 15 year old female suicide bomber took revenge by stepping into a crowded street near Tel Aviv and blows herself up taking six Israeli1s with her and wounding close to a dozen more.

These two events describe the everyday calamity that goes in the hub of the Middle East conflict. One that has been going on since the War of 1948 when the Israelis fought and won their independence and declared the territory of Israel the Jewish Homeland.

Today, this bloody conflict still goes on as both sides bring much pain and suffering to one another. A conflict and crisis that mirrors all conflict and crisis the world over in one way or another, from country to country, community to community, family to family and brother to brother. Will there ever be an end to this conflict? Can Jews and Arabs learn to share the same land, breath the same air and learn to co-exist? Some believe 'Yes' and others believe that this can never be resolved as the conditions and causes are too deeply entrenched in the hearts, minds and souls of both Jewish and Arab camps. A few even believe that this is merely an impossible task.

Not long ago I traveled to Israel to see for myself what I had, like many others had only heard and read about for years. I wanted to find out what was not being talked about and what we do not hear much about but only through the evening news or the headlines in the daily press or not at all. During the month of my stay in Israel I came across a community in the country that few people really knew much about. Others did not know anything or chose not to even discuss the topic.

In this article I want to share my own experience of this community that I had the good fortune to locate and spend some time. While there I had the opportunity to talk to many people in this unique place and even got to watch them "live" their experience. I met teachers, parents and even talked with a few young people ,both Arabs and Jew alike. I also was lucky enough to spend several hours in deep discussion with the democratically, elected mayor of the community. An Arab Palestinian and Christian. In a short time we became friends. He was a wise, thoughtful and intelligent man. I learned much from our shared encounters. I hope by sharing my experience of what I learned there the reader audience will have at least another view of things that goes deeper and beyond the usual media report. Perhaps, then we can see upfront and know about important pieces of a story or event that is often overlooked and blocked through the sensationalism of the media.

I give you Neva Shalom/Wahat Al- Salam. The only community in Israel where Jews and Arabs CHOOSE to live together, are building a better future for their children and have done so for over twenty-five years.

Building a Foundation for Dialogue, Cooperation and Peace.

As taken from the community brochure:

"Nestled on a hillside off the main highway between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, the community of Neva Shalom/ Wahat Al- Salam stands as an alternative to regional violence and strife. The „Oasis of Peace" as it is known in Hebrew and Arabic is made up of dedicated Jews and Palestinians, all Israeli citizens, who have established a model that they hope others will see as evidence that a new kind of society is possible. One where the state of Israel is sustained; where the Arab minority owns an equal share, has a legitimate voice; where traditions and culture are valued as an integral facet of the rich history of the middle East"

I have to confess that after I first read the words from the above I expected to see people with smiling faces and gestures of warmth towards the public. After all they represented something out of the ordinary as is often the case when people join together to become the pioneers of something new to the world. In this case certainly new for the conflicted region of Israel. While I did see some smiling faces and met people who were warm and friendly. I also met others who had frowns on their faces whether this was in the office, Hotel or small shops and markets. In short these people were just ordinary folks going about the business of living and like everyone else had stressful moments and bad days. Perhaps, this was because of a conflict in a family matter, or some important decision needed to be made to improve the lives of people in the community. They like anyone else had those moments when they raised their voice, or said something that hurt someone else etc.

The difference in this community is that the sit down and find the best way to resolve the dispute or improve the skills needed to bring about understanding and ease. They do not pickup guns and began shooting one another or finding other ways to bring about the abuse and humiliation of another person as well as themselves. It did not matter wether they were Arab or Jew or Christian or which family member of the 52 families they happened to come from. Like the rest of us humans who possess less than perfect traits and qualities. They too had struggles with thier emotions and „Archaic mind-sets", those that are simply part of any exchange between people but they found better and more healthier ways for doing this. At Neva Shalom/Wahat Al-Salam these have become some of the guiding principles for how they operate as a community. They take the time and make the effort to go where others often fear to tread. They go for a more lastin

approach that infuses all aspects of their lives on a daily basis. They go towards dialogue and beyond the staid clothes of limitedness and opinion.

One thing that I found particularly interesting about the community is learning that the founder Bruno Hussar was a converted Jew to Catholicism. Perhaps, this symbolized something important and was a key for the communities birth and vision. This is to be able to understand others people beliefs, backgrounds and traditions more deeply it might be helpful to have lived this or at least the desire and effort to do so.

Another part of the community that drew my attention was the special way the children are educated. In the community they have a bilingual school K-8 teaching from both Hebrew and Arabic languages. Here the teachers both Jewish and Palestinian help the children to know more deeply their rich cultural heritage while respecting the others. This program has been so successful that the school has received official endorsement from the office of the Ministry of Education of the state of Israel. Plus, several parents both Jews and Arabs outside of the community have sent their children to the school to be part of a more pioneering approach to learning about cultural differences.

The other program in the community that has attracted everyone's attention is what is called the School for Peace. Here one of the members of the Community, A Professor from Jerusalem has launched a unique encounter method in teaching both Arabs and Jews to really see and understand one another and the Conflict in thier country. This program has been offered in several Universities in the country and many have been trained in the programs methods. People from around the world come to partake in the unusual method of conflict resolution.

After speaking with more people, (sometimes in their homes over dinner) I learned that while many people want to participate in this „pioneer venture“ only a few are accepted. It would seem that it takes more than just a desire or even a dream to really be a part of the experiment going on in the Community. It takes a full commitment and a willingness to learn, grow and discover continuously how to really do what it takes to truly change. Although are many people who say they can be successful in some experience like this. It is only a few that can go for the duration. This is what the members look for when a potential applicant stands before them to be voted into the community or not. This is what I was told when I asked about this.

As I come closer to the end of this article I am wondering how I can bring its closure in the best way. I think probably, the best way to do this justice is to say the following:

I have no illusions that Neva Shalom/ Wahat Al- Salam is Utopia or even close to this. I say this because some people want to lay this label onto he heads of the people there. Something they do not need. Not at all. They are real, honest, courageous human beings who have taken it on themselves to try to create and find „another more healthy way to respond to a crisis that has been going on for far too long. Where other solutions have failed and even caused a regressive shift in matters. This community and its people continue to take the sometimes difficult steps out of blindness, and limitedness, in thought , feeling and choise that has kept them and people around them prisoners of an unhealthy attitude and lifestyle. These people should be congratulated for not only being able to do what they have already, but to do this when many people from all around them, from both sides look at them and what they are trying to do with suspicion and disdain. But what is more important here then this is that in spite of this response, they still carry on. Instead of blaming and complaining as others do, and offering nothing useful in exchange they still attempt to find better and lasting ways to have peace in thier country and among their people. I applaud them for this because it is not easy at all making the „impossible“ even close to possible. For this they are a model to us all everywhere on the planet.

In closing, I will let the voice of one of Neva Shalom/Wahat Al-Salam' member's express the very simple message of what they are trying to do.

"In the day to day life and interaction of a small community, we are bridging the gap that leads others who live apart to fear, hate and resort to violence."

Beyond this if people want to know more about this unique community in Israel. I encourage anyone to go there and see for themselves. Of course, people may come away with different views than mine in this article but this is fine and well. Because when we can have different views about how we see and understand something and this is just accepted. We are on our way to a more peaceful world. This I believe is the calling for Neva Shalom/ Wahat Al- Salam and other kinds of communities who are seeking better way to live together on this earth.

\*Frank Cardelle, Ph.D. is an internationally traveled group leader, consultant and author whose career has spanned over thirty years in psychotherapy and the human service community. Frank has presented at Conferences, Universities and Institutes worldwide and has conducted workshops / trainings in thirty-eight countries, i.e. Canada, USA, Eastern and Western Europe, South America, Russia and former Soviet Republics, Central and Western Asia, Africa and Australia and recently China. He has also given seminars to the staff of the United Nations. Additionally, he has authored several books with his writings soon to be in eleven languages. Some of these are: *Journey to Brotherhood, Youth and Adult: The Shared Journey, Man Soul (Spanish only) and Shadow into Light*. He has recently completed *FLIGHT OF THE EAGLE* – the evolution of his global work published first in Hungarian 2004, Lithuanian 2005 and Russian planned for 2006.His present work is called *GLOBAL SOUL: A CALL TO CITIZENS OF THE PLANET*, a book soon to be available.Frank's philosophy and approach is challenging, wholistic, heartfelt and keeping with his vision of a more humane and integrated world community. He may be reached at: eaglescircle@hotmail.com.

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**WHO STANDS TO PROFIT FROM THE MIDDLE EAST WAR**

Source: Common Ground News Service (CGNews, [www.commongroundnews.org](http://www.commongroundnews.org)), July 20, 2006.

Once again Lebanon finds itself propelled into a major conflict not of its choosing; and as in the past Lebanon is paying the price. In this one-sided battle it is worth asking who stands to profit from the latest violence. Certainly not the Lebanese who once again are seeing their country destroyed.

The Lebanese have still not forgotten the nightmarish 15-year civil war that devastated their country. Former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri helped rebuild the country. But after Syria, Lebanon's neighbour and only outlet to the rest of the Arab hinterland, was suspected of being implicated in the killing of the former prime minister, Israel, Lebanon's other neighbour is slowly killing Hariri's dream: the infrastructure he built after the war.

Israel wants to hold the Lebanese government accountable for Hezbollah's actions. Israel, however, is acting as though it is ignorant of the reality of Lebanese politics, insisting that the Lebanese government implements United Nations Security Council Resolution 1559, calling for disarming Hezbollah. Arab leaders, on the other hand, appear somewhat more realistic. Several Arab leaders have criticized Hezbollah, blaming the Lebanese Shiite militia for the latest violence.

Saudi Arabia held Hezbollah "fully responsible" for what a statement released by the official Saudi Arabian news agency called "its irresponsible action", referring to the kidnapping of the two Israeli soldiers in a cross-border attack Wednesday. Saudi Arabia said it believes in the right of peoples under occupation to resist by all possible means, and that the kingdom always stood by the Palestinian and Lebanese resistance movements against military occupation, "[b]ut the kingdom wants to draw a line between legitimate resistance and the uncalculated adventures carried out by members who are part of the state but act from behind it and without consulting with the legitimate authorities, creating as such an extremely dangerous situation and exposing all Arab countries and their achievements to destruction". The Saudi statement said that the time has come for Hezbollah to "assume alone the full responsibility of their irresponsible acts".

Egypt's mass-circulation newspaper al-Ahram, known to reflect the government's views, said Hezbollah is to be blamed for the ongoing Israeli war on Lebanon. The paper added that this latest escalation with Israel "serves regional goals".

So what does all that mean? Let the paper itself explain: "Many in Lebanon believe that there are parties who sacrifice Lebanon's security to serve regional calculations and the interests of other countries." In Middle East parlance that means Syria and Iran may have a hand in the latest violence in so far that both countries support Hezbollah. In fact, Cairo is voicing out loud what many people in the Middle East believe but dare not say.

Why would Syria and Iran find it in their interest to raise the stakes in the Middle East? For numerous reasons. Syria, who was forced to pull its army out of Lebanon after it was unofficially blamed for the assassination of Hariri, never quite got over the humiliation of submitting to the pressure of both the Lebanese street and the international community. At this point Syria could be saying: "See what happens when we leave? Maybe had we stayed this would have not happened."

Secondly, the new spate of violence in Lebanon will suspend -- if only temporarily -- the investigation into the killing of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri. This is buying Damascus some serious time.

As for Iran, it allows Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to deflect the focus on Iran's nuclear ambitions. While world leaders remain pre-occupied with Lebanon, Iran can get ahead developing its nuclear program. So this is buying Tehran some precious time, too.

And while Lebanon gets bombed back to its civil war era, Damascus and Tehran remain -- at least for the moment -- outside the conflict, even though they, far more so than the Lebanese government, not only support, but arm and finance Hezbollah.

Of course, if Israel were to hit either Damascus or Tehran, it would spark a full-fledged regional war. Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad warned that his country would deal "a painful response" to Israel in case it attacked its Arab ally, Syria. "If the entity which occupies Jerusalem commits a foolish act and carries out an aggression against Syria it will be tantamount to aggression against the Islamic world and will be confronted with a painful response", Ahmadinejad was quoted by the Iranian News Agency, IRNA.

A pertinent question might be why Iran deems it an act of aggression against the Islamic world if Syria were to be hit, but when Lebanon is being bombed back 20 years, as Army Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Dan Halutz said Israel would do, the reaction is limited to verbal support. Although it's no great surprise, even Arab ministers meeting in Cairo failed to come up with an action plan to help Lebanon. Once again Lebanon finds itself a reluctant participant in a war in which it had no say -- and in which it holds no cards with which to negotiate.

\* Claude Salhani is international editor and a political analyst with United Press International in Washington. This article is distributed by the Common Ground News Service (CGNews) with permission to republish and can be accessed at: [www.commongroundnews.org](http://www.commongroundnews.org).

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## LET THE VOICES OF MODERATION SPEAK

HRH Prince Hassan bin Talal\*

Source: *Haaretz* ([www.haaretz.com](http://www.haaretz.com)), August, 16 2006. Distributed by the Common Ground News Service (CGNews: <http://www.commongroundnews.org>) with permission to republish.

Amman - How much aggression in our region has been justified by the mantra that Western interests are under threat? The battle cries claim that all is at stake and every strike is a final defense of freedom and stability. But the premise behind this thinking has become all too obvious. Arabs and Muslims of whatever race or hue are not to be trusted. They are not to be dealt with fairly and the "liberal values" that protect the righteous of Israel or the United States are not for our defense or our protection. It seems that even the moderates in Arab societies lack the fibre that would grant them equality under international law. We are all as one, barbarians at the gate to be cowed and bullied into silent submission.

But we should be thankful that Arab moderation fights on with stoicism. Moderation will continue to battle for the hearts of those millions for whom this war on terror is an offence to their existential realities. Boaz Ganor, the prominent Israeli thinker, addressed the question of terrorism and demanded that there be "no prohibition without definition". Terrorism must be defined objectively, based upon accepted international laws and principles regarding what behavior is permitted in conventional wars between nations.

The roots of that Arab anger and disillusionment which allows legitimacy to be handed over to extremists cannot be ignored. Terrorism is a tactic borne out of a perversion of lines of representation. If we do not allow the many to speak, then the violent few will scream to be heard. It may be difficult for most Israelis to admit, but the Shi'a of southern Lebanon became politicized and militarized only in response to repeated Israeli aggression. The citizens of Israel and the other states in the Middle East must be honest about the effects of decades of abuse of people and of international law, unless you believe that we Arabs possess a unique terrorist gene, which has ignited our responses in recent decades. If this is the case, then throw firewood on the blaze and let our region burn until you have killed or exiled every last Arab in your neighborhood.

The founders of Israel and, indeed, the United States, fought what they perceived as an occupation. Recently, Israelis commemorated the bombing of the King David Hotel in 1946 as a landmark act in ending the British Mandate. But surely this must be defined as an act of terror. A statement in the British House of Commons at the time described the attack, in which 92 people were murdered, as "one of the most dastardly and cowardly crimes in recorded history."

The Lebanese have been damned to repeat this phrase to describe attacks on their country. But in our world, righteousness belongs to the victor. If this is the way of the new world order, and international law no longer has a place -- then, by all means, the extremists on all sides must fight to the death. The question is, what can usefully be won in such a scenario? The evils of pain, suffering and moral bankruptcy are all the spoils of our new-world fighters.

The traumatic effects of the collective punishment of civilian populations will be felt for generations to come. The Israeli Defence Forces that occupy have made terror a daily reality for the civilian populations of Palestine and Lebanon, populations who have lived and continue to live during illegal occupation. For the other side of this global war on terror, violence is most often something to read about. The threat of terror is fetishized by media and politicians, and provides a scant excuse for policies that make terror a daily reality in the lives of millions of people in the Middle East.

No one can ignore the pain and suffering of the Israeli people in recent weeks, but the policies of disproportionate reprisal and abuse of humanitarian norms can only beget further violence. Jordan is a country that fought two world wars on the side of the Allies. We have suffered from the shockwaves of aggression on all sides and we have endured threats and terror right up to Zarqawi's terrible attacks on Amman. So do not patronize us by dubbing us allies in the war on terror and then dismiss our words when we question your policies.

The politics you entertain in this region are the product of a false perception. Our regional perspective is being ignored and, all the while, empowered extremists are gaining greater control. We must not be fooled into thinking that a new Middle East can be devised by political strategists and imposed from top down. The promotion of participatory democracy has been curtailed by a fear of empowering moderate Arabs and moderate Islamists. Regimes within the region and powers outside attempt to stifle the protests of dismayed populations -- protests that should be aired through banners and the ballot box. But the moderates are now shouting also. The evolution of freedoms cannot be controlled from above, nor blasted into alien forms that poorly represent the needs of those seeking freedom. With the ever-increasing polarization of hate, we should be grateful that exasperation has not stifled the protest of moderates.

\*The writer, brother of the late King Hussein of Jordan, is president of the Arab Thought Forum. This article is distributed by Common Ground News Service ([www.commongroundnews.org](http://www.commongroundnews.org)) with permission to republish.

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## ANARCHY'S CONSEQUENCES

Naomi Chaza \*

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The most damaging outcome of the current phase of Israeli-Palestinian violence is the near-total collapse of the Palestinian Authority. While all eyes are riveted on Israeli incursions and the continuous barrage of Qassams, on attempts to release Gilad Shalit and on the progressively dire results of collective punishment, almost no attention is being paid to the dangers inherent in the growing political chaos. Unless a conscious effort is made by Israeli, Palestinian and international leaders to restore some semblance of the rule of law, the consequences for the region will be truly unspeakable.

The latest escalation in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict threatens to intensify the already advanced breakdown of central authority in Gaza and large portions of the West Bank. Contrary to what many believe, the operation in Kerem Shalom was not aimed only at the State of Israel. It had two other targets: Ismail Haniyeh and Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen). Those responsible have made it clear that they are as interested in undercutting the existing Palestinian leadership as they are in embarrassing Israel.

Ironically, Israel's response to the crisis has served to exacerbate the lawlessness -- thus playing directly into the hands of its perpetrators. Officially, the current military initiative has a twofold purpose: the return of the abducted soldier and the termination of rocket attacks on the Negev. But the roundup of Palestinian parliamentarians and the detention of over half the cabinet are indicative of a campaign to hasten the collapse of the Hamas government. Little, if any, thought has been given to what will come in its stead.

In the rush to topple a regime antagonistic to Israel's very existence, insufficient attention has been paid to the even more terrifying implications of the breakdown of political order. Indeed, the experience of the past few decades proves that maybe the gravest threat to human security and global order emanates from state collapse.

The examples of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Somalia highlight the comprehensive tragedy of failed states. Millions have lost their lives because government institutions have ceased to function. The same has been true in Kosovo, Afghanistan, Chechnya and, closer to home, in Lebanon and Iraq.

In these and other cases, the frailty of official institutions, exemplified by the inability to exercise a monopoly over the use of force, has led to the rise of armed militias whose actions along extremely porous boundaries have wrought untold devastation. The absence of governance and the dissipation of binding norms is the political equivalent of a series of massive natural disasters. The fragility of the state apparatus is not just an esoteric preoccupation of political scientists. It has immediate and deleterious ramifications for residents of these dysfunctional entities, their neighbours and the international order.

The prospect of the complete collapse of the Palestinian Authority, therefore, should be greeted by anything but equanimity. For Palestinians the glorification of armed commandos independent of the official leadership is an invitation not only for continued Israeli military pressure but also for ongoing domestic threats to personal security. Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and even Syria are becoming increasingly aware of the price of the pervasive anarchy in the region - hence their active quest for a compromise that can avert further deterioration.

Israel, too, must weigh any ephemeral immediate gains against the effects of the chaos attendant upon the disintegration of the Palestinian Authority. Such an eventuality will undoubtedly strengthen the Khaled Mashaal-Hizbullah-Iran axis at the expense not only of the PLO, but also of the political wing of Hamas represented by Haniyeh.

More tellingly, the lack of governance in Gaza and the West Bank might increase Israel's responsibility in these territories -- a burden even the opposition on the right is reluctant to assume. The task of rehabilitating shattered central institutions is far more daunting than preventing their collapse. For this -- if for no other -- reason, it is imperative that immediate measures be taken to avert utter chaos.

The first step in this direction requires putting an end to the present crisis. This means that Israel should accede to the Egyptian-brokered proposal for the release of prisoners in exchange for the return of Gilad Shalit and a full cease-fire. Although such a move may in the short term strengthen the standing of Hamas (already bolstered by Israel's massive assault in Gaza), if properly handled it can be parlayed into a reversal of the present downward spiral.

An allied measure, then, should involve implementation of the Prisoners' Letter, already initialled by the parties. This agreement is critical to the formation of a broadly acceptable Palestinian government that may be able to restore law and order locally while separating Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank more emphatically from the militant Hamas outside. It is also essential to the revival of a diplomatic momentum which would enable a transition to phase two of the road map and, with it, to the creation of a Palestinian state with provisional boundaries leading to negotiations on a permanent settlement. Political anarchy has a way of contaminating everything in its reach. The number one priority of all concerned, regardless of ideological persuasion, should be the avoidance of such a calamity.

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## ISRAEL REACHING TOWARD THE WRONG ADDRESS

Paul Scham\*

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The news from Gaza and the Lebanese-Israeli border is bad and getting worse. Unfortunately, Israel's response follows in the footsteps of the American response to 9/11, that is, purporting to "hold responsible" parties who cannot really control the situation. According to reports at the time (later confirmed in a July 12 article in the New York Times by Michael Slackman and Souad Mekhennet), Israeli Corporal Gilad Shalit's kidnappers were not connected with the Hamas government of the Palestinian Authority, and likely not even with the "outside leadership" of Khaled Meshal in Damascus. Despite this, Israel has repeatedly announced that it is holding Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh responsible for Shalit's welfare, and has launched punishing air and ground strikes -- many of which succeeded in killing only civilians. At this point, there is little reason to believe that either the mainstream Hamas leadership or the Palestinian Authority President has any real control over Shalit's fate.

On the contrary, those who are holding Shalit have no interest in a peaceful resolution. They are playing the role that Hamas did until a few years ago, basing their strategy on the assumption that the more violence, the better for them. This is the jihadist, al-Qaeda worldview and indeed the Times article indicates that Arab intelligence services see Shalit's kidnappers as ideologically embracing this strategy. These groups actively welcome Israeli attacks in the belief that they serve to radicalise the population and to delegitimize the Palestinian Authority.

In the last few days the Lebanese border has also exploded in violence and even there the Israeli response has been equally misguided. Israel, like any sovereign state, cannot tolerate attacks on its territory, but it must recognize that the Lebanese government is not sovereign in various respects -- especially with regard to Hezbollah, which is conducting the attacks and is generally considered a proxy for Iran. If anything, Iranian influence in Lebanon has grown since the formal withdrawal of Syrian forces last year. In the maze of Lebanese politics, some members of the government support Hezbollah, while others oppose it, but it is clear that the Lebanese government is not in a position to suppress Hezbollah's operations. Attacks on Lebanese cities will not prevent future attacks. On the contrary, with further attacks which kill civilians, Israel will fall into the jihadist trap, in which it is already enmeshed in Gaza.

Israel was apparently willing to agree to the phased withdrawal plan arranged by Egyptian President Mubarak (Mubarak blamed unspecified "pressures" on Hamas for the failure of the prisoner exchange). It would have been in the interest of both Israel and the Palestinian leadership to end the violence as quickly as possible. Israel must recognize that if it does not deal one way or another with the de facto and de jure Palestinian leadership --namely Hamas -- it will be strengthening the jihadist forces which are not the same as Hamas, but rather much worse for Israel and for the West. All Islamists are not the same, an inconvenient fact that both Israel and the United States must, in the current climate, learn to deal with. Israel does not have to deal with Hamas face-to-face, but there are ample precedents for using third party intermediaries, such as the Turks or Egyptians.

Israel's strategy of retaliation dates back to the 1950s when it was largely conducted by a young officer named Ariel Sharon. Its efficacy has consistently been questioned, but its central assumption rested on the belief that it was in the interest of neighbouring governments, whether Jordanian, Egyptian or Lebanese, to quell terrorist groups in order to prevent disproportionate attacks by Israel. The assumption falls apart when, as in the current case in Gaza and Lebanon, the neighbouring government is not in control of significant armed forces operating from its territory.

Israel's leaders must take a hard look at the current reality and recognize that its own interests, and the interests of the Hamas government in Gaza and of the Lebanese government in Beirut, lie in ending the current violence as quickly as possible. All have strong interests in preventing the emergence and strengthening of jihadist groups, whose strategy is primarily to exacerbate conflict. It is important to note that most Arab governments, especially those of Egypt and Jordan, share this desire to quell the violence as expeditiously as possible.

This means that Israel has to accept mediation, or even covert direct contacts, with the Hamas government based on their immediate shared interest in ending the current crisis. It also has to work with foreign governments to come to an agreement the will return the captured and end the attacks on its territory. Bombing Beirut will not accomplish these goals. Recognition of current realities offers the best chance for the return of the captives and defusing the crisis.

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**BEAUTIFUL MADNESS**

Am Johal\*

Source: *Electronic Intifada* (<http://electronicintifada.net/>), July 13, 2006. Distributed by the Common Ground News Service with permission to republish.

War (and chess) is what mathematicians and economists call a zero sum game. It is a game built on a model which requires one winner. The problem with developing international diplomatic policy on something as unforgiving as game theory means that civilian deaths become the de facto reality when the struggles of the ego cannot be averted by either side. Stopping this march to madness is a daily struggle of perseverance, patience and determination. It is so thoroughly depressing, I don't want to come back here for another ten years. I will miss drinking with the Ethiopians in the Haifa market or eating at Fattoush on Ben Gurion Street, having orange juice on the rooftop patio of Papa Andreas in the Old City where you can see the Western Wall and the Dome of the Rock, and ice cream at Rukab's in Ramallah on a hot summer day. On days like this, I dream about the "almost perfection" of my home town of Vancouver, Canada.

Civilians disproportionately pay the price of the misguided aggression on all sides. The dynamic equilibrium of this place in reality means about 1,000 deaths a year and has nothing to do with addressing root causes. How can you be inspired by a place when half the peace movement in the country supports the Separation Wall? I came here to have a vacation, work on research for my master's thesis, meet old friends, eat great food and write some articles. But, as long as there are idiots in power who continue this vicious circle, there is barely a foundation to build upon to take this conflict in a more positive direction. Virtually every collective narrative here is built on fundamental lies. What is happening today is not new -- it has been building since September 2000 and even before that. It is the legacy of Sharon and Arafat being carried out by even lesser men. What's happening today is exactly what everybody predicted would happen at some point.

Where else can elected people openly talk about killing democratically elected leaders as a legitimate form of public policy in the name of security? Where else can two-thirds of elected leaders of the Palestinian Authority be jailed without charge? But the West doesn't really seem to care, nor does it take responsibility for disproportionate Israeli responses to Palestinian resistance.

Hamas also deserves deep criticism for its actions and misplaying opportunities that were presented. The Palestinians without an effective peace movement that can act non-violently in a collective way, will always suffer more casualties when put against the military might of Israel. Violent resistance is not a game worth playing for the Palestinians -- they have lost that game for over 58 years. Why would it work now?

The sheer impotence of the US, the European Union and the UN is remarkable in the depth of its inability to harness the deeply radical agendas that serve to undermine any realistic option for peace. Any permanent peace plan will no doubt radicalize 45 percent of the population in both Israel and the Palestinian Territories against such an action. But in the end, it's the only way to move forward based on negotiations and not unilateralism. The failure to break the present impasse means the status quo of almost daily deaths. Captured soldiers, rocket attacks, naval blockades, airport attacks and now Hezbollah has attacked Haifa. The flags are out everywhere and jingoism is in the air. The root causes of the conflict such as the occupation of the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem are left off the public agenda.

Abir Kopty, media spokesperson for the Mossawa Center, a human rights NGO where I was assisting, said with a laugh, "Well, Am, if you die here, at least you will die with the Arabs. You should be honored." I said, "Abir, I neither want to die with the Arabs or the Jews. I want to go back to Vancouver and drink beer on the beach and live in multicultural bliss when this is all over."

Gaza is being demolished. The casualties are rising. There are soldiers being kidnapped. The papers are worried about another front opening up on the Syrian border. I don't know whether I should be leaving Haifa and heading for Tel Aviv or Jerusalem to get out of missile range. On days like this, I think to myself that I'm neither a Palestinian nor Jewish -- what the hell am I doing here? We here are all human rights activists. But now, in this context, when real power reveals its ugly head, we are thoroughly irrelevant. All of us have the right to live without fear. Whoever has taken that away from us is our enemy this afternoon.

The Mediterranean is a gorgeous blue. It's hotter than hell and I'm meeting friends for coffee tonight. There are birds on the window sill and I am wondering what they are making of all this. Tomorrow's another day -- hopefully it will be better than this one.

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## **CONTACT ACROSS THE LINES - AN ARTICLE OF FAITH**

Benjamin Pogrund\*

Source: Common Ground News Service (<http://www.commongroundnews.org>), April 6, 2006. Distributed by the Common Ground News Service with permission to publish.

We are awash in uncertainties. How far will the new Israeli government be willing to go in meeting Palestinian aspirations? When Ehud Olmert becomes prime minister, what exactly are the "painful compromises" which he has said he will offer in the cause of peace? How much internal division and trauma will Israel suffer when he evacuates up to 80,000 settlers from the West Bank?

On the Palestinian side, will the reality of being in government moderate Hamas? Will it review its refusal to recognize the existence of Israel? Does its Islamism allow it to do so? How do Israel, the United States, the EU and the world resolve the dilemma of refusing to have anything to do with Hamas and yet not push the Palestinian people into deeper poverty and despair?

What about the rockets landing on Israel from the Gaza Strip? No government anywhere can tolerate such assaults. Defence Minister Shaul Mofaz says Israel will broaden its fight against terrorist infrastructure and will "respond harshly". What will that mean?

These are some of the anxious questions of the moment. They do not lend themselves to easy answers. They make it difficult to speak hopefully about immediate prospects for peace. Taken to the extreme, we could be sliding into an abyss of violence and confrontation. There are negative attitudes on both sides: as the Hamas election win suggests, considerable numbers of Palestinians do not want to negotiate with Israel: they believe that violence will in due time bring them victory and destroy the Jewish state. On the other hand, some Israelis seem almost to welcome Hamas, victory: it provides the excuse that there is no partner for peace and that unilateral action is justified; they believe there is no alternative but perpetual conflict.

Yet we cannot escape each other. Jews and Arabs share a small space of land. No one is going to leave. We must reject those on both sides who argue for the inevitability of unending struggle and death. We have no alternative but to work out how to live together and alongside each other.

One reason to maintain hope is the fact of movement and activity. For most of the last five years we have been stuck in a logjam, with only limited, sporadic attempts to end it. Now, at least, there is change among both Israelis and Palestinians. The changes are not always welcome, and we do not know where they might lead and this creates uncertainties and fears. But the mere fact of change creates possibilities which could be exploited for the good.

South Africa's experience in ending apartheid is put forward by some as an example for Israelis and Palestinians. The situations are only partly analogous and it is dangerous and misleading to try to draw too many parallels (I write with the background of 26 years as a journalist in South Africa). But certainly one South African experience is relevant: even during the darkest days of apartheid, whites and blacks were in contact with each other. The government actively discouraged interracial links - for example, whites and blacks had problems visiting each other's homes, they could not eat together in a restaurant, let alone share a pot of tea, they could not ride together in taxis, buses or trains, or go to movies or theatres, or belong to the same political organization.

Despite this, friendships were forged and person-to-person trust was established. It wasn't a mass movement but consisted of individuals who crossed the lines of division. When political and economic circumstances changed, when a range of pressures came to bear on apartheid rule, the personal links paid off: small as the numbers were, there were whites and blacks who had learned to know and to trust each other. They provided the yeast for negotiations which finally led to what has become known as the South African "miracle".

It is a lesson for us. There is no clear political road ahead at the moment. Perhaps some of the changes happening around us will help to further peace. It doesn't look like it, but perhaps. Meanwhile, what must be done is to keep, extend and strengthen links between Israelis and Palestinians. There are people of goodwill and vision on both sides. There is contact through meetings, dialogue groups and across dinner tables.

Grave difficulties stand in the way. The obstacles are not those of apartheid South Africa. Israelis can easily meet Palestinians who live in East Jerusalem. But they need permission - which, it seems, is seldom given - to go beyond the checkpoints. Security - the worry about attack or kidnap - is given as the reason. Palestinians need permission to enter Israel and this too is apparently seldom given.

Fear and ignorance must be overcome. How many Israelis these days are astonished at the mere thought of going to a store or restaurant in East Jerusalem? The head of an American Jewish philanthropic organization, on a visit to Israel a few years ago, refused to meet Palestinians at the American Colony Hotel in East Jerusalem: she said it was too dangerous to go there. Was that an isolated bit of silliness or do others today feel the same way? Those who believe in making contact must view it as an article of faith, as their personal contribution to the eventual achievement of two states existing side by side as friends.

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## PALESTINIANS NEED TO STOP PERCEIVING VICTORY IN FAILURE

Ghassan Rubeiz \*

Source: *The Daily Star* (<http://www.dailystar.com.lb>), May 31, 2006. Distributed by the Common Ground News Service with permission to republish.

To soften the hard-line position of Hamas on Israel, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas issued a threat last week to call for national referendum within 10 days. This initiative seems to be rapidly losing momentum. Palestinian hard-liners see it as ploy, while Israeli officials do not endorse it.

It would be very surprising if Hamas yielded to Abbas' move to challenge its authority in such a dramatic way. Hamas' rejection of Israel is visceral, and rejection is its "badge of identity". Hamas' formal position on the state of Israel can only be changed with military force, electoral defeat or informal erosion of its local constituency. This power erosion is not likely to happen soon and easily. Abbas' referendum





