

NONVIOLENT CHANGE

Journal of the Research/Action Team on Nonviolent Large Systems Change,
an interorganizational project of the Organization Development Institute

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

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Nonviolent Change is on the web at: <http://www.nonviolentchangejournal.org>, along with several years of back issues. To be notified by E-mail when new issues are posted, send a request to be added to the NCJ notification E-mail list to Steve Sachs at: ssachs@earthlink.net. Issues are usually posted: Fall, in September or early October; Winter, in January or early February; Spring in mid-March to end of April.



EDITORS COMMENTS

Wishing you a fine New Year. The world continues to go through many shifts producing a great many developments in areas of our concern. **WE WELCOME YOUR THOUGHTS ABOUT ALL THAT IS IN PROGRESS.** These pages serve as a networking and dialoguing vehicle. We strongly encourage you to contribute articles (up to 2500 words), news, announcements, comments, queries, responses and art work. It would be very fine if we could develop ongoing discussion from issue to issue. **WE ESPECIALLY INVITE YOU TO SEND US A BRIEF NOTE ABOUT WHAT YOU ARE DOING, YOUR CONCERNS AND QUERIES, RELATING TO NONVIOLENT CHANGE, FOR OUR "WHAT WE READERS ARE ABOUT" COLUMN.** Whenever possible, please make submissions on disk or via e-mail (ssachs@earthlink.net).

Please **SEND WRITINGS AND ART WORK FOR NONVIOLENT CHANGE electronically** to Steve Sachs (E-mail address top of p. 2). Steve puts together a draft of each issue and sends it to Marilee Niehoff and Bob Hotes for Editing. Steve then undertakes e-mailing, printing, snail mailing, and posts the issue on the web (unsigned writings are Steve's). **We welcome additional editors and column writers to cover geographic or topic areas on an ongoing or one time basis. We would very much like to have additional people share in the compiling of information in each issue.**

COMMUNICATING ABOUT ANY OTHER RESEARCH/STUDY TEAM BUSINESS CAN BE DIRECTED TO ANY OF THE COCHAIRS (ADDRESS ON P. 1) or to OTHER MEMBERS OF THE COORDINATING COMMITTEE: DON COLE, ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE, 11234 Walnut Ridge Rd., Chesterland, OH 44026 (440)729-7419, DonWCole@aol.com, www.odinstitute.org, who is coordinating networking among organizations.

DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE IS MARCH 8

UPCOMING EVENTS

The **37th Annual O.D. Information Exchange** will be May 20-25 the Beckwith Conference Center on Weeks Bay, near Mobile, AL. For more information, contact Organization Development Institute, 11234 Walnut Ridge Rd., Chesterland, OH 44026 (440)729-7419, DonWCole@aol.com, www.odinstitute.org.

The **27th O.D. World Conference** and **O.D. Networks World Wide** will be July 9-14 at Malmo Castle, Malmo, Sweden. **For details contact Don Cole at O.D. Institute (address and phone above) www.odinstitute.org.**

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The **RockRose Institute's 2007 World Forum, Facing Violence: Justice, Religion and Conflict Resolution** is February 1-3, at the Argent Hotel in San Francisco, CA. For details, call (888)544-2695 or visit www.rockroseinstitute.org.

The **International Conference on Peace Building** is to be held in Hiroshima, Japan March 8-9. For more information, go to: <http://home.hiroshima-u.ac.jp/hipec/en/research/template002.html>.

The **Inter-American Summit on Conflict Resolution Education** is in Cleveland, Ohio, **March 14th – 17th**. Global Issues Resource Center, Office of Community Continuing Education at Cuyahoga Community College and The Organization of American States are hosting the event, bringing together government representatives from among the 50 states and 34 countries of the Americas and their non-governmental organization partners who have legislation or policies in place to deliver conflict resolution education at the K-12 level and in colleges of teacher education. "This first-ever Summit offers a dynamic opportunity to develop a hemispheric infrastructure throughout the Americas to advance the work in the fields of conflict resolution education and peace education". For details contact Jennifer Batton, Director, Global Issues Resource Center, Cuyahoga Community College - Eastern Campus, 4250 Richmond Rd., Highland Hills, OH 44122-6195 (216)987-2231, Jennifer.Batton@tri-c.edu.

EUROCLIO Annual Conference and Professional Training and Development Course /Human Rights Education: Lessons from History, is March 20-25, at Bled, Slovenia. For information go to: <http://www.euroclio.eu/mambo/index>.

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>.

Nexus for Change is March 22-23, at Bowling Green State University in Bowling Green, OH Ohio in March,. The conference brings together practitioners, researchers, leaders, activists, and educators to advance participative change methods. The focus of the gathering is on leveraging the power of over 60 approaches being used to transform whole organizations and communities as they tackle 21st century challenges. For information go to: www.nexusforchange.org.

Center for Human Rights and Civil Liberties **second Annual Conference on Human Rights: Genocide in the 20th and 21st Centuries: Cases, Causes and Cures** is March 23-24, at the Liberal Arts Building on the Hattiesburg, MI. campus of Southern Miss. For details contact The Center for Human Rights and Civil Liberties at www.usm.edu/humanrights or Tearanny Street at: tyranny_48103@yahoo.com.

on a national push to get out and say, "no more troops" (See <http://www.AmericaSaysNo.org>). In November, voters in Massachusetts, Wisconsin and Illinois passed referendums stating, "end the Iraq war immediately."

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** (Gush Shalom, p.o.b. 3322 Tel Aviv 61033, Israel, info@gush-shalom.org, <http://zope.gush-shalom.org/home/en>) and the **Other Israel** (The Other Israel, p.o.b. 2542, Holon 58125, Israel, ph/fx: +972-3-5565804, otherisr@actcom.co.il, <http://otherisrael.home.igc.org/>, and <http://toibillboard.info/index.htm>), among others, continue to push for peace and human rights. The Olive harvest campaign 2006 got underway, early, in October to help Palestinians isolated from their fields by the security wall, or its construction, get their harvest in, in some instances in the face of threats that settlers would destroy the harvest before it could be brought in. Rabbi Ascherman, **co-director of Rabbis for Human Rights, spent the six-week olive season, last fall, with other volunteers patrolling, after coordinating with the Israeli army, to protect Palestinian farmers near Nablus from armed Jewish settlers.** "Without the Jewish cleric, the farmers would be fired upon or beaten, their harvest stolen and ancient trees — some dating from Roman times — felled with chainsaws" (reported by *Occupation Magazine*: <http://www.kibush.co.il/index.asp>). The Other Israel reports that, in October, "50 villagers from Al Khader joined by Israeli and International supporters marched from the village to the military checkpoint on route 60 with bags of grapes to protest the economic siege.... The farmers intended to give their grapes away to passing motorists so they wouldn't just rot." Israeli security forces attacked the protesters, beating a number of them.

Physicians For Human Rights charged, in October, the **Shin Bet internal security agency wields a veto over the issue of permits to travel, including for healthcare, and has a policy of automatically classifying Palestinians as dangerous**, although it regularly backed down when challenged by the rights group to justify its decisions.

B'tselem, **The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories** (http://www.btselem.org/english/Email_Update/20061009.html), reported in October that "Israel must finance the rehabilitation of the power plant it bombed in the Gaza Strip," as "three months after the bombing, 1.4 million Gazans remain without a steady supply of electricity. The power stoppages significantly affect the level of health services they receive. The inability to refrigerate food has increased the risk of food poisoning. The water and sewage systems, which rely on a regular supply of electricity, have been severely impaired, with most city dwellers receiving water for two to three hours a day. B'Tselem warns that the sewage system in the northern Gaza Strip is liable to collapse and flood neighboring communities with raw sewage".

Two Israeli-Palestinian organizations working for a peaceful solution are **Bereaved Families**, representing a group of bereaved family members of victims of violence in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and **Combatants for Peace**, composed of military personnel and resistance fighters who have come to believe in the necessity of "mutual actions between Israelis and Palestinians against violence and for a fair and lasting peace" (for details see, Simone Korkus **Soldiers for peace**", at: www.commongroundnews.org).

During November and December Israeli peace organizations engaged in a month long **protest campaign, "Stop the siege! Stop the war!"** calling on the Israeli government and on the international community to end the siege on Gaza and to embark upon negotiations with the elected Palestinian leadership. 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.

Jerusalem Peacemakers has accomplished a great deal this past year towards uniting the children of Abraham in the Holy Land. Recent activities of its project, the **Abrahamic Reunion**, a group of Jewish, Christian, Muslim and Druze religious leaders and women peacemakers, included a 4 day retreat, November 5-9, at the Natura Beach resort at Polis, on the Western side of the island of Cyprus. Joined by a Christian theologian and leader in Muslim-Christian dialogue from Lebanon, along with the spouses of the religious leaders helping create a family atmosphere, and Shahabuddin and Anna Less, Andy Blanch and others from the Rising Tide Int'l community in Sarasota, Florida. The meeting re-affirmed the vision of the Abrahamic Reunion and the recent Call to Reconciliation after the Lebanon war. Imam Khalil Albaz expressed concern about remarks of a new cabinet minister towards the Arabs of Israel, Rabbi Froman gave a report of his recent delegation of rabbis who went to meet Palestinian Authority president Abu Mazen in the Mukata in Ramallah, and Abu Khatoum, speaking of his travels for peace to Lebanon. Sheikh Bukhari said it's our role as religious leaders to stand together for peace even with all the difficulties. A series of religious dialogue events were planned for the upcoming year in the Holy Land. The gathering closed with a group prayer of remembrance and healing for all the recent victims of violence in Lebanon, Israel and Gaza.

Abrahamic Reunion leader Eliyahu McLean took part, October 28-31, in a leadership course at the United Nations University in Amman Jordan, with a substantial group of Israelis and Palestinians, joined by Lebanese, Syrians, Iraqis, Saudis, Egyptians and Jordanians, as well as participants from India, Pakistan, Nepal, Uganda, Burundi, Indonesia, Ecuador, South Africa and the U.S. The major focus was the philosophy and impact on the nonviolent movements of Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr, the contribution of Abrahamic faiths to nonviolence, along with peace-building and reconciliation work being done in present and former conflict zones: Uganda, Burundi, South Africa, Northern Ireland, Afghanistan, Kashmir, Iraq and Israel-Palestine.

Reverend Masoud Abu Hatoum, a priest of the Greek Melkite Catholic Church hosted the Abrahamic Reunion for an interfaith Ramadan Iftar meal at his home in Yafia, near Nazareth, October 17, in a step toward healing relations with the Muslim community after the response to the Pope's recent controversial remarks about Islam. More than 200 Jews, Christians, Muslims and Druze from the Galilee and Jerusalem, participated, along with international guests, including Ethiopian Chief Rabbi Yosef Hadane and Sheikh Marai from Faradis, who gave blessings for peace and teachings from the sacred texts. Meanwhile, with the Jewish and Muslim holy days coinciding this year, on the Jewish fast day of Tsom Gedaliah, which also was also one of the Muslim fast days of Ramadan, Mclean hosted a Jewish-Muslim

shared break fast meal in his home in Jerusalem for over 50 Palestinians and Israelis, who shared prayer, dialogue and sacred songs. "Many said that this is the reality that we need to show the world about Jerusalem, Arabs and Jews celebrating each others holidays and living together as a shared community". In addition the Abrahamic Reunion organized an inter-religious Hannukah celebration in Jerusalem, on Dec. 19th. Abrahamic Reunion group members are planning projects for 2007, which include: interfaith women's meetings, text study between Imams and Rabbis, and interfaith humanitarian projects in the Bedouin and Ethiopian communities.

Jerusalem Peacemakers associated **Religious Peace Centers of East and West Jerusalem** holds once a month, public peace events at the Naqshabandi Sufi Center of Sheikh Bukhari in the Old City of Jerusalem, and at the home of Eliyahu McLean in West Jerusalem. The Centers function as forums for the public to learn from religious peacebuilders and for Israelis, Palestinians and internationals to gather each month for dialogue and development of shared projects. The **Humanitarian Initiative**, a partnership of the Naqshabandi Sufi Center and the Abu Dis Society, to provide humanitarian assistance and economic and personal empowerment for people in need in the West Bank, works through providing services including job training, youth education, high quality day- care centers, and resources for small business management. This project also empowers the voice of moderate Islam in Palestinian society. The **Rodef Shalom School for Peace** functions as an Institute to train Jewish community leaders and activists with wisdom from the Jewish tradition and practical tools to empower them to become true peacebuilders. **Bamat Shalom, or "Stage for Peace"**, brings Muslim and Jewish religious high school girls in the Jerusalem area together to create and perform original theater based on their experiences with the conflict and their mutual religious sources on peace and coexistence. Jerusalem Peacemakers Supports **the work of Rabbi Menachem Froman** in his efforts to broker a religiously sanctioned cease-fire, **hudna**, between Hamas, the Palestinian Authority, and the State of Israel. Rabbi Froman recently brought a delegation of Orthodox rabbis to Abu Mazen's office, the Mukata, in Ramallah. Rabbi Froman has the respect of the Hamas leadership and is an official advisor to Ministry of Defense in Israel. For more information, contact: Jerusalem Peacemakers, PO Box 2427, Glastonbury, Somerset BA6 8XX, or PO Box 31894, Jerusalem 91316 Israel, <http://www.jerusalempeacemakers.org>, Eliyahu McLean: eliyahu@jerusalempeacemakers.org; or the Center for Religious Tolerance, 520 Ralph St. Sarasota, FL 34242.

At the Porto Bello hotel in the Turkish Mediterranean resort of Antalya, in late December, some **200 Israelis and Palestinians participated in a four-day conference on peace education, in a bid to listen to each other's stories and to dialogue, discuss and ultimately find ways to "end the senseless conflict** that has been unleashed on all the inhabitants of that beautiful land for almost a century now". The **conference was the initiative of the Israel-Palestinian Centre for Research and Information (IPCRI)**, a non-governmental organization set up in 1988, soon after the outbreak of the first intifada, to find ways to bring Israelis and Palestinians together to work out a two-state solution to the conflict. Members of the **Belgian music group ICTUS and of the organization Music Fund**, held their 14th annual workshop for soloist musicians in Israel, in December, acting as a third party for peace, bringing together Israeli and Palestinian musicians. For more, go to: <http://paironirspal.canalblog.com>.

The Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP) "is a diverse and democratic community of activists inspired by Jewish tradition to work together for peace, social justice, and human rights. We support the aspirations of Israelis and Palestinians for security and self-determination. We seek: A U.S. foreign policy based on promoting peace, democracy, human rights, and respect for international law; An end to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem; A resolution of the Palestinian refugee problem consistent with international law and equity; An end to all violence against civilians; Peace among the peoples of the Middle East. We are among the many American Jews who say to the U.S. and Israeli governments: 'Not in our names!' JVP supports peace activists in Palestine and Israel, and works in broad coalition with other Jewish, Arab-American, faith-based, peace and social justice organizations." JVP's web site contains ongoing statements of its positions and news of its activities. The organization is calling for a change in U.S. foreign policy, to one that "promotes democracy and human rights. The United States must stop supporting repressive policies in Israel and elsewhere. U.S. military aid to countries in the Middle East must be based on rigorous enforcement of the Arms Export Control and Foreign Assistance Acts, which mandate that military aid may be used for only defensive purposes within the recipient country's borders, and that aid may not be delivered to countries that abuse human rights. Under these guidelines, U.S. military aid to Israel must be suspended until the occupation ends, since the occupation itself is in violation of these guidelines. Military aid allows Israel to avoid making serious efforts to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as well as conflicts with its other neighbors. It enables the occupation, contributes to the devastation of Palestinian society and fosters the increasing militarization of Israeli society. JVP also calls for suspension of military aid to other human rights abusers and occupiers in the Middle East. This aid helps prop up autocratic and repressive regimes, promotes violations of human rights and international law, obstructs democratic movements, prolongs the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and fosters militarism and violence at home and abroad" For more information contact the Jewish Voice for Peace, 1611 Telegraph Avenue, Suite 806, Oakland, CA 94612, (510)465-1777, info@jewishvoiceforpeace.org, <http://www.jewishvoiceforpeace.org/publish/contact.shtml>.

Search for Common Ground (SFCG) has initiated its most ambitious media project, in Nigeria, with a dramatic TV and radio series and a reality TV series. The dramatic series, *The Station*, tells the story of a fictionalized TV news station in Lagos. The boss is a Muslim woman, and the reporters come from Nigeria's various ethnic and religious groups. They tackle such critical issues as tribal violence, youth unemployment, HIV/AIDS, and corruption. *The Station* does not provide specific answers to Nigeria's problems, but rather it aims to empower Nigerians to engage in constructive problem-solving that moves the country toward positive solutions. The Reality series, developed to prepare the way for *The Station*, had 15 episodes, portraying the process by which cast members were selected for *The Station* through advertising throughout Nigeria, and training the selected cast, including introducing them to the concept of *common ground* drama. For more information about SFCG's many projects, contact Search for Common Ground, 1601 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20009, (202)265-4300, search@sfcg.org, www.sfcg.org; or Search for Common Ground, Rue Belliard 205 bte 13, B-1040 Brussels, Belgium, Tel.: (32-2) 736-7262, brussels@sfcg.be, www.sfcg.org.

The **International Peace Bureau, WWW: Working together for a World Without War** launched a major new program, in 2005, "designed to reflect widespread public concern at the rapid rise in global military spending (now totalling \$1118 billion), and the evidence that weapons -- such as small arms, cluster bombs, landmines -- seriously impede sustainable development. Post 9-11, the failure of military solutions should be obvious to all. IPB advocates reductions in defense budgets and the adoption of a 'human security' approach. Activities organized in pursuit of these goals include: seminars, publications, website, e-newsletter, exhibitions and a short film. National

and international networks are gradually being developed.” For more information contact International Peace Bureau, 41, Rue de Zurich; CH-1201 Geneva, Switzerland, Tel: +41 (22) 731 64 29; Fax: + 41 (22) 738 94 19, mailbox@ipb.org; website: <http://www.ipb.org>.

The **Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD Centre)** opened a regional office in Singapore, November 29, to coordinate its activities in armed conflict mediation and represent the organization in Asia. The office supports and coordinates the organizations work on mediating conflicts in Asia, providing a regional base from which to conduct debate, and facilitate contacts and logistics. In November, the HD Centre held its second Asian Mediator’s Retreat in conjunction with the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies in Singapore, with senior policy makers and mediators from Asian governments as well as senior UN staff from New York. The HD Asian Regional Representative, Michael Vatikiotis, is at Singapore Tel. +65 6224 6832, vatikiotis@hdcentre.org. The HD Centre provides speakers from 15 different nationalities able to speak 19 languages. For more information contact Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, 114 rue de Lausanne, Geneva, Geneva 1202 Switzerland, Tel: +41 22 908 1130, andya@hdcentre.org, <http://www.hdcentre.org/>.

The Peace Company announced its new Peace Millennium Award, in October, to ten individuals and organizations that “we believe are laying a strong foundation for a new millennial era of peace. Some are breaking new ground in the international arena; others are demonstrating impeccable moral courage; still others excel at networking (in person and online), at bringing peace practices into everyday life in our local communities, or in insuring that our youth become the next generation of peace leaders. All are unwavering in their commitment to making peace – its values, principles, and practices – the basis of our life together on this planet”. For more information contact The Peace Company • 54 Maple Street, Bristol, VT 05443 • 1-888-455-5355 (toll-free) • info@thepeacecompany.com, <http://www.thepeacecompany.com>.

The Alliance for Peacebuilding is a coalition of diverse organizations working together to build sustainable peace and security worldwide. Members of the Alliance are directly engaged in applied conflict prevention and resolution in places of violent conflict around the world. “They are the unsung, often invisible heroes and heroines of peace, providing training, education, facilitation, mediation, negotiation, research, and community projects that help people find creative and peaceful solutions to their differences. We honor all the members of the Alliance for Peacebuilding for their courageous work in war zones and for their dedication to fostering peace communities – and the people and institutions to sustain them – around the world”: at: www.allianceforpeacebuilding.org.

The Cambridge Peace Commission “is the embodiment of thinking globally and acting locally. As an actual department of the municipality of Cambridge, Massachusetts, the Peace Commission looks at the roots of violence within our community and promotes programs, policies, and relationships of peace and justice as the alternative. Their Youth Peace and Justice Corps is a multi-racial group of Cambridge public high school students uncovering their brilliance with one another and creating a ‘family’ for social justice. Their Sister Cities program with El Salvador, Armenia, and Cuba build relationships of mutual respect and citizen exchange. Their Restorative Justice Working Group designs trainings and practices to address harm at the neighborhood level. We honor the Cambridge Peace Commission for its courage in addressing local and global issues of justice, violence, and diversity in its own back yard.” www.cambridgema.gov/dept/peace.html/

Robin Lloyd “is a peace activist with a passion for truth-telling. She tells the truth about social justice and human rights in the films she makes through her company, Green Valley Media. As publisher of *Toward Freedom*, an online progressive perspective on world affairs, she provides information not usually available in mainstream media. In demonstrations against the School of the Americas and elsewhere she speaks truth to power by her presence, and her willingness to go to jail for her convictions about right and wrong. Robin is the quintessential activist, standing up for what she believes and inspiring others to do the same. We honor Robin Lloyd for the strength of her moral conviction and for the constancy of her witness:” www.greenvalleymedia.org.

Avon Mattison, Founder and President of Pathways to Peace, “is a source of inspiration and action for a global peace culture. Formerly a diplomat, Avon has worked with the United Nations, businesses, non-governmental organizations, and individuals all over the world to activate a culture of peace. Her many projects, including the *Culture of Peace Initiative*, formerly *We the Peoples Initiative*, have been instrumental in educating, engaging, and connecting people from every region of the world in peace action, including the yearly celebration of the International Day of Peace, September 21. She is also a consultant, quietly supporting and nourishing the growth of peace leaders in many fields. We honor Avon as a powerful embodiment of the living Spirit of Peace:” www.pathwaystopace.org and www.cultureofpeace.org.

Dot Maver, Executive Director of The Peace Alliance and The Peace Alliance Foundation, “is a true coalition builder. A long-time peace educator, Dot managed the presidential campaign of Dennis Kucinich for the 2004 elections. She now works to create a culture of peace and the infrastructure to support it, through the establishment of a cabinet-level Department of Peace and through peace education, training, and special projects to promote civic activism. We honor Dot for her skillful ability to carry the big vision, build global networks, and empower individual and collective action for a peace culture.” www.thepeacealliance.org and www.peacealliancefound.org.

The Nonviolent Peaceforce “is a noble experiment in peacemaking: Can a trained group of international peacemakers, operating nonviolently, be an agent of safety and peace for populations engaged in violent conflict? Committed to exploring this vision on the ground, the NP has had a pilot project in Sri Lanka since 2003, and is now developing initiatives in the Mindanao region of the Philippines and in Colombia. Combining such strategies as accompaniment of human rights activists, building networks, and encouraging dialogue, the NP is exploring new possibilities for a third-party presence in active war zones. We honor the Nonviolent Peaceforce for its innovative and courageous efforts to expand the role of nonviolence in global peacemaking, and for its creative use of Peace Bonds to fund its work:” www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org.

PeaceWeb (formerly NCPCR) went out of existence, December 31, after 24 years of service, 11 international conferences on peacemaking and conflict resolution, a strong commitment to diversity-focused programming and a decade of supporting youth peacemakers in producing their own conference events. In its transition, PeaceWeb is supporting the founding of the **Nonviolence Youth**

Leadership Alliance (NYLA). The mission of NYLA is to pass the legacy of Kingian nonviolence to 'today's youth – tomorrow's leaders!' NYLA's goals include plans to introduce thousands of youth and young adults to the nonviolent principles, steps and strategies, which Martin Luther King, Jr. and other civil rights activists utilized to bring about an end to racial segregation in the United States. Through a series of orientation sessions and training workshops about Kingian nonviolence, to be held in key communities across the United States during 2007, a national team of several hundred youth nonviolence leaders will gain the expertise needed to then inspire and train other youth and young adults in these peacebuilding skills, and to apply these nonviolent strategies in their own schools and communities. NYLA's plans for 2008 focus on organizing a global conference of youth activists and human rights leaders, an Olympics of Peace and Nonviolence. More immediate steps are being taken to hold a major nonviolence educational event in Atlanta, GA in April 2007, commemorating the legacy of Dr. King and announcing the birth of this NYLA. At this point, the fiscal agent for NYLA is ACRES (American Civil Rights Education Services, Inc). For information contact NYLA c/o ACRES, 563 8th St., Brooklyn, NY 11215, or Dr. Ann Yellott, (949)632-6989, azyellott@aol.com, www.nylayouth.org.

PeaceJam "recently celebrated its 10th anniversary of bringing together the wisdom of Nobel Peace Laureates with the enthusiasm of young people the world over to make a difference. Its goal is to inspire a new generation of peacemakers who will transform their local communities, themselves and the world. This unique international education program has changed the lives of thousands of young people, and given our treasured Peace Laureates a fertile field in which to sow their aspirations for the future of our planet. We honor PeaceJam for its highly successful program of empowering and preparing our youth to change the world:" www.peacejam.org.

Robert (Bob) Silverstein "is a one-man engine behind the culture of peace movement. He has written over 40 books for children and adults, produced music CD's, and created and maintained literally hundreds of peace-related websites. He is co-chair of The International Day of Peace NGO Committee at the United Nations, and co-director of the Peace Day Network, connecting more than 1,000 organizations in over 100 nations in support of a global ceasefire and worldwide day of peace and nonviolence on Peace Day, September 21. Bob is also co-coordinator of the Culture of Peace Initiative. We honor Bob for his unwavering and tireless commitment to building a culture of peace, and his pioneering use of the internet for that mission:" www.CultureOfPeace.com or www.internationaldayofpeace.org.

Andrea Kay Smith "is an anchor and inspiration for peace, starting, literally, in her own back yard with neighborhood art, computer, and garden projects. Her Atlanta-based organization, Partnerships In Peace, has been planting Peace Poles and handing out peace buttons since 1985. They established a Peace Center in 1996 and built the 30th section of the World Wall for Peace at the Centennial Olympics. Currently they are co-creating "*Atlanta: City of Peace*," which is developing a Global Peace Museum; the world's biggest Peace & Love Garden; University of Peace North America; and a Global Peace Concert worldwide. We honor Andrea for her skill in addressing the needs of her community and in mobilizing collaborative and creative action for peace:" www.PartnershipsInPeace.org.

Seeds of Peace "has been empowering young peace leaders from conflict zones since 1993. Beginning with Israeli and Palestinian youth, the program has grown to encompass the Middle East, South Asia, Cyprus, and the Balkans, with a roster now of more than 3,000 youth leaders from several conflict zones. Their summer camp program brings together teens from different factions or ethnic groups for a live-in experience with 'the other,' all the while providing leadership skills for reconciliation and coexistence. Follow-up programs provide training, education, and professional opportunities to participants, for a comprehensive approach to developing the peace leaders of the future. We honor Seeds of Peace for literally planting and nourishing the seeds of a peaceful tomorrow through the youth of the world:" www.seedspeace.org. For more information contact Louise Diamond, CEO, The Peace Company, 54 Maple Street, Bristol, Vermont 05443, www.thepeacecompany.com.

The **Let's Go Africa Foundation** was created in 2001 to improve the lives of disadvantaged populations in the inner cities of America and African Countries by promoting social and economic development and cultural exchange. "Our goal is to support the poor and also build partnerships by research, training, exchange programs and better life options for all. Our programs aim to create awareness and the need for development in health, gender equity, infrastructure and stability for growth". Membership is free and open to anyone with an interest to help the disadvantaged. The foundation's mission is: "To network and plan for the underprivileged. To provide opportunity for open dialogue on development. To emphasize on health, personal growth and group consciousness. To institute check and balances, accountability and discipline to build a better Africa. To increase knowledge and promote peace. The Let's Go Africa Foundation Work Study Program, in Africa provides Americans with internships in Africa, where professionals or College Students live with a host family. It also arranges study tours of key institutions related to Africa 's political and economic development. Internship placements include: HIV Preventions Programs, Adolescent Health and Better Life Options Program, Math and Science Tutorial Programs, Child Developmental Study, Elderly Care Study, Computer Literacy among others. The duration of the work study programs varies with the priorities of the applicant, from two weeks to 3months or more, and currently may take place in Ghana, Rwanda, Kenya, or South Africa. For details go to: <http://www.letsgoafrica.org/>.

The **Open Society Institute (OSI)** issued "Keeping America Open: OSI U.S. Programs Tenth Anniversary Report," in October. In early January, OSI's Central Eurasia Project put on a forum in New York "Islamists of Central Asia and Xinjiang: Questions of Religious Freedom." For more information, go to: <http://www.soros.org/>.

Peace Through Commerce is an integrated outreach, education, and engagement platform designed to promote peace through commerce and to celebrate the powerful role commerce plays in promoting peace. For details go to: <http://www.peacethroughcommerce.com>.

Changemakers "is an initiative of Ashoka: Innovators for the Public that focuses on the rapidly growing world of social entrepreneurship. It provides solutions and resources needed to help everyone become a changemaker and presents compelling stories that explore the fundamental principles of successful social innovation around the world. Changemakers is building the world's first global online "open source" community that competes to surface the best social solutions, and then collaborates to refine, enrich, and implement those solutions. Changemakers begins by providing an overarching intellectual framework for collaborative competitions that bring together

individual social change initiatives into a more powerful whole". "Changemakers's **Idea Reviewers** are regular contributors of commentary and analysis that helps ensure a lively and rich online discussion". **For more information** Changemakers, 188/3/1A Prince Anwar Shah Rd., Calcutta 700045, <http://www.changemakers.net>.

The **Agape Foundation** funds organizations that address issues of peace, human rights, environmental protection, economic justice, progressive arts and media, and grassroots organizing, with grants up to \$5000. The Foundation also funds the distribution of social issue media, including films, videos, radio programs, compact discs, vinyl records and books. For information go to: <http://www.agapefdn.org>, or call Agape at: (415)701-8707.

The **Global Campaign for Peace Education, Peace Boat US**, continues an active program education, training and events. For example, in October, Peace Boat's 30,000 ton passenger liner berthed in San Francisco, bringing 1,000 people from Japan to take part in two days of people-to-people activities to build a culture of peace. Participants engaged in alternative tours and study programs put together with local civil society organizations, addressing a range of local and global social justice issues. For more information contact the Global University Program at our office in New York, (212)687-7214, info@peaceboat-us.org, <http://www.peaceboat-us.org/>.

Rutgers University, in a first for an American institution of higher learning, **established a Middle East Coexistence House**, last fall, with 11 female students living there — five Jewish, three Muslim, one Hindu, one Christian and an agnostic. "Their goal was to learn about the Middle East together in order to improve Jewish—Muslim relations on campus and beyond..." The house combines residential experience with academic coursework including a course on Middle East conflict negotiation and resolution.

The **Billion Tree Campaign** is encouraging people, communities, organizations, business and industry, civil society and governments to plant trees and enter their tree planting pledges on this web site, with the objective is to plant at least one billion trees worldwide during 2007. For details go to: <http://www.unep.org/billiontreecampaign/index.asp>,

The **Center for Global Education** at Augsburg College has a number of [upcomngpeace and justice studies focus programs](#) to Mexico, Central America and Southern Africa, including: Nicaragua - Coffee, CAFTA and a Caldera, March 17-24; Nicaragua - Legacy of Conflict: Sustainable Development in Nicaragua, May 13-26; Nicaragua - Environmental Justice and Sustainable Development: Views from Latin America, May 21-June 3; Mexico - Language, Culture, & Social Change: From the Revolutionary Soldaderas to Frida Kahlo: Gender, Sexuality, Politics and the Arts (HIS/WS and SPA) May 25-July 1; Mexico - LGBT Lives: Mexican Perspectives. June 16-25; Mexico - Border Crossings: Globalization, Migration, & Social Work, A Professional Development Seminar for Social Workers & Social Work Professors, June 16-26; Guatemala Education for Decolonization: A Professional Development Seminar, June 23-July 1; El Salvador and Guatemala - Journey of Love and Understanding, August 4 – 15; and Namibia - International Education in Context, June 20 – July 11. For more information go to the Center's website: <http://www.augsburg.edu/global/triplist.html> or www.centerforglobaleducation.org, or contact the Center for Global studies, Augsburg College, 2211 Riverside Avenue, Minneapolis, MN 55454 (612)330-1159 or (800)299-8889 globaled@augsburg.edu.

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WORLD DEVELOPMENTS

Steve Sachs

2007 opens with a combination of increasing opportunities for reducing violence, and threats of violent expansion. Looking at long term trends, the Human Security Centre at the University of British Columbia, in *Human Security Brief 2006* (www.humansecuritybrief.info), states that, **"Notwithstanding the escalating violence in Iraq and the widening war in Darfur, from the beginning of 2002 to the end of 2005, the number of wars being fought around the world dropped significantly. By far the greatest decline was in sub-Saharan Africa,"** with the post-Cold War decline in armed conflicts continuing. The *2005 Report* argued that the decline could be attributed in large part to an upsurge in international activism, spearheaded by the UN, that sought to stop ongoing wars, help negotiate peace settlements, support post-conflict reconstruction, and prevent old wars from starting again. The current report indicates that these efforts are continuing to have a positive effect. **From the beginning of 2002 to the end of 2005, the number of armed conflicts being waged around the world shrank 15%—from 66 to 56, with far the greatest decline was in Sub-Saharan Africa. In 2005, there was just one ongoing genocide—in Darfur. In 1989, there were 10. The estimated number of displaced people around the world—refugees and internally displaced persons—fell from 34.2 to 32.1 million between 2003 and 2005, a net decline of 6%. The number of military coups and attempted coups fell from 10 in 2004 to just 3 in 2005, continuing an uneven decline from the 1963 high point of 25. However, In four regions of the world the number of armed conflicts increased between 2002 and 2005, while international terrorist incidents increased threefold worldwide between 2000 and 2005, with an even greater increase in fatalities. The number of campaigns of organized violence waged against civilians each year increased by 56% between 1989 and 2005. Meanwhile, genocides and other campaigns of mass violence against civilians dropped by 90% between 1989 and 2005, after rising for almost three decades.** This pattern closely follows the trend in high-intensity armed conflicts over the same period, which is not surprising, since most intentional mass killings of civilians take place in the context of major wars. Concerning terrorism,, according to the U.S.-based Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism, a the data *do* suggest that **civilians are increasingly being targeted by the perpetrators of political violence—although for most of the period under review (1968–2005) the number of civilians killed by international terrorists has only been a small fraction of the civilian death toll from other forms of political violence.** In terms of civilian lives saved, however, by far **the most important changes in the past 50 years have been the steep decline in genocides and other campaigns of mass violence against civilians since the end of the Cold War, and the equally steep decline in high-intensity armed conflicts.** The latter trend is important because large numbers of civilians were intentionally killed by governments or rebel groups in many of the major conflicts of the Cold War years.

The study shows that there has been a radical shift in the number of wars starting and ending since the Cold War—and an equally important shift in the ways in which conflicts end. A new study on conflict terminations produced by the Uppsala Conflict Data Program and

funded in part by the Human Security Centre, reveals that from the 1940s to the end of the Cold War, more wars ended in military victory than in negotiated settlements. This changed in the 1990s and into the new millennium, with more wars ending in peace talks than on the battlefield, providing **evidence that the UN's rapidly expanded peacemaking activities in this period were having an impact**. But wars that end in negotiated settlements have a downside. They last three times longer on average than conflicts that end in victory, and are nearly twice as likely to start up again within five years. The *Human Security Report 2005* noted that the demise of colonialism and the end of the Cold War had removed two major sources of conflict from the international system. It also argued that the international community's efforts to stop conflicts and prevent them from starting again, though plagued by many failures, had helped drive the steady decline in armed conflicts that began in the aftermath of the Cold War and has continued ever since.

Relating to the current time, Daniel Ellsberg wrote in the October issue of Harper's Magazine, that **"A hidden crisis is under way. Many government insiders are aware of serious plans for war with Iran, but Congress and the public remain largely in the dark.** The current situation is very like that of 1964, the year preceding our overt, open-ended escalation of the Vietnam War, and 2002, the year leading up to the U.S. invasion of Iraq. In both cases, if one or more conscientious insiders had closed the information gap with unauthorized disclosures to the public, a disastrous war might have been averted entirely". (The complete text is at: <http://www.harpers.org/TheNextWar.html>). Uzi Mahnaimi, New York and Sarah Baxter, Washington, wrote, January 7, in "Revealed: Israel Plans Nuclear Strike on Iran", *The Sunday Times* (http://www.truthout.org/docs_2006/010707Z.shtml). **"Israel has drawn up secret plans to destroy Iran's uranium enrichment facilities with tactical nuclear weapons.** Two Israeli air force squadrons are training to blow up an Iranian facility using low-yield nuclear "bunker-busters", according to several Israeli military sources." It should be noted that with all such plans, (if these stories are correct) they may or may not be used, but there is a danger that they might be. Often such plans, including training, are prepared on a contingency basis. Sometimes they are intended as a threat, for diplomatic purposes. But as President Kennedy experienced with the Cuban Bay of Pigs contingency preparations, such planning has a certain momentum, and the existence of a prepared plan can lead to its being put into action.

Looking more broadly, The International Crisis Groups (ICG: Contacts: Andrew Stroehlein (Brussels) 32 (0) 2 541 1635 and Kimberly Abbott (Washington) (202)785-1601.) December 1 report, *Crisis Watch* No. 40 (<http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4557&l=1>), found that "November overtook July 2006 as the worst month for conflict prevention since *CrisisWatch* began publication 40 months ago. Fourteen situations deteriorated in November, with seven conflict risk alerts (in anticipation of new or significantly escalated conflict). Improvements were noted during November in only three situations, and no new conflict resolution opportunities were identified for the coming month. **Sectarian killings in Iraq rose to their worst levels** since the U.S.-led invasion in 2003. **Violence in eastern Chad increased dramatically**, with over 60 villages attacked and hundreds killed, as the **Sudan war expanded. Major fighting erupted in south Sudan** between the Sudan People's Liberation Army and the Sudanese Armed Forces in the **first major violation of the 2005 north-south peace agreement**. In **Somalia**, a draft UN Security Council Resolution recommending a regional intervention force and a partial lifting of the arms embargo **threatened to generate a full-scale war**. **Political killing and Shiite resignations in Lebanon increased polarization and brought the government close to collapse**. **Côte d'Ivoire became potentially explosive** as relations soured further between the prime minister and president, and security forces allied to the latter took to the streets of Abidjan. The **situation also deteriorated in Azerbaijan, Bolivia, Burundi, Central African Republic, Colombia, Fiji, India (non-Kashmir) and Tonga**.

Three conflict situations showed **improvement in November**. In **Nepal, rebel Maoists and the interim government signed a historic peace deal, ending a 10-year war**. **Senegalese President Wade met with Casamance leaders in an effort to consolidate peace**, announcing several measures for reconstruction and reconciliation. A **newly adopted constitution in Kyrgyzstan establishing parliamentary checks on presidential power** was ratified, thus easing tensions after mass opposition protests." At the same time ICG issued alerts of **risk of new or increasing violence** in December in **Bangladesh, Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Fiji, Lebanon and Somalia**.

ICG's January *CrisisWatch* bulletin, No 41, (<http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4588&l=1>), found **Ten actual or potential conflict situations around the world deteriorated in December**. In **Somalia, full-scale war erupted** between the Council of Somali Islamic Courts and the Ethiopian-backed Transitional Federal Government, with fighting estimated to have killed hundreds of people and displaced tens of thousands as the Islamic courts greatly expanded the areas under their control. That **situation threatened to become a regional conflict, but Ethiopia sending in a large force, brought about the complete military defeat of the Courts**, and with the capture of the capital, Mogadishu, **brought the Transitional Government into power** across the country. That **situation may again deteriorate, unless an effective peacekeeping force is found, as Ethiopia states that it will not leave its forces in Somalia**.

In **Darfur, the humanitarian and security situation even further deteriorated while international negotiations continued, with out resolve, over the deployment of a strengthened peacekeeping force**. The **Occupied Palestinian Territories saw their worst factional clashes in a decade** as Fatah and Hamas battled over the formation of a unity government, and Israeli security actions continued. **Tensions over Iran's nuclear program rose after the UN Security Council voted unanimously to impose sanctions**, though the sanctions are widely seen as too weak to dissuade Iran from moving ahead with its potentially eventual atomic bomb producing activities. The main sanctions are a ban on import and export with Iran of materials and technology used in uranium enrichment and reprocessing, and the development and building of ballistic missiles. The U.S. considers these sanctions "only a first step," which can be followed up upon if Iran does not change course. However, gaining international agreement for considerably stronger sanctions is likely to be difficult. Iran responded by passing legislation authorizing the government to limit cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Commission, as it saw fit. **Iran's nuclear program (as well as North Korea's and the existence of Israeli's nuclear weapons, recently admitted by its Prime Minister) may be contributing to a regional arms race**. **Egypt's President Mubarak** stated in early January, "We said that **the region should be demilitarized of mass destruction weapons** and that we don't want nuclear weapons in the region, **or else we would be forced to also bring in nuclear weapons** so that we are not attacked at any time." In December, leaders of Arab nations in the **Gulf Cooperation Council, Meeting in Saudi Arabia, announced their intention to commence a joint program to develop nuclear electricity**.

The sudden death of Turkmenistan's authoritarian leader, Saparmurat Niyazov, prompted fears of a destabilizing struggle to fill the power vacuum. In Fiji, the government of Laisenia Qarase was deposed by military commander Frank Bainimarama in a bloodless coup. The situation also deteriorated in the Basque Country (with a bombing in Madrid in January, attributed to Basque separatists – in spite of a declaration of cease fire last year by the main separatist group), **Bolivia, Egypt and Kyrgyzstan**. The one situation showing improvement in December, was **Guinea**, where supporters of President Conte and the opposition reached consensus on conditions for organizing legislative elections in June. For January, *CrisisWatch* identified **Lebanon as a situation at particular risk of new or significantly escalated conflict**, while noting a **Conflict Resolution Opportunity in Uganda**. Reported as unchanged were situations in Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Angola, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Chechnya (Russia), Colombia, Comoros Islands, Côte d'Ivoire, Cyprus, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Ethiopia/Eritrea, Georgia, Haiti, Indonesia, Iraq, India (non-Kashmir), Kashmir, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Lebanon, Liberia, Macedonia, Madagascar, Mauritania, Moldova, Myanmar/Burma, Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan), Nepal, Nigeria, North Caucasus (non-Chechnya), North Korea, Northern Ireland (UK), Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, Somaliland (Somalia), Sri Lanka, Syria, Taiwan Strait, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, 20Tonga, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Venezuela, Western Sahara, Zimbabwe

The situation in Iraq continues to deteriorate, with inter-ethnic violence escalating, yet further, as **ethnic cleansing expands, with hundreds of thousands of Iraqis refugees fleeing their homes, and many thousands escaping abroad**, in the face of many Middle East nations placing a limit on their entry or stay. Meanwhile **U.S. official military 'combat' deaths have exceeded 3,000, while more than 16,000 U.S. troops have become paraplegics, amputees, burn victims, blinded, maimed, brain damaged or are suffering serious post traumatic stress**, and many thousands more wounded or injured. In the present circumstances, the **needed political solution appears to be increasingly illusive**, though some inter-group negotiators have come close to a possible deal that would provide for three autonomous regions and all three major groups sharing in oil revenues. However, even if a proposed settlement can be agreed upon by negotiators, the government may not be able to pass it without a major shift in the political climate.

The question then, is what to do now? **President Bush appears leaning toward sending 20,000 to 40,000 additional troops for a year and a half or more**, to secure Baghdad. Aside from the problem of finding such a force (and what further erosion of U.S. force capability may result from such an expansion), to many this seems too little and too late. Recent shifting of forces to the Iraqi capital has been ineffective. It is likely that the doubling, or more so, of the U.S. forces in Baghdad (where they likely would be deployed), would increase the tactical ability of the forces there, and ease the strain on them, somewhat. But that is only one embattled location in Iraq. Many analysts agree that if the U.S. had begun the war with perhaps 100,000 more troops, it would have provided the order that might have provided favorable conditions for a political settlement. But there is no guarantee that Iraq would still not have disintegrated, bringing regional destabilization and violence enhancing power shifts. Perhaps if an international force, including Islamic nation troops who understand the conditions in Iraq, of several hundred thousand were sent, security for a relatively peaceful political solution might be possible. However, U.S. actions have eliminated any possibility of that taking place, at this time, unless the Bush administration makes a major shift in policy and diplomacy, that so far has been beyond its capacity to undertake. In any case, sending even a large number of troops could only be effective if it were part of a plan for achieving a political solution, for which the Bush administration has yet to offer a needed new policy. Some argue that if the U.S. removes its troops, by whatever fazed withdrawal, violence will intensify. Of course, that is already happening, but it could get worse. The question is, would an intensification shorten the fighting? Many say that the U.S. forces are a cause of the unrest. An interesting view is that U.S. troops are shoring up the current government sufficiently so that it is able to avoid making the very difficult political decisions that could bring movement out of the current turmoil.

The International Crisis Group (ICG) reported findings, December 19 ("After Baker-Hamilton: What to Do in Iraq," <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?l=1&id=4580>), stating, "**The rethinking of U.S. Iraq policy represented by the Baker-Hamilton report [but, to date, not heeded by President Bush] is an important and welcome start but insufficiently radical if Iraq's collapse and an unprecedented regional war are to be avoided.**" Crisis Group President Gareth Evans stated, "**We are looking at Iraq's complete disintegration into failed-state chaos, threatening to drag down much of the region with it. More troops in - or out - are not going to solve this. What is needed above all is a new multinational effort to achieve a new political compact between all relevant Iraqi players.** All Iraqi actors who, one way or another, are involved in the country's internecine violence must be brought to the negotiating table and pressed to accept the necessary compromises. That cannot be done without a concerted effort by all Iraqis neighbors, which in turn cannot be done if their interests are not reflected in the final outcome.

If Iraq can be saved at this late date, it will require three ambitious and interrelated steps: A new forceful multilateral approach that puts real pressure on all Iraqi parties. The Baker-Hamilton report is right to advocate a broad International Support Group; it should comprise the five permanent Security Council members and Iraq's six neighbors. But its purpose must not be to support the Iraqi government. It must support Iraq, which means pressing the government, along with all other constituencies, to make necessary compromises. The government and security forces should not be treated as privileged allies to be bolstered. They are but one among many parties to the conflict and not innocent of responsibility for much of the trouble. It also means agreeing on rules of conduct and red-lines for third-party involvement. Sustained multilateral diplomacy, not a one-off international conference is needed. A conference of all Iraqi and international stakeholders to forge a new political compact. This is not a military challenge in which one side needs to be strengthened and another defeated. It is a political challenge in which new consensual understandings need to be reached. A new, more equitable and inclusive national compact needs to be agreed upon by all relevant actors, including militias and insurgent groups, on issues such as federalism, resource allocation, de-Baathification, the scope of the amnesty and the timetable for a U.S. withdrawal. This can only be done if the International Support Group brings all of them to the negotiating table, and if its members steer their deliberations, deploying a mixture of 20 carrots and sticks to influence those on whom they have particular leverage. **A new U.S. regional strategy, including engagement with Syria and Iran, end of efforts at regime change, revitalization of the Arab-Israeli peace process and altered strategic goals. Mere engagement of Iraq's neighbors will not do; Washington must clearly redefine its objectives in the region to enlist regional, and particularly Iranian and Syrian help. The goal is not to bargain with them, but to seek compromise**

agreement on an end-state for Iraq and the region that is no one's first choice, but with which all can live". IISS (www.iiss.org) suggests, in its Winter 2006 *Flashpoint* newsletter, that in addition to a workable political accommodation, and reform of security forces, supported by increased international action, including from Iraqis neighbors, local governments across Iraq will need to be empowered with the capacity to meet basic needs. The rule of law will have to be firmly established through effective policing and courts that are free from bias and intimidation, and supported by adequate prisons, while religious courts run by militias and extra judicial killings need to be criminalized. In addition significant anti corruption measures are needed along with financial and legal reforms. Most difficult of all, IISS states that a sustained effort is needed to rekindle hope among Iraqis that a peaceful future is possible.

Rising violence in Afghanistan, in the face of little progress on security or economic and infrastructure development since the instillation of the Karzai government, finds growing dissolution around the country with the government in Kabul, and a continuing resurgence of the Taliban. Surveys taken in Afghanistan in 2004 and last summer show the public loss of confidence in the regime. In 2004, 64% saw the country moving in the right direction, 11% in the wrong direction, and 8% mixed. In 2006 the figures shifted to: 44% the right direction, 21% the wrong direction and 29% mixed directions. IGC stated November 2 (<http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4485&l=1>, "Countering Afghanistan's Insurgency: No Quick Fixes"), "The rising violence in Afghanistan is an urgent wake-up call for President Karzai to build a clean and accountable administration and the international community to rethink its policies, including towards Pakistan's military government," as the insurgency produces fierce battles in the south, while insurgent attacks in the east creep towards the provinces surrounding Kabul, and a new campaign of terrorist violence targets urban centers. "Having regrouped within Pakistan, the Taliban and other anti-government elements have stepped up pressure, and disillusioned, disenfranchised and economically desperate people are responding again to the call of extremists in a region radicalized by decades of conflict. Self-interested spoilers, particularly in the rapidly expanding narcotics trade, further fuel the violence." "The **urgent measures needed include putting substantially more international forces into the battle zones and removing national restrictions** so that all those in the country can be used where they are most needed. However, **efforts to stabilize Afghanistan will be about containment at best until the international community puts real, sustained diplomatic pressure on Pakistan to tackle militant leaderships and reverse policies that feed extremism. Within Afghanistan, no concessions should be made to violent extremists; instead the legitimate grievances of the population must be met. Promoting the rule of law and ending the culture of impunity are crucial to countering the insurgency and strengthening the Karzai government's legitimacy. Priority should be given to reforming the police and judiciary and attacking corruption. Short-term measures such as relying on ill-trained, poorly-disciplined militias, ad hoc anti-terrorism laws and discredited power brokers will not beat the insurgency but will undermine the long-term goal of building sustainable institutions.**"

Among the growing ill-effects of the Bush Administration's destabilization of Iraq, bringing power struggles and shifts throughout the wider region, is that **Lebanon is experiencing serious tensions between Hezbollah (and its supporters) and those who back the current government, which could collapse, while there is a threat that civil war could be sparked.** On November 1, IGC advised ("Israel/Hezbollah/Lebanon: Avoiding New Conflict"), "The international community needs to keep its goals in Lebanon modest lest it renew the conflagration that Security Council Resolution 1701 has put a temporary lid on." "The greatest threats would be attempts by Israel or UN forces (UNIFIL) to use 1701 as a blunt means to disarm Hizbollah or by Hizbollah to test UNIFIL resolve. 1701 is a transitory tool to stabilize the border until bolder action is taken to reform Lebanon's political system and build a strong state and to address regional issues like re-launching the Syrian track and engaging Iran." "1701 cannot resolve underlying Israeli-Lebanese problems", says Robert Malley, Crisis Group's Middle East Program Director. "It elevates Hizbollah's armed status to a core international concern but entrusts its resolution to a process incapable of dealing with it and defers the key political step - progress toward an Arab-Israeli peace - that is a precondition for settling it." To promote stability in the short term, IGC recommends, "containing Hizbollah and Israel's military moves, the former through UNIFIL and LAF forces, the latter through pressure to halt violations of Lebanon's sovereignty; bolstering the Lebanese state's sovereignty and in particular strengthening the army; addressing some of Hizbollah's core justifications for maintaining its arsenal, in particular the status of Shebaa farms".

On December 21, ICG reported, "**Lebanon is at risk of renewed collapse unless domestic and especially international actors abandon their zero-sum struggle and seek compromise** (<http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4586&l=1>, "Lebanon at a Tripwire"). "The conflict is now concentrated on the issue of the international tribunal to prosecute those responsible for the assassination of ex-Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri and the composition of the government. The political impasse has led both sides to call out their followers." ICG analyst Patrick Haenni states that, "Street politics have replaced institutional politics. Huge demonstrations on one side trigger colossal protests from the other. Civil war remains unlikely. But with heightened polarization, intensified confessionalization and heavy outside interference, it is again becoming thinkable." "The conflict reflects deeper local and international struggles: a vision of Lebanon anchored in the West against a militant, pan-Arab outlook; Syria against Israel; the U.S. administration against the Syrian regime; pro-Western Sunni Arab regimes led by Saudi Arabia against ascendant Iran and Shiite militancy; and, hovering above it all, Washington against Tehran. Any viable solution must reflect a broad consensual package deal: a joint majority/opposition commission to review and amend the international tribunal statutes to guarantee independence and non-politicization; simultaneous parliamentary approval of those statutes, a unity government and a new electoral law; early parliamentary and presidential elections. Lebanon must also address domestic problems that enable and encourage outside interference. **This means strengthening state institutions, ending a corrupt patronage system and de-confessionalizing politics. A sustainable resolution of the conflict also requires immediate U.S. re-engagement with Syria, for Damascus has made clear that it will destabilize Lebanon if its vital interests are ignored.**"

The International Crisis Group, ICG, recommended, on October 5 ("The Arab-Israeli Conflict: To Reach a Lasting Peace." <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4427&l=1>), "**Now is the time for a serious international push to launch an Arab-Israeli peace initiative.** Catastrophic as the recent series of developments in the Middle East have been, they can give new impetus to the search for a comprehensive settlement.... Since the collapse of the peace process in late 2000, none of the regional parties has displayed the requisite capacity or willingness to reach an acceptable compromise, and the international community has shown more fecklessness than resolve. And yet, **some promising ingredients exist: the possibility (despite the fraught relationship between Fatah and Hamas) of a Palestinian national unity government; Syria's repeated appeal for a resumption of negotiations; increased eagerness on the**

part of Arab regimes for a renewed peace process; and Israel's need to find an alternative way forward. A new international conference might offer a jump-start, but a more realistic mechanism for early progress would involve the necessary negotiation initiatives coming from the Quartet (acting in concert with key regional countries), working under the general oversight of the Security Council. The following elements are key: **Any new process must be comprehensive and inclusive**, enabling all parties with a recognized stake in the outcome to participate; From the outset, it must provide a clear political horizon as well as a credible means of getting there; It should be realistic, and reflect existing conditions on the ground; **It should involve far greater engagement of Arab states and of Europe, who need to seize the initiative rather than await an increasingly improbable U.S. reawakening.** The goal, or political horizon, **must be unambiguously stated as security and full recognition to the state of Israel within internationally recognized borders, an end to the occupation for the Palestinian people in an independent, sovereign state with East Jerusalem as its capital, recovery of lost land to Syria and a fully sovereign and secure Lebanese state**". President of Crisis Group President stated. "Years of culpable neglect have crippled forces of moderation and pragmatism throughout the region and made the achievement of peace immeasurably more difficult. The prospect of years more of waiting may make it impossible."

Margarita Mathiopoulos wrote in the *International Herald Tribune*, October 12, that **interviews of current and former Israeli senior security officials following last summer's conflict in Lebanon** showed that, "Many felt that the operation was too large and too lengthy, and some blamed the United States for this. More strikingly, many of the senior officers argued that the operation was **proof that Israel must go all out to reach a peace agreement with the Arabs.**" Meanwhile, **Israeli's policies remain essentially unchanged**, with ongoing assassinations and incursions, particularly into Gaza, as the building of the security wall continues, quite often across Palestinian land, without compensation isolating numerous Palestinians, cutting them off from medical care, farms, trade, and their families and colleagues, while no new Israeli peace initiatives are forthcoming. Then in December, the **Israel government approved a plan to construct a Jewish settlement in the occupied West Bank for the first time in 10 years**, amidst protest from Palestinians, the Israeli peace movement and the international community, including the U.S. government. There is speculation that the expansion plan is intended to assuage settlers for closing some illegal settlements. At the same time, Prime Minister Olmert promised Palestinian President Abbas that some West Bank military checkpoints would be removed, However, the proposal to remove 27 of the 400 checkpoints is under review because of opposition from the Israeli Defense Forces. A complicating factor in reaching a final peace agreement, is the November revelation that **39% of the land held by Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank is on privately owned by Palestinians**, according to Israeli government maps.

In November, **Israel called off air strikes intended to assassinate a Palestinian Militant because a large crowd of Palestinian women formed a human shield** around the targeted house. The **success of this action is likely to encourage increased nonviolent initiatives** by Palestinians (*The Christian Science Monitor*, November 20 2006, [http:// www.csmonitor.com](http://www.csmonitor.com)). However, **supersonic Israeli aircraft flights over Gaza disturbing Palestinians with sonic bombs have been continuing for many months.**

The London-based Arabic daily *Al-Hayat* reported an interview with **Hamas politburo leader Khaled Mashaal**, on October 11, in which **he restated that Hamas would not recognize Israel, but was willing to accept a Palestinian state within 1967 borders, as well as a hudna [truce] with Israel, without recognizing the "occupation"**. This would seem to be a basis for negotiations, establishing a long term truce with confidence building steps slowly building a peace over time. This follows upon November statements by Palestinian and Israeli officials, in November, saying that each side was open to a truce in Gaza. This officially occurred, but did not fully stop Palestinian rocket fire or Israeli attacks and incursions.

Israel's continuing assaults, over more than five months in the Gaza strip, unleashing missiles, attack helicopters and jet fighters over the densely packed concrete hovels, while the Israeli army has made numerous deadly incursions, has brought about the deaths of some 500 people, nearly all civilians, while 1,600 more have been wounded (this includes unarmed women surrounding a house to protect it, who were fired on by Israeli forces, on November 3). The Israeli Defense Force (IDF) has detained hundreds of Palestinians, destroyed Gaza's infrastructure, including its electrical power system and key roads and bridges, carried out huge land confiscations, demolished homes and plunged families into a crisis that has greatly increased already widespread poverty and malnutrition. These IDF's actions are a direct cause of the unraveling of Gazan civil society, including street fighting amongst Hamas and Fatah factions, threatening civil war, despite a tenuous cease-fire and attempts to create a unity government. (In January, President Abbas stated that he had given up in trying to form a unity government and renewed his call for early Presidential and Parliamentary elections, which Hamas is resisting). All of the IDF action has failed to bring the return of a kidnapped Israeli soldier, or stop sporadic missile launches by Palestinian militants into Israel (though it has prevented some such bombardments and delayed others). **It would seem that Israel needs to develop alternative strategies. The historical record clearly shows that the more Israel uses broadly punitive methods, the more this creates angry, militants among the Palestinians. As the IDF's violence destroys Gaza, and the occupation blocks access to economic opportunity and needed services, the more desperate became many Gazans, who have little to lose in resorting the violence.**

Gush Shalom reported in November, that **"...According to the World Bank, Palestinians are currently experiencing the worst economic depression in modern history. The opprobrious imposition of international sanctions has had a devastating impact on an already severely comprised economy given its extreme dependence on external sources of finance.** For example, the Palestinian Authority is highly dependent on two sources of income. The first is annual aid package from Western donors of about \$1 billion per year (in 2005, according to the World Bank, donors gave \$1.3 billion in humanitarian and emergency [\$500m/38%], developmental [\$450m/35%] and budgetary [\$350m/27%]) assistance, much of it now suspended. The second is a monthly transfer by Israel of \$55 million in customs and tax revenues that it collects for the PA, a source of revenue that is absolutely critical to the Palestinian budget and totally suspended. In fact, Israel is now withholding close to half a billion dollars in Palestinian revenue that is desperately needed in Gaza. The combined impact of restrictions, notably the almost unabated closure and the ongoing economic boycott, has resulted in **unprecedented levels of unemployment that currently approach 40% in Gaza (compared to less than 12% in 1999).** In fact, Palestinian workers from Gaza have not been allowed into Israel since 12 March 2006, **Gaza's primary market and all entry and exit points have been virtually sealed since June 25, 2006 when Israel's current military campaign in Gaza began.** In the next five years, furthermore, 135,000 new jobs will be needed just to keep unemployment at 10 percent. Trade levels have been similarly affected. By early May 2006, for example,

the Karni crossing, through which commercial supplies enter Gaza, had been closed for 47% of the year with estimated daily losses of \$500,000-\$600,000. Compounding this are agricultural losses amounting to an estimated \$1.2 billion for both Gaza and the West Bank over the last six years. By April 2006, 79% of Gazan households were living in poverty (compared to less than 30 percent in 2000), a figure that has likely increased; many are hungry..."

The West Bank has only been somewhat less harassed than Gaza, as it has suffered a series of IDF raids. For example, Gush Shalom reported on January 4, "At the very hour when the Prime Minister of the State of Israel held with the President of Egypt a meeting, which is supposed to bring us back on the route to peace, somebody had decided to send soldiers, bulldozers and helicopter gunships to conduct a deadly midday raid into Ramallah. The largest Israeli force to enter this city in the past four years conducted a prolonged gun battle in Ramallah's main square, in front of international TV crews, and killed four Palestinian inhabitants. It was an act of heavy-handed aggression which immediately wiped out Olmert's so-called "gestures" to President Abu Mazen (none of which, incidentally, was carried out). Either somebody deliberately intended to create a deadly provocation, or it was an unbelievable show of stupidity and incompetence. In both cases, the dire result is the same, as is the conclusion: **this is not the way to build a ceasefire, and certainly not the way to advance towards peace. If the deadly IDF raids into the West Bank cities are not stopped, there will also be no quiet in Sderot and on the Gaza Strip border, and all of us will sink deeper into the abyss of hatred and bloodshed.** For further information contact Adam Keller, Gush Shalom Spokesperson: <mailto:adam@gush-shalom.org>".

Meanwhile, according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Jerusalem, in October, **during the past year there was a 40% rise in the number of Israeli West Bank checkpoints, while more restrictive policies were put in place for authorization of crossing permits**

Israel has tightened visa restrictions on Palestinians who have land and families in the occupied territories, keeping an increasing number from entering or remaining in the territories. *Charmaine Seitz*-aljazeera.net reports that "Israeli human rights workers say the tightening of visa rules is an additional form of pressure on the Palestinian government. But Yehezkiel Lien, research director of ... B'Tselem says Israel's main reason for freezing Palestinian residency petitions is the "demographic consideration" or the desire to maintain a Jewish majority between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River." (For more go to: http://www.kibush.co.il/show_file.asp?num=16549). In addition, last fall, the **Israeli military banned new admissions of Palestinian students to universities in Israel.**

In early December, the **U.S. House and Senate reached agreement on S. 2370, the Palestinian Anti-Terrorism Act of 2006**, which would severely restrict all funds to the Palestinian people, making providing humanitarian aid more difficult and would also severely limit diplomatic contacts with the duly elected Palestinian government. Since the US has not given direct aid to the Palestinian Authority in years, this bill will only stop funds that would not get into the hands of a Hamas-led Palestinian Authority, and would severely impact funding for UN programs designed to help the Palestinian people, who are already suffering dire economic and humanitarian conditions.

Negotiations with North Korea continue to make no real progress toward ending North Korea's nuclear weapons program, as the last round of the on and off six power talks, last fall, convened only after considerable pressure on North Korea, ended without movement. ICG reported October 26 ("Perilous Journeys: The Plight of North Koreans in China and Beyond", <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?l=1&id=4469>), "**The international community needs to do more to help thousands of desperate North Koreans who are fleeing their country or it may find the nuclear crisis with Pyongyang even more difficult to resolve.**" "China and South Korea have held back, even during the recent Security Council debate over post-test sanctions, from applying as much pressure as they might to persuade Pyongyang to reverse its dangerous nuclear policy, in part because they fear that the steady stream of North Koreans flowing into China and beyond would become a torrent if the North's economy were to collapse under the weight of tough measures." "Clearly, the primary responsibility for the mounting humanitarian tragedy lies with North Korea but the international community has failed to find an effective means of dealing with the situation."

Concerning **Pakistan**, on December 11, IGC reported ("Pakistan's Tribal Areas: Appeasing the Militants," <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4568&l=1>), "The Musharraf government's appeasement of Taliban sympathizers has resulted in a base in Pakistan's tribal areas that militants are using to stoke instability both at home and in neighboring Afghanistan. Over the past five years, the Musharraf government has tried first brute force, then appeasement. Both have failed." "The Musharraf governments failure to extend its control over and provide good governance to its citizens in FATA has enabled this militancy to flourish." "President Musharraf has been reluctant to take more consequential action in the tribal belt because his government depends upon support from radical religious groups and parties which sympathize with the militants. However, **it needs to institute broad political and economic measures to curb extremism**, beginning by integrating FATA into the Northwest Frontier Province, developing its natural resources and spurring agriculture. It should disarm militants, shut down their training camps, and prosecute those responsible for killing civilians and officials, while opening FATA to the media and human rights monitors. **The U.S. and the EU should make continued economic and diplomatic support to Musharraf contingent not only on such actions but also upon his allowing free, democratic elections in 2007.**" At the moment that does not seem likely. Behind the scenes, the U.S. White House has been pressuring President Musharraf (who many Pakistanis see as a puppet of U.S. President Bush) to retire from the army next year, when parliamentary elections are scheduled to take place, and run as a civilian candidate. Musharraf has been intimating that he will get himself re-elected through the existing parliament and postpone parliamentary elections for 2008, while he seems increasingly reluctant to retire from the army. At the same time, anti-American sentiment has been quite high because of a failed U.S. attempt to strike Al Qaeda's top leadership in a remote area of northern Pakistan. The air strike killed more than a dozen Pakistanis, while Musharraf was not able to gain an apology from Washington. This has overshadowed the good will American gained when U.S. troops and aid workers assisted Pakistanis in the aftermath of a huge and catastrophic earthquake in Pakistan a year ago last fall. Ian Davis states, "The Bush administration's adoption of Israel's strategy of "targeted assassination" is the latest worrying trend in its misguided "war on terror" (See, "Why the U.S. is Losing its War on Terror," <http://www.bu.edu/globalbeat/syndicate/davis021506.html>).

The **foreign ministers of India and Pakistan met, in November, for talks on terrorism and rival claims on Kashmir**, in a hopeful sign that progress can soon be made on those divisive issues. Both countries continue to suffer from bombing and other violence. In Pakistan this includes sectarian conflict, and islamicist extremist and some disaffected northern tribes people's attacks on President Musharraf's government, including a bombing believed in reprisal for Musharraf's allowing the deadly U.S. air strike, reported above. India has been suffering bombings and other attacks from separatists both in Kashmir and in other parts of the country.

Bangladesh, which recently experienced discordant demonstrations over political issues, in early January, saw **all major opposition parties withdraw from the elections**, slated for the end of the month. ICG warned, October 23 ("Bangladesh Today," <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4462&l=1>), that there was a danger that political discord "could threaten democracy and encourage the growth of militant Islamist forces." "As elections approach, problems are multiplying, and it is uncertain whether Bangladesh's traditional moderation will see it through. The leaders of the two main parties, the BNP and the Awami League (AL), are locked in mutual hatred that has paralyzed parliament. The principal beneficiary of this messy politics has been the increasingly influential Islamist fringe, led by legitimate governing parties like the Jamaat-e-Islami but extending to violently militant organizations. Circumstantial evidence suggests underground terrorist groups have been cultivated by those in power. There are many stabilizing factors including a lively and free media, vibrant civil society and a sophisticated electorate with a deep-rooted tradition of liberal secularism. But there is urgent need for political leaders to ensure the people at large shape the country's future rather than a violent fringe filling the vacuum created by moderate parties, failure to accept democratic norms and respect democratic functioning. The international community should help by offering more active political engagement and treating Bangladesh as an important partner, not simply an aid recipient."

The comprehensive peace accord reached in Nepal, after extensive negotiations, November 21, now finds the Marxist guerillas putting down their guns to take part in parliamentary politics, and appears to have that nation moving well toward lasting peace. The International Crisis Group (ICG) reported December 15 (<http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4577&l=1>), "Nepal's Peace Agreement: Making it Work", however, that there are **still hurdles to be crossed**, that the support of internationals can help get over. **Issues yet to be resolved include finalizing an interim constitution**, originally to be completed in June, while the **December 1 target for forming an interim government was missed. Thus there are serious questions over whether free and fair constituent assembly elections can take place as scheduled in June.** Some of the difficulties which delayed the peace talks have been addressed, but there are new process challenges, for example deploying UN monitors within the tight deadlines envisioned by the parties. At this stage, ICG finds the prognosis generally positive.

King Jigme Singye Wangchuck, **Bhutan's head of state since 1972, abdicated in favor of his son**, HM Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, in December. Previously, the **King had announced his intention to relinquish power by 2008, when parliamentary elections were scheduled to take place under a new, plural political system.**

ICG stated, December 8 ("Myanmar: New Threats to Humanitarian Aid," <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?l=1&id=4565&m=1>), that **increasing signs of a dawning humanitarian crises in Myanmar** require the international community to increase humanitarian aid to the country, in spite of its repressive government.

China took part with the leaders of 48 of Africa's 53 nations, at the China-Africa Forum in Beijing, in early November. Officially, the gathering was primarily **aimed at expanding trade, so that China can gain the oil and ore it increasingly requires.** Many observers believe it was also the opening of **China seeking diplomatic influence in Africa**, at a time when many Africans feel that the U.S. has not paid the continent enough attention (despite some recent U.S. diplomatic increase of energy, there). China's influence has also been increasing in Southeast Asia and the western Pacific, including with nations such Australia, Thailand and the Philippines, while U.S. policy-makers have been narrowly focused on terrorism and the Middle East. China took actions, in October, to **reduce its broad use of the death penalty**, including reviewing all current death sentences. The Chinese government continues to suppress the Uighur population of Xinjiang Province, holding hundreds of Uighur activists in jail – who seek an end to Chinese rule there – while bringing in ethnic Chinese so that the Uighur and other Turkic group population of the province has fallen from 95% in 1949 to a minority today. The Uighur resistance is led by Rebiya Kadeer (now in exile in the U.S.) who was a close contender for a Nobel Peace Prize last year,

The **Azerbaijani government, in November, closed the country's largest independent radio station, while evicting the major opposition party, the Azerbaijan Popular Front Party, two opposition newspapers Azadlig and Bizim Yol and the Turan information agency from their Baku offices.** ICG stated, November 27 (<http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?l=1>), that these "aggressive moves to silence independent media and the leading opposition party last week not only raise obvious human rights problems but will have a detrimental effect on efforts to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Azerbaijan's international partners - the EU and its member states, the U.S., the OSCE, the Council of Europe and others - should in unequivocal terms call on the Government of President Ilham Aliyev to restore media freedoms protected in the Azerbaijani Constitution and in commitments made as a member of the OSCE and the Council of Europe, and as a recent signatory of an EU Neighborhood Action Plan."

On November 22, ICG cautioned ("Georgia's Armenian and Azeri Minorities," <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4517&l=1>), **"The Georgian government must take significant steps to avoid conflict in the country's ethnic Armenian and Azeri areas."** While there is no risk of the situation becoming Ossetian- or Abkhaz-like threats to Georgia's territorial integrity, tensions are evident in the regions of Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo-Kartli, where the two predominantly live. There have been demonstrations, alleged police brutality and killings during the past two years. Georgia has made little progress towards integrating these minorities, who constitute over 12 per cent of the population. Armenians and Azeris are underrepresented in all spheres of public life, especially government, and a lack of dialogue between them and Tbilisi adds to perceptions of discrimination and alienation. This is aggravated by economic problems, including high unemployment and decaying infrastructure. Tbilisi needs to do much more to build confidence and to encourage minorities to address their problems through state structures rather than in the street." "Implementation of local government reform after the 2006 elections provides a new platform for minorities to affect decision making through municipal bodies. More consultation by Tbilisi when drafting legislation can also help. The government needs to establish a

comprehensive education system to teach Georgian as a second language to minorities, but while a new generation is educated, minorities should not be discriminated against, especially in hiring for state jobs. The state should also implement its international commitments, particularly allowing use of minority languages for government business in municipalities with large numbers of minority citizens, as is standard throughout Europe.”

ICG proposed , November 6 (“Uzbekistan: Europe,s Sanctions Matter,”), that the **European Union should expand, not weaken, targeted sanctions on the government of Uzbekistan**, since the desired effect has not been achieved: getting the government to investigate the indiscriminate killings of civilians by its security forces in Andijon in 2005. Moreover. “The Karimov dictatorship is looking increasingly fragile. Serious thought should be given to facing the consequences of its ultimate collapse, including the impact on the region. Instead of reverting to a soft engagement policy that has failed, the EU should focus its energies and resources on doing what it can from the periphery to help Uzbeks, while building up resilience in weak neighboring states, such as Kyrgyzstan, to the growing instability in Uzbekistan.”

The Crisis Group reported, November 9 (“Kyrgyzstan on the Edge.” <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?l=1&id=4495>), that, **“With Kyrgyzstan on the brink of what could yet become a civil war that would destabilize the fragile Central Asia region, the European Union and others must take urgent diplomatic initiatives,”** despite the President’s signing a new constitution, curbing his powers, November 9, confrontation between government and opposition demonstrators in the capital could spread into a wider conflict. ICG called “for key international actors to send a mission to Bishkek to help the Kyrgyz parties keep talking, first to prevent violence but also to develop a longer-term mechanism to resolve the underlying disputes.” “Beyond the urgent need for immediate diplomatic action to head off violence, the OSCE, EU, Russia, Kazakhstan and the U.S. all need to be more fully involved in a longer-term effort to restore political health by helping launch a national reconciliation effort to ease tensions between the country,s various regions and factions.”

Turkmenistan authoritarian President Saparmyrat Niyazov died, December 21,. In the absence of a designated successor, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Health and the Medical Industry, Gurbanguly Berdymukhammetov, assumed the responsibilities of Head of State in an acting capacity. A presidential election was subsequently scheduled for February 11. The dual question now is whether some opening up of the regime might begin to take place, and if the stability of the nation might weaken.

Thailand has continued to experience political violence, despite **moves toward reconciliation** taken since the coup. In November, the government dropped charges against 92 Muslims involved in a 2004 protest in the rebellious south, with Prime Minister Chulanont apologizing for the harsh policies of his predecessor. The Prime Minister also stated that. “They should have Islamic law in practice, Shariah, because the way they are dealing with the normal practice in society, in their life is completely different from us.” The south is 80% ethnic Malay and Muslim. As of January, it appears that **much of the violence is in response to the minimalist non-violent coup** (supposedly to “restore democracy”), and that a power struggle will continue in Thailand.

The **renewed fighting in Sri Lanka between the government and the Tamil Tigers has continued to increase since the collapse of peace negotiations**, some months ago. ICG reported, November 28 (“Sri Lanka: The Failure of the Peace Process,” <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4523&l=1>), that “Sri Lanka needs international engagement more than ever, focusing first on immediate humanitarian concerns and halting serious human rights abuses, but including a longer-term effort to renew a peace process.” By contrast, **in Aceh, the peace agreement with the Indonesian government brought former guerillas to run as candidates in December’s local elections.**

The **crisis that has plagued most of Tomor-Leste’s short independence has been continuing**, ICG reported, October 10, “but there is **general agreement on the elements of a resolution - the problem is getting a dysfunctional government to implement them.**” (“Resolving Timor-Leste’s Crisis,” <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4438&l=1>), **“Resolving the crisis will depend on comprehensive security sector reform and better oversight of the courts. But with elections due in May 2007, it will also depend on reform within the dominant party, FRETILIN, and on the willingness of key political actors to sit down together and agree on solutions.** One consequence of the crisis has been a deepening rift in Dili between people from the west (Ioromonu) and people from the east (Iorosae) but reconciliation will be next to impossible unless it takes place at the top as well.”

UN Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari announced a **postponement**, in December, **for the presentation of final status proposals on Kosovo until after Serbia’s January 21 elections.** There is concern that the delay could be longer, as Serbia is adamant about not losing Kosovo, while Russia has become inflexible. A long delay might give rise to a unilateral act of impence, of new violence, out of frustration, by Kosovo’s Albanians. ICG reported, December 20 (“Kosovo,s Status: Difficult Months Ahead,” <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4585&l=1>), “The international community will need to give Ahtisaari strong and unambiguous support to get this process wrapped up in the first half of next year.” “The Contact Group should not permit further delay in Ahtisaari,s proposals after Serbia’s January elections and should not dilute them. It should refer them quickly to the UN for Security Council consideration. The EU Council should give its preparations and requirements for assuming post-status responsibilities in Kosovo more prominence, both for European public opinion and the Security Council. The incoming German Presidency should make uniting member states behind the Ahtisaari proposals a top priority. The Security Council should act promptly and positively when it receives Ahtisaari,s proposals, recognising that delay would likely mean a return of Kosovo to its agenda soon in crisis circumstances. Kosovo institutions should strengthen good governance to gain more legitimacy with their public and be prepared to exercise new responsibilities effectively once status is resolved. Serbia should be encouraged to engage with the Kosovo independence project and extract the maximum benefit for its own long-term interests and those of the Kosovo Serb minority but be left in no doubt that it does not have a veto over the status decision.” “The precarious situation in Kosovo makes it essential that its elite, institutions and society use 2007 to make a great adjustment: away from threats of crisis and toward sustainable self-governance.” Meanwhile, in October, **Serbia passed a new Constitution in voting that may have been rigged** by the government of Premier Vojislav Kostunica and the Democratic Party of Serbia. The new fundamental law **gives potentially dangerous emergency powers to the government, and considerably centralizes power.** At least for now,

Serbia's leaders continue to move away from integration with Western Europe, which has thwarted the aspirations of its nationalists, and threatens to remove historically important Kosovo from its territory.

Amnesty International, reported in November, reported that in ordinary cases, **the Russian criminal justice system often uses torture to obtain confessions**, sighting 114 cases of pretrial torture.

Northern Ireland's slow and difficult struggle to restore provincial government with participation of Protestant and Catholic parties and ministers in Parliament continues, with the active facilitation of the British and, to a lesser extent, the Irish governments. With some significant progress, but no agreement reached between Sinn Fein and the Democratic Unionist Party, the British government reset the deadline for a basic agreement for restarting the Northern Ireland Parliament, with new elections, from November 24 to March 26. With the IRA having decommissioned its weapons, the remaining concrete issue (beyond general distrust, particularly of Sinn Fein and the IRA by the hard line unionist DUP, now the leading Protestant party) has been **policing**. For Sinn Fein, reform of the police, long seen as being strongly prejudiced against Catholics, has been a major requirement for completing the peace process. Sinn Fein has to date refused to recognize the existing northern Ireland police constabulary as legitimate, demanding it become truly even handed, including employing a significant number of Catholic officers. The DUP has insisted that it will not participate in a government with Sinn Fein until that Catholic party recognizes the existing police force, which the DUP wishes to leave essentially unchanged. Sinn Fein voted, in December, to hold a conference in January to consider the issue of policing, including the possibility of recognizing the current police force and putting off the issue of reform until after parliament has reconvened, if it received reassurances from the British government that there would be movement on police reform, and from the DUP that Sinn Fein's taking such a step would finally end the DUP's refusal to join with it in a government. As of January 6, after intensive talks between the Sinn Fein leadership and the British government, and a DUP statement that appears to grudgingly agree to parliamentary participation should Sinn Fein recognize the police, it appears likely that the police conference will take place in late January or early February. Northern Ireland, whose economy has had a significant resurgence since the peace process began, was **offered a \$95 billion economic reconstruction package, over 10 years, by Great Britain**, in December, **if the opposing political parties can agree to power sharing** and the formation of a joint government.

Spanish authorities blamed Basque separatists for a **bombing** in a garage **at the Madrid Airport**, in early January, bringing **the Spanish government to pull out of peace talks with the separatists**, but leaders of the **Basque separatist group ETA**, say they were surprised by the act, and **stated that they continue to follow their nine month old cease fire**, and act only by political means.

Turkey, in response to pressure from the European Union, which it wishes to join, in December, said that it **would allow limited trade links with Cyprus**, and the nation is **expected to commit to intensive talks with resolving the Cyprus division**, occurring in 1974 when Turkey invaded the island to foil an Athens supported Greek Cypriot coups seeking to unite the island with Greece.

The European Union expanded its membership to 27 countries, January 1, with the formal admission of Bulgaria and Romania, as Slovenia became the first of the 10 countries admitted to the Union in 2004 to adopt the euro as its currency.

As of late 2006, the Islamicist Courts were expanding their authority over increasing areas of **Somalia**, and threatening the small authority of the weak provisional government, supported by the U.S. The entry into the conflict of Ethiopia appeared to threaten a region wide war, but **the quick victory of its forces, and thereby of the provisional government**, at least for the moment relieved fears of such an occurrence. As the Ethiopian army has no plans for a long term stay, a **conference of African nations was underway in Kenya**, in early January, **to attempt to establish a much needed peace force** to restore order and allow the provisional government to begin to reintegrate the country by restraining warlords and militant islamists. On January 8, a **U.S. helicopter gunship attacked a group of suspected Al Qaeda operatives, in southern Somalia** believed to have fled from Mogadishu with the approach of the Ethiopian army.

The **humanitarian crisis and genocide in Darfur continues to worsen**, as the government in **Khartoum is refusing a U.N. force** and the African nations peace force remains extremely limited in its numbers and capacity, unable to stop the worsening genocide (though in isolated areas, there has been enough calm for a very few displaced people to return home and reconcile with some neighbors, while with U.N. financial support, the government in Khartoum has begun sending home 2 million refugees who fled from the south, up to 20 years ago, and have been living in slums). On October 12, ICG again joined many groups in saying, **"the international community must take strong economic and legal, and some new military measures to change the regime's calculation of the costs of non-cooperation.** (<http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4442&l=1>)." Unfortunately, that has yet to happen, and the already horrendous human toll continues to mount across the whole area, while parts of the already achieved cease fires are unraveling. Meanwhile, the **fighting has spread into the Central African Republic, where rebels attempting to overthrow the government of Chad, with backing of the Somalian government** in Khartoum. As of December, at least 50,000 people had fled their homes in the Central African Republic and become refugees in Chad. **Deadly attacks, including one killing hundreds of villagers** in November, have been **launched into Chad from Somalia. Chad, itself, has been caught in civil war**, but in late December **the government and one of the rebel groups it has been fighting signed a peace treaty.** Meanwhile, The Pulitzer Center (<http://www.pulitzercenter.org/showproject.cfm?id=23>) reports that **Somali government harassments in East Sudan has been forcing hundreds of thousands from their homes.** As in Darfur, eastern rebels complain that successive governments in Khartoum have left their region under-developed, while exploiting its natural resources. Somalia's main oil exporting pipeline runs through the area, with no benefit to the local population.

As ethnic and religious groups continue to clash in Nigeria, occasionally disrupting oil production and export, with extreme corruption and related mal-distribution of income from resources an ongoing major issue, public confidence in the government has dropped considerably. In 2000, when President Olusegun Obasanjo was elected, pledging reform, 84% of Nigerians said they were satisfied with the state of their new democracy. A survey in 2006 showed that those satisfied has fallen to 25%. So lucrative is the corruption, that even in back water areas, candidates and government officials are being threatened and killed over illicit money

issues. Even with the limited anti-corruption program of the Nigerian government, of the nation's 36 governors, by late last year, 5 had been impeached, of 31 being investigated on suspicion of corruption. ICG warned, October 25 ("Nigeria's Faltering Federal Experiment," <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?l=1&id=4464>, "**Nigeria faces grave risks unless the government addresses the causes underlying the crisis in the country's failing federalist system.** Poor governance, lack of leadership and pervasive corruption - these are the root causes of the failing system today, and these are the issues the government must tackle to avoid destabilization," according to Nnamdi Obasi, Crisis Group's Senior Analyst in Nigeria." Despite attempts to develop federal institutions that accommodate the nation's diversity in a widely felt sense of national unity, leaders, at all levels, of all the governments since independence "have failed to live up to their obligations to offer good governance based on equitable political arrangements, transparent administrative practices and accountable public conduct. Failing to encourage genuine power sharing, they have sparked dangerous rivalries between the centre and the 36 states over revenue from the country's oil and other natural resources; promoted no-holds-barred struggles between interest groups to capture the state and its attendant wealth; and facilitated the emergence of violent ethnic militias, while they play on and exacerbate inter-communal tensions to cover up their corruption. The government has been too quick to brand many of the symptoms, especially the rise of militancy, as simple criminality to be dealt with by more police and more troops. It needs to engage with the underlying issues of resource control, equal rights, power sharing and accountability. The federal government should grant a significant level of resource control to local communities and replace the anachronistic concept of indigeneity with a residence test when applying the federal character principle. Perhaps most fundamentally, it should create a democratic constitutional reform process that would allow Nigerians, so often since independence under military governments, to engage for the first time in a free and wide-ranging debate over restructuring the country's power-sharing arrangements." "Nigeria is a political and economic giant in Africa, but its future can either be a shining example for the continent or a cautionary tale of what happens when great potential is sabotaged by greed and mismanagement," says Crisis Group's West Africa Project Director, Carolyn Norris.

Indigenous people, and those who are attuned to indigenous ways of thinking, will not want "all references to indigeneity removed from the constitution," as ICG proposes for Nigeria, as tribal membership is a primary identification for tribal people and a basis for indigenous rights. This does not mean that indigeneity can not be a co-identity with a national identity, as works well in the United States with American Indians, or for that matter with broader identities, such as pan-Africanism, or that local citizenship can not be an important aspect of Nigerian federalism. It is clear that there is a need to insure local sharing in income from resources and in control of development, and political power is necessary for that purpose. At the same time, indigeneity is meaningless, unless it is given appropriate concrete institutionalization through which to manifest. It is clear that a decentralization of power, and with it of resource control and income sharing, is necessary – and this is quite consistent with indigeneity. But whatever arrangements are made, to be legitimate, need to include traditional elements that remain part of the culture of those concerned.

The **government of Burundi has been becoming increasingly authoritarian.** ICG warned, November 30 ("Burundi: Democracy and Peace at Risk," <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4553&l=1>), that unless the Burundi government ceases its centralization and abuse of power, becoming more open, sharing wealth as well as political input, a promising peace process is likely to collapse. "The international community needs to help get things back on track by encouraging Bujumbura to respect the rule of law and open a dialogue with its critics." "The government can defuse the situation by respecting the rule of law, engaging its critics in a constructive dialogue and punishing officials guilty of abuses. Regional allies such as Uganda, Tanzania and South Africa, each a key broker of the peace process, must place the same emphasis on human rights and civil liberties as they did on ending the civil war." The broader international community can assist "by conditioning aid on improved governance and human rights and remaining engaged even after UN peacekeepers leave in December. The new UN Peacebuilding Commission has a central role to play in all efforts to consolidate the peace."

Todd Moss and Stewart Patrick, writes in "After Mugabe, Zimbabwe Will Need Help (<http://www.bu.edu/globalbeat/syndicate/moss122005.html>), that the Southern African country of **Zimbabwe is on the verge of collapse,** and the quarter of a century rule of 81 year old Robert Mugabe can not last long. **When the collapse comes, "the international community will need to respond quickly.** Even though Zimbabwe is not at war, international donors should be thinking about Zimbabwe's recovery as if it were". "Once he is gone, a new government will face the tragic consequences of his misrule. Zimbabwe has suffered so much that it now shows extreme characteristics typical of a society emerging from violent conflict. State security forces and militias have terrorized civilians, committed gross human rights violations, and disrupted political opposition. The economy has shrunk by at least one-third since 2000—a meltdown worse than full-scale civil wars in Congo, Sierra Leone, or Ivory Coast." "Given how far Zimbabwe has fallen, any recovery strategy should draw lessons from post-conflict reconstruction in places like Bosnia, East Timor, and Afghanistan. Because Zimbabwe's troubles are, at the core, political, getting the politics right is a necessary precondition. The international community can help smooth any transition by providing a "contact group" or helping establish a caretaker government. The donors can promote security and the rule of law by supporting reform of the police, military, intelligence services, and the courts. There may also be a need for a Truth and Reconciliation Commission or a war crimes tribunal, both of which could use external backing".

In the **Congo,** although there was **violence during the election** campaign, **international observers say that the Presidential election and run off were fair,** in which reelected President Joseph Kabila, in November. The loser in the run off challenged the result, but vowed to protest peacefully. The election is a milestone toward normalization of the nation, upon which the government, with international support, needs to build with considerable effort. On what needs yet to be done, Mvemba Phezo Dizolle, "How to End the Deadliest War in Africa," *Hoover Digest*, 2006 No. 3 (<http://www.hoover.org/publications/digest/4635761.html>), "the **unification of the armed factions has yet to materialize.** Even though they wear the same army uniform, these **militias maintain parallel structures and commands, often disregarding instructions from the general headquarters in Kinshasa.** They pledge allegiance and loyalty to, and take their orders directly from, their leaders in the transitional government. In several instances, units have fought against each other. Congo's corrupt transitional government finds itself with an unpaid, undertrained, under-equipped, and disorganized army with a weak central command. Without an army, the government can neither protect its citizens nor defend Congo's territorial integrity. This situation reflects the greatest weakness of the Sun City Accord, which offered carrots to the signatories but brandished no sticks at the belligerents. Most of the positions in the transitional government went either to former fighters, including the Kabila camp, or their proxies. Overnight, the

warlords became government officials, with full immunity but no popular mandate. Many of these leaders are guilty of war crimes, gross human rights violations, and corruption. Yet only one warlord, Thomas Lubanga, has been indicted by the International Criminal Court for human rights abuses and the conscription of child soldiers. A new government may lead to the prosecution of these leaders, an outcome they do not welcome. **With little chance to win in the elections, these former warlords have no incentive to give up their militias. Neither are they interested in a successful transition. Unless they are prosecuted (or threatened with prosecution) after the elections, those warlords would resume the conflict in an effort to remain in the political system and enjoy immunity from legal action. The same applies to their sponsors in Rwanda and Uganda.**" International pressure on Rwanda and Uganda is needed to begin to change the situation.

ICG issued a report, January 9 ("Congo: Staying Engaged after the Elections," <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4604&l=1>), holding, **"The international community must renew its strong political engagement after Congo's successful elections if the momentum of a still incomplete peace process is to be maintained."** In order to assist the President in completing the peace process, "When the mandate of the UN peacekeeping mission (MONUC) is renewed in February, the Security Council should redefine its political role to acknowledge that Congo now has democratically legitimated institutions, but the mission needs to be able to continue to assist in conflict prevention and management, as well as supporting state institutions, monitoring human rights abuses and enforcing the arms embargo. MONUC should also retain its 17,000 troop strength at least through 2007 so it can continue to protect civilians and deal with illegal armed groups, both in support of the army and on its own in emergencies. The International Committee for Supporting the Transition (CIAT), the Kinshasa-based donors group, will be disbanded when the new government is inaugurated this month. Although Kabila now wants to deal only bilaterally with aid givers, donors need to create a smaller successor body not only for coordination but also to speak with one voice on significant conflict prevention and conflict management issues".

The government of **Uganda signed a revised truce with the Lords Resistance Army extending the time the rebels have to gather at two protected camps in southern Sudan, while a full peace accord is worked out.** At the beginning of November, the **UN Security Council voted unanimously to give Ivory coast's Prime Minister extensive additional powers to guide the country to delayed elections by October 2007, as the transitional government was extended for a second year.** President Laurent Gbagbo was stripped of most of his authority, for undermining the peace process on a number of occasions. Although it is admitted that there is necessary work to prepare for elections, some observers are concerned by their again being delayed.

In **Mexico's Oaxaca State, resistance against the PRI governor, and the government more broadly on a range of issues, is continuing at a lower level of on going protest,** since first the teacher's strike which triggered the long rebellion was settled, and this fall federal troops retook the central square of the state capital. The **massive drug war is continuing in Mexico,** between gangs, and at times against the government and other people. As of October 123 law enforcement officers had been shot or tortured to death during 2006, while the more than 1,700 killed, over all, threatened, by years end, to see more than the estimated 1,800 drug related killings of 2005.

Haiti continues to struggle with its long history of ongoing poverty coupled with its long experience of authoritarianism using, and then breaking down into, violence. The International Crisis group reported, October 30 ("Haiti: Security and the Reintegration of the State," <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4475&l=1>), that new **President René Préval has only a short period time in which to develop security and re-establish state authority, without undermining budding democracy, if Haiti is to make meaningful progress with corruption in the national police, youth gangs, drug trafficking, kidnappings, and, ultimately, poverty.** "The Préval administration must simultaneously tackle the pervasive violence while launching infrastructure and development projects to combat extreme poverty and give people reason to trust in government." "The international community should reinforce the UN police with more security and anti-gang specialists, including SWAT teams and crime investigators, as well as finance highly visible infrastructure and jobs programs. And it must recognize that there are no quick fixes and commit for a least a decade to Haiti,s recovery".

Daniel Ortega returned to the presidency of Nicaragua, winning the late fall election in a campaign of reconciliation, encompassing political accommodations with groups across the political spectrum. Thus his current administration is likely to follow a more moderate "left" set of policies, than his previous time in office, and it remains to be seen to what extent, and in what ways, he will oppose neoliberal economics. Latin America is now split between governments that are generally pro and, in principle, anti neoliberal approaches to economic and related policy, but especially among those who are opposed, there is a wide range of views, For more, see Laura Carlson, "Latin America's Pink Tide," in IRC's *Foreign Policy in Focus* at: <http://www.fpif.org/fpifxt/3806>.

ICG stated on October 20 (<http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4455&l=1>), that **Columbia's President Uribe's second term promises to be more difficult than his first, and unless he broadens his emphasis on a military solution to the nation's internal conflict and confronts corruption, poverty and human rights violations more effectively, "blame for the country's ills will lie squarely with him".** ICG says that Uribe needs to face the nation's serious problems of drug trafficking, internal conflict, poverty, corruption and social inequality, developing a second-term strategy for peace and development that addresses them comprehensively. "Given his overwhelming re-election, some see a second Uribe term as smooth going but appearances may be deceiving unless he addresses impunity with regard to the demobilized paramilitaries, drug links in state intelligence and armed forces and defines and carries out a national initiative on rural governance and development." "President Uribe,s popularity is largely based on his genuine success in improving security but a military victory is not achievable, and, despite initial contacts, he has not yet brought the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) to the negotiating table. An agreement with the second and weaker insurgent group, the National Liberation Army (ELN), is closer in sight but still faces many obstacles. Paramilitaries continue to use intimidation and violence on towns and communities even if they no longer are in their old uniforms. The counter-drug policy has not stemmed cocaine and heroin exports that give the armed groups steady cash flows." **"There is opportunity in these four years for genuine progress not only toward ending 43 years of conflict, but also to attack the roots of that conflict"**, according to Alain Deletroz, Crisis Group's Latin America Program Director. **"If the opportunity is squandered, violence will continue unabated and Colombia's democracy will be shaken."**

Meanwhile, to defend a hard-won guarantee that allows Colombia's indigenous territories to remain neutral in the face of violent incursions in the country's bloody civil war, the Nasa people, without weapons, have expressed solidarity and organization on par with that of the warring factions, in creating the Indigenous Guard, in 2001, to peacefully patrol their territory, carrying decorative staffs instead of guns. In maintaining their neutrality and a high level of internal security, however, the NASA have attracted enmity and suspicion from both sides, each of which accuse them of supporting and gaining help from the other. The Nasa unequivocally maintain that they have never cooperated with any party in the war. (For more see "Colombia's Indigenous Nasa Women Resist," <http://news.nacla.org/2006/11/15/colombias-indigenous-nasa-women-resist/>).

In the midst of very polarized politics, Bolivia's President Evo Morales has succeeded in getting sweeping land reform legislation passed, in November, and has won new contracts from foreign energy companies, under which the share of energy revenues going to the government will increase to from 50%-82%. It is anticipated that Morales will shortly announce plans to nationalize the nation's mining industry, as the next step in his plan to recover Bolivia's natural resources from foreign control, and provide money to "solve the economic and social problems" of South America's poorest country. Bolivia's action on resources is part a growing Latin American trend away from neoliberal economics, with Ecuador and Venezuela having taken similar steps. As in Venezuela, Bolivia's politics has been extremely polarized. It took long term mass movement to overcome the resistance of the economic and political elite to get Morales elected President, and the confrontation between wealthy and poor factions is growing. On January 8, ICG proposed ("Bolivia's Reforms: The Danger of New Conflicts," <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4602&l=1>), "that growing instability could lead to future violence if leaders fail to negotiate an end to the current standoff. As this month's first anniversary of Morales's inauguration nears, three key issues are at the heart of the dispute: land reform, the workings of the constituent assembly, and regional autonomy, all of which are closely linked to the rivalry between the central government and the rich eastern lowlands where Bolivia's oil, gas, and export-oriented agribusiness are based". "The two sides have to begin lowering the menacing rhetoric and raising the level of dialogue and mediation if the country hopes to avoid instability." "Both sides should publicly condemn violence, the government should stop using attacks on elites to rally indigenous support, and the eastern region civic groups should stop their separatist threats. International mediators should be called on to help bridge the disputes at the constituent assembly, and to help wade through the complicated technical aspects of land management disputes." Crisis Group Colombia/Andes analyst, says Mauricio Angel Morales, stated, "Only when these first steps are made will this government have a chance to move the country toward greater social cohesion, economic progress and equity. Otherwise there is a real risk of Bolivia's gradual disintegration." Venezuela's President Hugo Chavez announced his government's intention to nationalize the telecommunication and electrical industries, on January 8. In Brazil, President Luiz Inacio da Silva won a landslide victory for reelection, in a runoff, despite a growing corruption scandal.

As of October, long term drought in Australia, likely related to global warming climate change, has reduced agricultural production and drastically raised food prices for over a year.

The UN General Assembly began work on an international Arms Trade Treaty, immediately following a vote, in November, with 153 governments supporting the proposed Treaty to prevent international arms transfers that fuel conflict, poverty and serious human rights violations. Only the United States voted against the proposal, while 24 governments abstained. In 2005, Russia was the leader in arms sales to the developing world, passing the U.S. The World Security Institute (www.worldsecurityinstitute.org) reported, January 4, that, "in the five years since the September 11 attacks, the Bush administration has solidified a trend of supplying high technology weapons and millions of dollars in military assistance to allies in the 'war on terror.' Support for the United States -- either in its quest to stamp out international terrorist networks, or for its operations in Iraq and Afghanistan -- seems to take precedence over other criteria usually taken into account when the United States considers an arms transfer. According to standing tenets of U.S. arms export policy, arms transfers should not undermine long-term security and stability, weaken democratic movements, support military coups, escalate arms races, exacerbate ongoing conflicts, cause arms build-ups in unstable regions, or be used to commit human rights abuses. However, in the last five years, the Bush administration has demonstrated a willingness to provide weapons and military training to weak and failing states and countries that have been repeatedly criticized by the U.S. State Department for human rights violations, lack of democracy, and even support of terrorism."

The UN General Assembly passed a resolution, on December 4, backing the Kimberley Process, a global initiative involving governments, the international diamond industry and civil society aimed at preventing so-called "conflict diamonds" from funding warfare and civil unrest. The resolution stated that, "The General Assembly, recognizing that the trade in conflict diamonds continues to be a matter of serious international concern, which can be directly linked to the fuelling of armed conflict... reaffirms its strong and continuing support for the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme and the Kimberley Process as a whole." The resolution also supported a decision taken by a meeting of the Kimberley Process earlier in December calling for "stronger internal control" standards for participants in the process — who now number 47 representing 71 countries — as well as for clearer guidance on implementing effective controls from the mining to the export of diamonds. President Mogae's briefing to the Assembly also included a 2006 progress report on the Kimberly Process, which concluded that it was working well although there were still some problems, particularly in Côte d'Ivoire and South America, stating, "Some of Côte d'Ivoire's neighbors are not Kimberley Process Participants and, therefore, the Kimberley Process has relatively limited influence over such countries. The Kimberley Process views the problem of leakage diamonds from Côte d'Ivoire into the legitimate trade as one that may require a regional approach to resolve... Before the Certification Scheme it was reported that conflict diamonds were possibly about 4 per cent of global production. Now with Certification we have admitted in my report that ...we are glad to say that they are now less than 1 per cent." Begun in 2000 by southern African diamond-producing countries, the Kimberley Process led to the adoption in November 2002 in Interlaken, Switzerland, of the international Certification Scheme for rough diamonds, based primarily on national certification schemes and on internationally-agreed minimum standards.

United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan launched an appeal, in November, for almost \$4 billion to provide food, water, medicine and other emergency assistance to help millions of people struggling to survive in areas of conflict and natural disasters in 29 countries or regions in 2007.

Bangladeshi economist **Muhammed Yunus, developer of micro-banking, accepted the Nobel Peace prize and made a speech, in December, calling on the world to look at the connection between peace and poverty, and acknowledge that poverty is a threat to world peace.**

The **UN First Committee of the General Assembly**, which addresses disarmament issues, **voted overwhelmingly**, in late October, for a **Resolution to Prevent an Arms Race in Outer Space**. 166 nations voted in favor of the proposal **with only the United States opposed**, while Israel and Cote D'Ivoire abstained. A second resolution, to take "Transparency and Confidence Building Measures in Outer Space Activities", passed a similar vote, with only the US voting against it and Israel abstaining. Outgoing **UN Secretary General Kofi Annan**, addressing the Review Conference on the Convention on Prohibition of Certain Conventional Weapons, in November, **called for a ban on cluster bombs**. It has been **estimated that it will take 7-8 years to clear 1.2 million unexploded Israeli cluster bombs across Southern Lebanon**, which pose the same kind of danger to civilians as do land mines, causing serious injury and death, and preventing land to be used for living and needed production.

The UN Food and Agricultural Organization reported, in October, that while **the planet could feed twice its population of 6 billion, if there were better distribution**, programs to reduce hunger are falling short as **those receiving inadequate food have increased to 852 million**. The report stated that contributing causes of hunger are the fact that half of the hungry live on already degraded land, there has been **'massive under funding' of UN food programs**, especially in Africa, while **Europe and the U.S. – with annual agricultural subsidies of \$349 million – continue to dump food, undercutting local food production elsewhere**. In addition, 80% of the hungry live in **rural areas that need massive investment, especially in small scale agriculture and irrigation**. The report also called for international protection of **ecological refugees**, forced to leave their land because of environmental degradation.

A **World Bank study**, published December 7, stated that **its programs in Africa have failed to bring adequate results to about half of the 48 countries reviewed**. A major error has been the **failure to address effectively the conditions in rural areas, where most of the continent's poor people live**. In many cases most of the aid went to better off urban areas. The Bank's managers responded that they share the investigators concern and **have shifted to increasing investment in rural areas**. The report is **part of a broader internal assessment that found that the Bank tended to spread its resources to widely, underestimated resistance to its anti-corruption and patronage policies, and gave too little focus to ensuring that economic growth improved the condition of the poor**. Jake Miller. "Rethinking Aid" Alternatives for Real Development," Grassroots International *Insights*, Summer 2006 (grassrootsonline.org), also **critiqued international assistance, complaining that it is too often misdirected**. One example presented was Haiti, where **international donors neglected developing needed rural infrastructure, while undermining rice production in its last stronghold in the country, by providing American rice for school lunch programs there**,

The United Nations AIDS Program released findings, in November, that **AIDS is growing in all parts of the world, showing resurgence in nations that were succeeding in curtailing it**. The report found that HIV prevention programs are effective, but that there are not enough of them. There are an estimated 39.5 million people living with HIV, of whom 4.3 million became infected in 2006, while 2.7 million people died of AIDS in 2006, The Pan American Health Organization reported, in September, that **unequal access to health services, and great disparities between services in urban and rural areas continue to be a serious problem in North and South America and the Caribbean**.

If the world's population were represented by a village of 100 people, it would look something like this: 60 Asians, 12 Europeans, 5 from the U.S. and Canada, 8 Latin Americans, 14 Africans. 49 would be women and 51 men, 82 non-white and 19 white, 89 heterosexual and 11 homosexual. 67 would be non-Christian and 33 would be Christian. **5 would control 32% of the entire world's wealth, and all of them would be US citizens. 80 would live in substandard housing. 24 would not have any electricity (And of the 76% that do have electricity, most would only use it for light at night). 67 would be unable to read. Only 1 would have a college education. 50 would be malnourished and 1 dying of starvation. 33 would not have access to a safe water supply. 1 would have HIV. 1 would be near death, 2 near birth. 7 people would have Internet access. Expanding the perspective, If you woke up this morning with more health than sickness, you are more fortunate than the million that will not survive this week. If you have never experienced a war, a loneliness of an imprisonment, the agony of torture. or famine, you are better off than 500 million persons in this world. If you are able to go to church, mosque, temple or synagogue without fear of harassment, arrest, torture or death, you are more fortunate than 3 billion people around the world. If there is a meal in your refrigerator, if you are dressed and have shoes, if you have a bed and a roof over your head, you fare better than 75% of the planet's people. You are rare If your parents are still alive and remain married. If you have a bank account and money in your wallet, you are one of but 8% of well-provided people in the world.**

Major world economic shifts are in motion. Since 1978 the Chinese economy has averaged growth rate of 10%, while India has averaged 6% since 1991. **Some economic forecasters predict that the Chinese economy will overtake the US economy between 2030 and 2040, with India following in 2050.**

Consistent with the strong anti-bush administration surge of the November U.S. elections, an October poll by the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) at the University of Maryland found that **79% of the respondents believed that "the United States should think in terms of being a good neighbor with other countries because cooperative relationships are ultimately in the best interests of the United States."** And that the "United States should coordinate its power together with other countries according to shared ideas of what is best for the world as a whole." 65% agreed with the statement: "When the U.S. government justifies its foreign policies to the **American people, it plays on people's fears too much.**"

Bennett Gordon, in "For Their Eyes Only: A secret program to make government history . . . history," in the January / February 2007 Issue of the *Utne Reader* (www.utne.com/issues/2006%5F139/promo/12394%2D1.html&summary=A%20secret%20program%20to%20make%20g), writes, "What may be most significant," according to Steven Aftergood of the Federation of American Scientists, "is the way in which [the NARA

reclassification effort] exemplifies **a much larger trend of restricting information for the general public.**" Aftergood publishes the online, *Secrecy News* newsletter (<http://www.fas.org/blog/secrec>), on issues of government secrecy and information suppression. While recent public scrutiny seems to have put an end to the improper NARA reclassifications, Aftergood insists that the incident was simply a "small subset of a much larger problem." In this vein, Meredith Fuchs, general counsel to the National Security Archive, says. "It's our position that there are all sorts of efforts, not just this one, to close down access to information." The improper classifications in the National Archives simply represent one of the clearest abuses of U.S. government secrecy in recent memory. The National Security Archive and the Federation of American Scientists, along with independent researchers like Russ Kick of the MemoryHole.org (<http://thememoryhole.org/>) and organizations like OpenTheGovernment.org (<http://openthegovernment.org/>), have been working to restore public access to government documents, and to ensure the accountability set out in documents like the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. One recent effort in this direction is an internet initiative called Wikileaks (<http://www.wikileaks.org/>) seeking promotion of good government and democratization by enabling anonymous disclosure and publication of confidential government records.

According to the Government Accountability Office (GAO), **If the United States government continues its seriously unbalanced budgeting over the next few decades, a national debt that is already \$8.5 trillion could reach \$46 trillion or more, adjusted for inflation, equivalent to the total net worth of every person in America.** GAO head, David M. Walker, warned in October, that **unless the current massive government pending imbalance is soon reversed, it will bring economic disaster.** The dollar has been declining, particularly against the Euro which many governments are selling some of their dollars to buy, **since the end of 2005 when foreign investment in the U.S. for the first time fell below the amount of the U.S. government debt.** The rate of Euro buying to replace dollars increased at the end of 2006. Many financial experts stated that they did not see any danger in the selling of the dollar in that period, but there is no question in the minds of this writer, that it is a warning of future U.S. financial disaster if the current U.S. greatly imbalanced budget, and negative balance of trade are not reversed.

The FBI reported, in December, **that driven by an increase in armed robberies, violent crime rose in the 3,7% in the first six months of 2006,** particularly in the West, with reported robberies up 9.7%. Murders increased by 1,4% an arson was up 6.8%. Reported rape was unchanged. Murders rose in Texas following the dislocation of Hurricane Katrina. The Southern Poverty Law Center, in September, reported that **relaxed U.S. military recruiting standards have led to a significant number of racist extremists entering the armed services.**

Prejudice and baseless suspicion of Muslims in the U.S. showed itself in **the removal by authorities from a U.S. Airways flight in Minneapolis, and holding for several hours, of six Muslim religious leaders, who had just attended a conference on developing inter-religious understanding,** in large part because someone became suspicious of their praying before going on the plane.

In the face of **falling public and private budgets, world wide, for developing alternative energy that does not increase global warming, UN Secretary General Kofi Annon, in November, deplored a 'frightening lack of leadership' in combating global warming.** The U.N. weather agency reported, in November, that heat trapping **carbon dioxide and nitrous oxide reached record levels in the atmosphere (for at least the last 100,000 years), and that there is no sign that their levels are leveling off.** *New York Times* interviews, in November, of more than 50 energy scientists, engineers and entrepreneurs found consensus that unless their was a far more aggressive, world wide, search for nonpolluting energy sources and systems, the world was likely to face dangerous warming and strife as nations with growing energy demands compete for increasingly inadequate resources. A British government report, released in November, calls for doubling of funding across the globe for developing low carbon emitting technology, to limit global warming which otherwise will create low lying flooding and shortage of drinking water that will create 200 million refugees (which many scientists believe is a conservative figure – see the Fall 2006 issue of *NCJ*). In November, **China, the European Union, India, Japan, Russia, South Korea and the United States signed an agreement to invest \$12.8 billion in the development of a nuclear fusion reactor,** in the hopes of making available safe, clean and inexhaustible energy. The **UN program to replace fossil fuels with-bio energy,** such as fuel from sugar cane or sun flower seeds, moved ahead, in September, with the inauguration of the Secretariat of the Global Bioenergy Partnership. However, **while this development will reduce certain (while increasing or leaving unchanged other) pollution, be of economic benefit to many rural poor people, and will reduce demand for increasingly scarce oil and gas, it will do nothing to combat global warming.**

Economic growth in China, including increases of industrial fuel burning, conventional power generation and automobile ownership and use, now seems likely to see China surpass the U.S. in releasing Carbon Dioxide into the atmosphere by 2009, a decade earlier than previously predicted, according to the International Energy Agency. The agency stated, in November, that in **the next quarter century China, India and other developing countries not covered by the Kyoto global warming agreement are anticipated to produce the majority of greenhouse gasses.**

A decade long satellite study of the oceans, published in December, shows that **as oceans warm phytoplankton decline.** Phytoplankton are a major converter of carbon dioxide into oxygen (and carbon) – hence **their decline increases global warming,** and are the bottom level of the ocean food chain, so that **their decline reduces the amount of other marine life, including fish.** Without taking into account the negative impact of global warming caused phytoplankton decline, a study published in *Science*, November 3, found that **if world wide fishing continues at its present rate, an increasing number of fish species will vanish, marine ecosystems will unravel, and there will be a global collapse of all fished species, perhaps as soon as mid century.** Studies of the **Dry Valleys of Antarctica** by the Natural Resource Ecology Laboratory at Colorado State University, made public in November, indicate that **alarming change is occurring to the ecosystem** in the valleys with the decline of a critical worm. **Overgrazing in China is stripping arable land, causing deserts to grow** and sending dust as far as the Pacific coast of North America.

The World Health Organization stated, in September, **that without considerable investment the world will fail to meet its goal of cutting in half the number of people without access to clean drinking water and basic sanitation by 2015.**

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DIALOGUING

THERE IS NO VICTORY STRATEGY

Alon Ben-Meir – December 11, 2006, alon@alonben-meir.com

After nearly four years of successive disasters in Iraq, which unleashed a civil war and brought the country to its knees, not to speak of the monumental American losses, there are still those dreamers, including the president, who speak of victory. Knowing what we know about the grave situation in Iraq today, we can no longer engage in such recklessly wishful thinking.

As Mr. Bush reviews his options, in the wake of the Iraq Study Group's report, he must clearly demonstrate the cause and effect of every aspect of any "victory strategy" he envisions before embarking on another perilous misadventure. Sadly, the reality in Iraq precludes a victory in any classic sense, and the only realistic solution lies in dividing Iraq into three self-ruled parts—a Kurdish part that actually already exists, a Shiite part, which is in the making, and a Sunni part which must be created.

But some influential voices, including those of Senator John McCain and Richard Pearl, a prominent neoconservative, advocate increasing American combat troops for a limited period to bring order to Baghdad and crush the insurgency. There is no greater fallacy than the notion that the insurgency can be crushed. Mr. McCain, with his rich military experience, should know better: he should know that a determined insurgency cannot be overwhelmed, especially when it is deeply imbedded in supportive communities that provide both cover and unlimited resources. Moreover, the Sunni insurgents in Iraq operate extremely adeptly within this environment; they are patient, have enormous caches of munitions, select their targets carefully, and take their time to strike at will. When faced with overwhelming power, they melt away into their respective communities, where they can wait for weeks, months, or even years to surface again and with only greater intensity, as the Taliban in Afghanistan have shown insurgencies can do when operating within their own country. Increasing American forces may initially show some signs of success in fighting the insurgency, but the success will not be enduring. Rather, it will prove to be nothing but a recipe for additional American casualties and the complete disintegration of Iraq.

In addition, increasing American trainers by many thousands more, an idea strongly advocated by the Iraq Study Group and embraced by the victory seekers, will not in itself work either. Accelerating the training of unified Iraqi forces so they can assume expanded security functions to reduce and eventually eliminate American involvement is necessary, but the focus must be shifted to the Sunnis. While it seems on the surface self-evident that better trained Iraqi security forces should be able to do the job, the reality is that the military and the police are infested with Shiite militias, whose questionable loyalty has severely undermined their neutrality. Although historically Iraq was already divided along sectarian lines, the war has intensified that division and the greater loyalty of the security personnel remains to the tribe or sect they belong to rather than to the nation. Moreover, as long as the current government and future governments are led by Shiites, they will remain beholden to their militia, which they will rely on to strengthen their power base as well as safeguard Shiite interests before any other.

Nevertheless, in contrast to many conservative Republican politicians, who have spared no words in tearing apart the Study Group's report, I find it contains many good points that the White House should embrace, including the recommendation to withdraw American combat brigades in the beginning of 2008. But to achieve anything that offers the United States any possibility of a face-saving way out while leaving behind conditions with the potential for stability, the administration must promote the Sunnis' self-rule over their three provinces while maintaining loose federal ties. Unfortunately, the Study Group failed to address the absolute need of the Sunnis to govern themselves, as it is a prerequisite for achieving even a modicum of stability in Iraq. As long as the Sunnis fear for their lives, there will be no hope that the sectarian killing and insurgency will end. To allay their fears, the Sunnis can build their own security forces with American or preferably European training to protect them now and in the future in a similar vein as the Kurdish Peshmerga. This can be facilitated now especially, since the Iraqi government is nearing an agreement on the distribution of oil revenue, something that the Sunnis must secure to establish an economically viable entity of their own. To that end the United States must insist that equitable distribution of oil revenue becomes a basic law of the land to be administered by a federal agency.

The Sunnis, who have lost power, must now be persuaded that ruling all of Iraq is no longer possible, and the only realistic alternative they can achieve is self-rule with equitable revenue sharing from the sale of oil. If they are persuaded, it may represent a partial victory for the Sunnis and lead to a somewhat dignified exit for the Americans. Given these realities, those who advocate total victory over the insurgency by military means must be listed in the column of recklessly dangerous bordering on criminal. They are gambling with the lives of thousands of Americans and the future standing of America without offering a shred of evidence that their strategy for a so called victory is anything but a hallucination.

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PREVENTING GENOCIDE IN IRAQ

Alon Ben-Meir – November 28, 2006

To prevent genocide in Iraq on the scale of the genocide in Rwanda between the Tutsis and the Hutus, the Bush administration must move swiftly to divide Iraq into three main self-rule entities with loose federal ties. Neither the insurgency nor the sectarian killing will end unless the Sunnis can govern themselves. The Bush administration must use every ounce of leverage it has to push for such a solution before it is too late.

To end the carnage the Bush administration must address the root causes behind the ever escalating civil war which has swept Iraq. The sooner the administration stops pushing for a western-style democracy and in that context try to preserve the so-called democratic national unity government, the sooner it will stop the fast approaching precipice. Moreover, it must, by now, be clear to the Bush administration that there is no military solution. No Iraqi or American forces will be able to end the insurgency or disarm the numerous militias. The violence will continue to rage because for the Sunnis it has become a matter of survival itself. The history of Iraq and the relationship between the main factions, the Sunnis, Shiites and Kurds make the option of creating three separate entities the only viable option that will end to the violence and here is why:

First, the history of hatred and animosity between the Shiite and the Sunnis in Iraq predates the current conflict; it goes back centuries but it has been steadily intensifying following the creation of modern Iraq in 1922. The Shiites have suffered unimaginable oppression and abuse by the Sunni minority, especially under the ruthless reign of Saddam Hussein. Revenge and retribution have become engrained in the culture and there is practically nothing the administration can do to change it.

Second, having held power in Iraq from the day of its inception, the Sunnis have not accepted the fact that they are a minority and may never regain power again. Sitting in a coalition government where the Shiite majority can railroad any legislation they wish makes the Sunnis feel complicit in their own political demise. Sooner or later they will permanently walk away and regardless of how much pressure the Bush administration brings to bear to keep the government together, the current Iraqi coalition will not last.

Third, the indiscriminate killing and the brutality inflicted on each other has virtually destroyed any vestiges of civility and trust between the two sides. The fight for survival itself became the motivation and therefore all means to ensure survival, especially for the Sunnis, have become justified. Moreover, fearing for their lives, a self-imposed sectarian separation became routine in mixed areas in Baghdad and elsewhere where hundreds of thousands relocated to safer areas to live with their own brethren, creating a de-facto all-Sunni or all-Shiite enclaves.

Iraq is already divided. The Kurds have been enjoying complete self-rule for the past 15 years and they are not about to surrender what they have gained in blood. Notwithstanding their majority status, the Shiites are moving toward establishing their own independent provinces and are determined to hold fast to the oil beneath their land in the south. In any case, the Iraqi constitution allows for the creation of independent provinces, permitting each group to enact their own laws and build their own institutions.

The only way the Sunnis will accept their minority status is if they can govern themselves with a guaranteed equitable share of oil or its revenue. Only an economically viable and politically independent Sunni entity will provide the Sunnis the assurances they need to give up the fight. Otherwise, however dim the prospect of winning may be, they will continue to battle the Shiites because they see no other viable option. The artificial political arrangement the Bush administration has pursued to politically co-opt the Sunnis has done nothing to change the psychological disposition between the Shiite and Sunnis which was nurtured by decades, nay centuries, of acrimony, hostility and distrust.

As it considers a new course of action in Iraq, the Bush administration must realize that Iraq has been broken along fault lines that have always been there but the administration willfully ignored. The unfolding carnage reflects not only the current tragic state of affairs but it should indicate how much worse the situation will be if the administration stubbornly clings to the notion that there can be a different outcome.

Not all Sunnis would settle for a much smaller piece of the pie, but then again, they can be made to understand the pitfalls of the unending violence. The army, the police and all other internal security forces are dominated by the Shiites and buttressed from within and outside by several Shiite militias making reversal of fortune for the Sunnis extremely unlikely. Dividing Iraq with loose federal ties will provide the Sunnis and the Shiites the same condition that exists for the Kurds: the opportunity to lead their lives as they see fit and cooperate under federal settings where cooperation benefits them.

The Bush administration has been warned time and again before and after the war about the unintended consequences of the Iraq war but paid no heed and remained stuck in a failed policy. Iraq has disintegrated and genocide of unimaginable scale looms high. The Bush administration must act immediately to prevent that from happening before it is too late.

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THE LAST WAR FOR OIL?

Alon Ben-Meir - November 13, 2006

There should be no doubt that the United States has waged two Gulf wars largely, if not solely, for oil. To ensure that the Iraq war is the last Gulf war, the administration and the Democratic majority in the new Congress must work together to enact an energy-independence bill to address the root-causes of these wars and free America from the shackles of foreign oil.

Whatever the rationale provided by the Bush administration to justify the war in Iraq, there should be no mistake that oil and securing its sources were the main catalysts of both this war and the previous one. Although the United States must extricate its forces from Iraq honorably and without leaving the country in anarchy, as long as America remains dependent on imported oil, even a successful exist strategy will not prevent a third Gulf war. Oil will remain a precious commodity; a weapon used by authoritarian regimes, such as Iran, against Western interests and a target for scores of terrorist groups like Al Qaeda that are bent on undermining Western economies. Dependency on oil also will continue to compromise America's policies, leading it to accommodate suppliers, and enrich unsavory regimes such as Venezuela, enabling them to oppose the United States with impunity. In addition, importing oil will continue to play havoc with America's trading policies: at present, oil imports account for more than one third of the trade deficit, to the tune of \$320 billion. Also, to

keep a steady flow of oil, a supply that remains vulnerable at best, the United States will have to stay militarily vigilant at an enormous cost while sending American soldiers in harms' way to protect its national strategic interests. A more ominous but likely scenario is that as oil supplies become increasingly scarce and the price escalates to \$200 a barrel or higher, the end to cheap oil could precipitate violent conflicts, even wars, causing severe dislocations within the global economy.

A serious energy bill that can address America's needs and eventually free it from outside energy sources will be extremely complex to initiate and then successfully administer. Energy experts estimate that an energy-independence program could take up to two decades to accomplish its ends and as such would require a resolute political commitment stretching over several administrations and the allocation of upward of \$200 billion over 15 to 20 years. To ensure global economic stability during this period, Washington will also need to collaborate with its European allies in the development of new energy sources. This is particularly critical because the European states' dependency on Middle Eastern oil is far greater than that of the United States, which makes them extremely vulnerable to any interruption of oil supplies. None of this is an easy challenge for any administration to tackle. But the nay-Sayers and those who have vested interests in keeping the status quo must remember that America's future well-being and its global leadership are at stake here, not to mention the problem of having to resort to force to protect oil interests. Those who argue that the United States does not have the resources to fund such an enormous undertaking must rethink their opposition. They would do well to ask, "How many billions have been spent, if not wasted on the Iraq war and on military instillations in the Middle East over the years to protect America's strategic oil interests?"

The Iraq war will end up costing the U.S. tax-payer in excess of \$1 trillion. One fifth of that amount invested over two decades will virtually eliminate American vulnerability to foreign oil. Energy independence will also substantially enhance Washington's effectiveness in developing policies, including the promotion of democratic reform in the Arab world, which heretofore was seen as nothing more than a smokescreen to cover America's own self-interest. In addition, more than 1 million jobs will be created within the first three years and double that number in five to seven years. For these reasons, energy-independence must supersede all other national concerns, including taxes, prescription drugs, immigration laws, and social security. In other words, an energy- independent bill must top the agenda of the newly-elected Democratic Congress and be seen too as an integral piece to ending the war in Iraq. This is the singular most critical challenge that faces the nation. America has the know-how, the technology, and the financial resources to become energy-independent. It must now muster the political will to act. Not a single American soldier should ever again die for a barrel of oil.

The new Democratic Congress must assume that solemn responsibility and call on the President to join in this critical national effort. Lacking other major accomplishments, he may well heed the call and depart the White House credited for achieving something momentous that will secure America's future. If he refuses to cooperate, the Democrats must press ahead and bring public pressure to bear in anticipation of another Democratic victory in 2008 to complete the task.

If the tragic war in Iraq becomes the catalyst for freeing America from its addiction to foreign oil, then the sacrifices made by America's finest men and women will perhaps not have been entirely in vain.

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RAISING THE STAKES

Alon Ben-Meir – October 16, 2006

North Korea has finally played its trump card by testing a nuclear weapon. In doing so, it has challenged the United States, shook South Korea, deeply alarmed Japan, paid little heed to Russia, and risks humiliating China for a big reward by appearing independent and daring. Emboldened by its own action, Pyongyang will be less accommodating in future negotiations, especially since it has successfully provoked international attention while raising the stakes for the United States, South Korea, and Japan. The sanctions passed by the Security Council are not strong enough to force Pyongyang to relinquish its nuclear weapons. To prevent the situation from spinning out of control, the Bush administration must conduct direct talks with North Korea.

The administration may praise the UN resolution, arguing that even a weaker resolution strongly signals international condemnation. But since when has North Korea worried about international condemnation? The truth is that the sanctions will neither have an immediate nor a crippling effect. North Korea knows that China will not allow it to become a failed state and inherit the insurmountable burden of dealing with millions of refugees and possibly millions more starving to death. This is why China and Russia will continue to insist that the situation be peacefully resolved. Pyongyang also knows that by seeking multilateral punitive measures through the UN, Washington has ruled out a military response. In fact, President Bush conceded defeat when he publicly switched from a policy of nonproliferation to one of deterrence and defense. Thus, in his statement after the test, he basically acknowledged that he can no longer seek to prevent North Korea from acquiring nuclear weapons but will try to deter North Korea from their use or transfer. Pyongyang is also fully cognizant that South Korea, regardless of its internal debate on how to deal with a nuclear North, wants to preserve the Sunshine policy. Seoul is eager to keep the prospect of unification alive and will do everything to prevent a war that could completely devastate it. Finally, although realizing how sensitive Tokyo is about a nuclear North Korea, but obsessed with its historic enmity to Japan, Pyongyang went ahead with its nuclear test willingly risking the loss of Japanese economic assistance in order to assert itself as a regional nuclear power to be reckoned with. In sum, North Korea skillfully capitalized on the divergent interests of the group of five it has engaged with in on-and-off negotiations during the last few years.

The test's aftermath finds North Korea in a much better bargaining position. Washington's refusal to negotiate directly with Pyongyang for the past six years has allowed it to proceed with its nuclear program with impunity. The administration's stubborn insistence on regime change and its refusal to enter into a non-belligerency agreement have given North Korea every reason to defy and successfully

defeat the Bush administration policy. Pyongyang has certainly succeeded: there is not even a hint of an American military attack, and to assure the American public, Secretary of State Rice has categorically removed that option.

The Bush administration may choose to be satisfied with the passage of the Security Council's sanctions. But by themselves, they will not force North Korea to the negotiating table nor abandon its nuclear program. Kim Jong-il has skillfully raised the stakes at a time of *his* choosing: U.S. troops are bogged down in Iraq fighting an ever-widening insurgency in a country that has plunged into civil war; the administration is fighting for its political life in mid-term elections, and Iran has rejected international demands to end its uranium enrichment program, thus presenting another daunting challenge to Washington. To be sure, North Korea has scored another impressive victory in its brinkmanship game with the Bush administration, leaving it scrambling for a face-saving way out.

Six years of failed policy has added another nation to the nuclear club, but one that is reckless, unpredictable, and potentially extremely dangerous. The argument by some administration officials who boast that the UN resolution is evidence of a united, multilateral front agreeing to punish North Korea is dangerously naive. It is critical to move quickly beyond the sanctions because North Korea's first nuclear test hardly signals the end of its nuclear program. Kim Jong-il seeks a functional nuclear deterrent, and this requires more testing of larger magnitude as well as the development of long-range missiles. Moreover, now that scores of countries are involved in uranium enrichment programs the problem of proliferation assumes far greater urgency.

To prevent North Korea from pursuing this dangerously ambitious goal, there is an urgent need for long, sustained talks between Pyongyang and Washington. In this context, the Bush administration must give up the idea of regime change in North Korea to assuage its main concerns and begin the process of building a positive relationship. Only bilateral dialogue will permit Washington to gauge Pyongyang's intentions and requirements and reach a verifiable and enduring agreement. Such an agreement will permanently remove the danger of transfer of nuclear technology and the growing risks of nuclear conflagration in Asia.

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THE BITTER FRUITS OF OCCUPATION

Alon Ben-Meir – October 23, 2006

Whatever the circumstances and regardless of the Palestinians' internal struggle, Israel must recognize that continued occupation is not only non-sustainable but insidiously eroding rather than enhancing its own national security. This is why a responsible Israeli government must develop a framework for withdrawal and implement it in stages at a pace consistent with prevailing conditions. Time is not on Israel's side. The longer it holds onto the territories, the greater and more ominous the danger.

Despite this reality, after nearly 40 years of occupation many Israelis still argue, especially in the wake of the withdrawal from southern Lebanon and Gaza, that their country is safer because of the occupation. The truth is that by any measure, the years of occupation have set the stage for ever-growing resistance to Israel not just by the Palestinians or the Syrians, but by the larger Arab and Muslim communities. Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and many other moderate Arab states feel threatened and undermined by external and internal forces that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have galvanized. The social, economic, and political plight of the Arab masses are manifested in ever-growing expressions against the West *and* their own governments for failing to end the Palestinian crisis by ending the occupation. Even more ominously, the occupation has provided Islamic extremists, both Sunnis and Shiites, with the rationale and the motivation to wage an existential struggle against Israel. Iran is now leading this crusade by attempting to de-legitimize Israel's very existence. Israel is being portrayed as the cause of all evils, a notion reinforced by the occupation and the endless violence. If the situation continues, in a few years, Israel will find itself pitted against a regional, if not global, Islamists movement bent on its destruction--a prospect only the most irresponsible and oblivious Israeli government can ignore.

Yet, many voices in Israel, chief among them Likud's leader Benjamin Netanyahu, promise the people peace for peace but have never articulated how they might achieve that miracle without relinquishing Arab land. Right-wing Israelis should know that no improvement, not to speak of normalization of relations, is possible with the Arab and Muslim world until Israel decides to end the occupation. Their argument that the withdrawal from southern Lebanon and Gaza has simply made these areas into staging grounds for more violence is disingenuous. Unlike the complete Israeli withdrawal from Egypt and Jordan, the pullout from Lebanon has not been settled entirely (Hezbollah continues to claim the Sheba Farms); while the withdrawal from Gaza is seen as partial, since the West Bank remains occupied. Only by ending totally the occupation, will Israelis be able to walk the high moral ground and be viewed as justified in dealing with Palestinian provocations however they deem appropriate, because they will then be acting not as an occupying force but as defenders of their homeland.

Wounded politically by the war in Lebanon, Prime Minister Olmert may be too weakened, at this juncture, to stick to his original plan of withdrawing unilaterally from most of the West Bank. In addition, the violent internal power struggle among Palestinian groups precludes, at least temporarily, major territorial withdrawal even through negotiation. This situation is, however, transitory; in contrast, ending the occupation must remain the very core of Israel's strategy. If withdrawal from the territories seemed a good idea when the Kadima party was created, it is even more so now. Withdrawal must occur under any formula that Israel can work out--as long as its national security is not compromised--with the international community, especially the quartet of the United States, the United Nations, the European Union, and Russia. Meanwhile, Mr. Olmert needs to send clear signals that he remains committed to the idea of ending the occupation by: a) making it abundantly clear that he will not tolerate the building of illegal outposts and will dismantle all existing ones, b) ending the expansion of existing settlements with *only minor exceptions*, c) providing economic incentives and sustainable development projects to Palestinian communities that do not engage in violent activity, d) removing all road blocks that are not *absolutely critical* to Israel's security, e) allowing Palestinians to legitimately build, plant, and develop their land with no undue restrictions, f) forsaking any form of collective punishment and, finally, g) releasing all prisoners who came from Palestinian communities that have not been actively engaged in violence. With or

without the support of the Palestinian Authority and regardless of the Authority's political convictions, Israel must build positive inroads into the Palestinian community because; in final analysis, Israelis and Palestinians must co-exist.

Israel must remember that the present inability of Palestinians or Syrians to recover their land by force offers a false reprieve because it does not improve the Israeli position over time. Israel can hold onto the territories for another 50 years and at the end of that period, the occupation will remain the beating heart of the conflict-except that Israel will have been consumed by the agony of self-defeat for not realizing that it was betrayed rather than buttressed by time.

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EUROPE MAKES WELCOME ADDITION TO EXPANDING PEACE INITIATIVE

Daily Star Editorial

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It is too soon to know whether the Middle East has received an early Christmas gift in the form of a workable peace initiative for Palestine and Israel, but the three wise men who have proposed it deserve credit for focusing world attention on the region's most intractable problem. The five-point plan unveiled by Spanish Premier Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, French President Jacques Chirac and Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi is only the latest of several recent attempts on the part of international leaders to breathe new life into a moribund peace process. Shortly after the end of the war in Lebanon this summer, Qatar launched a fresh push for a return to peace negotiations, and Doha's move was followed by the Arab League's renewed commitment to a Saudi-penned peace initiative. Then British Prime Minister Tony Blair renewed his calls for a resolution to the conflict, telling a U.S. panel that any solution to the problems in Iraq must come as part of a broader strategy for regional peace.

In fact the only major world leader who has not yet jumped on the peace bandwagon is U.S. President George W. Bush. The American president has vowed to see the creation of a Palestinian state before he leaves office, but he has so far done very little to accomplish that objective.

Bush's absence from the peace drive is made up for, however, by the presence of a growing number of international leaders who are recognizing the benefits of securing an agreement between the Palestinians and Israelis. The participation of these leaders makes the prospects for a return to negotiations look less bleak, even as the killing rages on in Gaza.

Another cause for optimism is the re-emergence of European diplomacy on the global stage. Throughout Bush's first term, Europe's diplomatic role in the Middle East was eclipsed by a heavy-handed and hawkish American foreign policy. But difficulties in Iraq, along with other failures in foreign policy, have forced a rethink of U.S. strategies in the region and have made it necessary for the president to adopt a more cooperative stance toward his allies across the Atlantic. Bush's maneuvering room has diminished even further now that many of his fellow party members have been voted out of Congress. The time is ripe for the Europeans to take the lead in reviving the peace process.

Now that European leaders have put the peace process at the top of their agenda, it is all the more urgent for the Palestinians to complete the formation of their unity government. The first task of the newly appointed Palestinian premier ought to be to visit Europe for talks with Zapatero, Chirac, Prodi and Blair.

There is no guarantee that the newly launched European peace blueprint will bear any fruit. Indeed, the Israelis, who have scuttled several peace initiatives in the past, have already flatly rejected the European proposal. But an emerging international consensus on the urgent need for a peace agreement could provide the necessary momentum to finally rid ourselves of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which has for far too long been a source of regional instability.

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COMPREHENSIVE PEACE IS THE ONLY KIND OF PEACE TO SAVE THE MIDDLE EAST

Marc Gopin*

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In the course of intensively shuttling between and within enemy groups in the Arab-Israeli conflict in the last two years I have noticed a pattern on all sides: the tendency of even the peacemakers and diplomats to create alliances against someone to be excluded. „Divide and conquer„ is not just an imperial strategy, it is human nature. We tend to be compelled to think in terms of enemies and allies, as the noted psychoanalyst Vamik Volkan has taught in his classic works. An alternative approach must be that no one is left out who can then become a spoiler. Everyone must benefit so that the radicals in each camp will not have a political leg left on which to stand.

Let's be clear on what you can no longer do. You can no longer cut a deal with Palestinian secular elites that has no demonstrable benefit for the Palestinian masses. Everyone rushes in to support them with militant programs: the Syrians, the Iranians, the refugee Palestinian community, really, just about everyone in the Arab and Muslim world. You cannot ignore the Palestinians and cut a deal with

Syria. Iran and Hizbullah will not allow it and, as Bashar Assad said recently, you will simply create a Palestinian insurgency inside Syria. You cannot even cut a deal with Syria/Lebanon and the Palestinians, because Iran is determined to be a spoiler. To think that you can simply divide and conquer the Syria/Iran axis without Israel and the U.S. paying a price in return is to treat enemies with intellectual contempt. You also cannot cut a secular deal that does not address the way in which this conflict is framed and supported by millions of Muslims worldwide, not in the age of Al Qaeda and Salafism. You cannot cut a deal with resident Palestinians that leaves out the refugees. You cannot get the Israelis to the table without the U.S. Congress and Presidency, and you cannot divide them from the State of Israel because the American Jewish community will not let that happen. And you cannot cut a deal with secular Israelis hoping that nationalist religious Israelis will just go away and not resort to violence. Instead, peace must be about the enticement of all parties away from the waste of destructive human relations.

The secular Palestinian leadership and moderate Israeli leadership got very close to what they needed from each other at Camp David and Taba in 2000. What was not included were Syrian needs, Iranian needs, needs of the Palestinian poor, needs of Muslim conservatives, needs of Israeli Arabs or Palestinians, and needs of the Israeli and Jewish hardliners. Those who were missing at Camp David did very well in destroying the progress that was made by a variety of violent and political means, including settlements, suicide bomb funding, a worldwide campaign of Jew hatred, clever sidelining of the American Congress and Presidency from any constructive role, endless provocations on the ground and insults to Palestinian dignity. The recent war in Lebanon simply confirmed the awesome power of the spoilers.

Here is what is needed for any future plan to work:

1. Both the Palestinians and the Syrians must be at the table at the same time. Moderate Syrian leadership wants political victories such as the return of the Golan and a return to legitimacy on the global stage. The spoilers in Syria want the status quo of violent control and corruption, but they would be powerless before a serious inclusion of Syria by America, Israel and the Europeans.
2. The Iranians want security guarantees from America in exchange for giving up their genocidal rhetoric regarding Israel and their nuclear arms ambitions. This is the only way to sideline the extremists and bring back the moderate clerics into power. The only way to know if this would work, however, is to negotiate with them, develop mutual steps of confidence building, and verify the results.
3. Poor Palestinians need evidence that this process will tangibly and immediately change their lives for the better during the process. There will have to be a series of agreements between the sides on how to react to spoilers and their provocations without holding the Palestinian masses hostage to revenge and collective punishment.
4. Conservative Muslims need to be persuaded by evidence that both Israel and Palestine will be places in the future that respect and care for Muslim families and their needs, their holy places and their dignity. Any peace process of the future must have a social, economic and cultural component that builds confidence in this new reality.
5. The Jewish community, hard-line Israel and especially religious nationalist Jews need to be convinced of one thing as they are asked to give up territory – a far greater sense of safety, security and acceptance in the Arab and Muslim world. They will need evidence that is also a part of this new form of peace process.
6. Palestinian refugees need compensation; they need acknowledgement; they need a serious stake in the new Palestine; and I believe they need some symbolic welcome to, at the very least, visit their old homeland inside Israel. The two-state solution may be a necessity, but ultimately Jews and Palestinians need to feel welcome and equal in each other's lands.
7. Israeli Arabs need absolute equality culturally and economically. They are the living symbol of whether the Arab world sees the possibility of Israel in the midst of Middle Eastern culture or not. This equality need not impinge on the Jewish quality of life in Israel. It simply must be that Israeli identity is multi-cultural and non-racial in every sense.

Any future process must offer concrete steps that will both entice all seven of these actors, but also test all these actors; hold their feet to the fire, evenly and fairly, in order for the remaining spoilers to truly be isolated and silenced politically, morally and psychologically.

*Marc Gopin is the James Laue professor of world religions, diplomacy and conflict resolution at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia. This article is distributed by the Common Ground News Service (CGNews) and can be accessed at <<http://www.commongroundnews.org>>www.commongroundnews.org.

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## BUILDING ISRAEL-PALESTINIAN PEACE

Kamran Mofid\*

As recent as last week, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice met with Israeli and Palestinian leaders and urged them to step up their efforts to find a lasting peace.

“Everybody recognizes that the creation of a viable, independent democratic Palestinian state that can live side by side in peace with Israel would be not just a remarkable achievement but a just achievement,” Rice said in a news conference with the Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, in the West Bank town of Jericho.

Rice also held talks with the Israeli prime minister, Ehud Olmert, in Jerusalem, in which she expressed her appreciation for remarks

Olmert had made earlier in the week as an “important step that was likely to both contribute towards calm and advance the peace processes in the region”. Moreover, in the last few days the Baker-Hamilton report on Iraq has recommended attempts at a revival of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

As everybody knows, we have been here many times before: so many peace processes and so many failures with tragic consequences for all. This is so, because those promoting such proposals, it seems, have failed to acknowledge that, the key which will open the door to peace is called justice. Furthermore, there will be no peace between Israel and Palestine, and no true security for Israel, so long as there exists such a level of poverty, inhumanity and economic injustice in Palestine. The words and sentiments of the UN Report on Palestine which was released yesterday (7/12/06) rings true, a gist of it can be noted below.

UN aid agencies launched their biggest appeal for funding to tackle the humanitarian crisis in the Palestinian territories, asking for \$453m for next year and warning of a weakening in the Palestinians’ ability to govern.

Senior UN aid officials in Jerusalem said there were clear signs of a worsening economic crisis. Around two thirds of the 4 million Palestinian population are living below the poverty line and half the population were “food-insecure”, meaning they could not afford the basic foods to meet dietary needs. Unemployment was running as high as 40% in the Gaza strip and at around 25% in the West Bank. Kevin Kennedy, the UN humanitarian coordinator, said the crisis was not only an economic collapse but was also tied to an increase in closures and access restrictions imposed on the occupied territories by the Israeli government and to continued conflict, internal political fighting and a breakdown of law and order.

The UN has warned there has been a gradual weakening of the Palestinian Authority. The crisis results from an international boycott imposed in March after Hamas won the elections and formed a government. Israel has since withheld \$60m a month of tax revenues that should go to the Palestinians.

Although some of that money has been spent paying the Palestinian bills of Israeli electricity and water companies, the Israelis have now withheld nearly \$600m.

The international community, under the Quartet of the US, the UN, the EU and Russia, has also halted direct funding to the Palestinian government, saying it must recognize Israel, halt violence and accept past peace agreements. The freeze means salaries for 160,000 government workers have largely gone unpaid. “Obviously the longer the current situation continues, with further deterioration, a lack of salaries, people on strike, continued military conflict on both sides, [the] further [the] weakening of the Palestinian Authority and its institutions”, the Report notes.

In the past year, the UN observes, there had been a 40% increase in the number of barriers and checkpoints across the West Bank. In addition, there have been continued closures of the crossing points for people and goods out of Gaza. Under an agreement negotiated last November, Israel was to open up the main crossing points to relieve the economic crisis. But the crossings have in effect been closed, with Israel citing security concerns.

### **How Can a Lasting Peace Process Move Forward?**

Sound economic policies, effectively implemented, are essential elements of the peace process in the Middle East. “Economics of Hope”, leading to envisioning, enabling and empowering the disposed and marginalized people of Palestine is the most effective path to a non-violent resolution of conflict in the Middle East and a long-term security for Israel. Without economic empowerment, leading to tangible economic wellbeing and prosperity, all forms of peace proposals and dialogue, although valuable, will remain ineffective in realizing their overall objective: peace, security and harmonious living, side-by-side.

### **Hopelessness Leads to Violence**

Experience in the Holy Land has shown that hopelessness leads to violence, but the prospect for empowerment leads to peaceful coexistence. Calm and relative cooperation prevailed after the successful negotiations at Camp David over 25 years ago, after the Oslo agreement of 1993, and during and after the Palestinian elections of 1996. These were times when moderate leadership and sound judgment prevailed, and there was hope that further progress would be made. Tragically, radical and violent actions subsequently intruded.

### **The Path to Peace, Reconstruction, Security and Prosperity: Challenges and Opportunities**

It is increasingly apparent that the problem of economics is not just a technical problem for experts but is above all a moral and spiritual issue. The world is longing for a system that would be both participatory and socially just; a system with a functioning economy that would be at the same time sensitive to theological consequences. We must deal with the issue of economic empowerment that has a religious tract. Through our indifference and complicity, the integrity of our faith is in jeopardy.

People everywhere, given a chance prefer to be compassionate, spiritual and caring. They want to be able to practice their religions freely. More and more, they also want to see that their religious values have a bearing on their economic systems and structures. This philosophy is nowhere stronger than in the Middle-East, whose people by and large are very spiritual, religious, hospitable, informed and cultural. They largely do not reject the pivotal values behind the market economy. Indeed, the Middle-East region throughout the history has been the major area of, and for, business, trade and commerce. They do know that, under the right conditions, a market economy can drive development, decrease poverty, encourage productivity, and reward entrepreneurial energy.

The children of Abraham in the Middle East know well that religion is a major factor in the formation of social networks and trust. In

addition, the impetus for focusing specifically on spiritual/theological economics draws on the growing recognition in economics and other social sciences that religion is not epiphenomenal, nor is it fading from public significance in the 21st century and the importance to social/economic dynamics of human economic intangibles. Recent developments in the social sciences suggest a growing openness to nonmaterial factors, such as the radius of trust, behavioural norms, and religion as having profound economic, political, and social consequences.

### **Spiritual Economics, Reconstruction and Development in West Bank and Gaza Palestinian Economy: An Overview**

The Palestinian economy is made up from the following industries:

**Construction** – this is one of the biggest sectors of the Palestinian economy. Demand for his sector is from the rapidly growing population, displaced persons still living in squalid camp conditions and reconstruction of war damaged property.

**Agriculture** is one of the biggest exporting sectors of the Palestinian economy and is also a major source of employment. Demand for this sector is expected to rise due to cost advantage enjoyed by this sector and growing demand from the local population.

**Tourism** is one of the major sources of foreign currency income for the Palestinian economy. With such world famous sites as Bethlehem and Jericho under its jurisdiction this sector is expected to contribute significantly to the economy of the Palestinian economy for the foreseeable future– as long as there is an absence of armed conflict.

**Light manufacturing** is one of the growing areas of the Palestinian economy. Sources of demand for this sector are from the local Palestinian population and also Israel where Palestinian products enjoy a strong cost advantage against their Israeli competitors.

The Palestinian Authority's economy is largely dependent on the Israeli economy as most points of import and export are controlled by Israel's security measures. Furthermore, Israel's close proximity to the Palestinian market makes Israel one of its biggest trade partners. Subsequently the economic fortunes of the Palestinian economy are closely tied to the peace process. In times of calm between the two sides the Palestinian economy has witnessed marked improvements, especially in areas such as construction and tourism. Periods of peace have also been marked by higher rates of investment in its economy and lower rates of unemployment. In times of conflict such as the recent Intifada the reverse has proven true where as a result the Palestinian economy entered a period of major recession and even almost collapse.

### **Economic Forum for the Common Good: Areas of Concentration**

As part of its vision to empower people to create a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable Middle East, The Economic Forum of the Globalisation for the Common Good Initiative- proposes the following sectors as the initial areas of concentration:

**Faith and Economic life:** The Economics of Reconciliation and Peace Building.

**Beyond Corruption and Informal Economy:** Good Governance and Economic Development for Peace.

**Tourism for Peace.** Unlike many other regions in the world today, the Middle East has become synonymous with conflict. Images of wanton destruction and meaningless violence are commonplace. But there are other facets to the Middle East that are rarely seen, and the region's history provides great examples of beauty, tranquility, sacredness and peace. As children of Abraham, we should be concerned about ways of bringing our communities together for the good of all.

**Agriculture for Peace.** To support peace through policies leading to agricultural development increased employment and economic growth.

**Business for Peace.** It is our understanding that business is the dominant institution in society today and the one most capable of responding to rapid change. As such, business must adopt a new tradition of responsibility for the whole. It must do this by defining business interests within the wider perspective of society in order to create a positive and sustainable future.

**Youth Leadership programme for Peace:** Today's youth in Palestine will one day lead their communities in various capacities, build their economies, and make decisions that will have an impact in the lives of future generations. A series of programmes on conflict resolution, good governance, peace making and economic development will be initiated.

**Economic and trade relation** between the West Bank and Gaza.

**Economic and trade relation** between Israel and Palestine.

**Economic and trade relation** between Palestine and Egypt.

It is expected that the economics of hope for the common good, will lead to the creation of an environment which will foster a better understanding between the Israeli and Palestinian people, where many other equally important issues dividing them- such as the unity government in Palestine, the recognition of Israel and the acceptance of the past peace agreements by Hamas, etc- can be addressed and resolved. A hopeful Palestinian population, who enjoys the fruits of a just economy and trade relation with its neighbour, surely is better equipped to talk with Israel on the issues of security than otherwise.

For a more detailed treatment of these issues please see: <http://www.islamonline.net/English/contemporary/2005/08/article02.shtml>.

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### THREE CONDITIONS FOR A SUCCESSFUL CEASEFIRE

Daoud Kuttab\*

Source: Arabic Media Internet Network (<http://www.amin.org>), December 4, 2006, Distributed by the Common Ground News Service with permission to publish.

Three conditions must obtain for ceasefire agreements to work. They need to be mutual, supervised by a neutral party and supported by continuous political negotiations. Only the first condition seems to have been met this time around, and for the fire to cease we need to work on the remaining two conditions.

Although nothing has been signed by the conflicting parties, the condition of mutuality seems to have been fulfilled by an Israeli willingness to be involved in what amounts to an understanding rather than an agreement. As such, this ceasefire seems closer to the understandings reached in Lebanon or with the Syrians that have worked even though they were not put on paper by the parties to the conflict. It therefore bodes well that we seem to have overcome the initial hurdle that has been delaying movement on this front.

The lack of a signed agreement, however, has unfortunately left the larger part of the Palestinian territories outside the understanding. Without including the West Bank, Israel will get what it wants, i.e., an end to the Qassam fire, without Palestinians getting what they need, i.e., an end to the continuous Israeli incursions and assassinations in the West Bank. If these continue, they would be a clear invitation to West Bank Palestinians to use the same tactic that forced the Israelis to accept a ceasefire with their Gazan brethren. That would be unfortunate.

But this is not enough. Both sides need to agree on a mechanism to put an end to violations through a clear monitoring scheme that is operated by a genuinely neutral party. To be effective, such neutral monitors must be allowed to name and shame the guilty party. Politics have too often prevented the naming of the parties that have violated previous ceasefire attempts.

Naturally, the most effective way to give any ceasefire longevity is to reach a political agreement. Individuals and groups shoot at each other because of feelings of injustice and because of the absence of political agreements that address their demands. The most obvious way to begin a political process is with a recognition of the basics: that each side accepts the other and its right to self-determination. This applies as much to Israel accepting Hamas as to Hamas accepting Israel.

The issue of Palestinian statehood is no longer in question, but in addition to the geography of this state (especially as regards East Jerusalem), the problems of viability and contiguity are not to be minimized. The contiguity issue is now a major problem because the Israelis are unilaterally building tunnels and alternate roads without coordinating with the Palestinians and without including East Jerusalem or Arab neighborhoods in East Jerusalem as part of this complex road system. The peace that both sides require needs to be built on trust and respect. Attempts to impose solutions based on the needs of the strong party will fail. They may bring temporary ceasefire understandings, but true peace and security can only be achieved when both sides are willing to address some of the most important needs of the other. This means security for Israel and sovereignty for Palestinians. Such agreements begin with respect and are concluded on the negotiating table. Ending the shooting is important. But unless this is widened to include all Palestinian territories, is monitored by a neutral party and followed directly with substantive talks, it is unlikely to last very long.

\*Daoud Kuttab is a Palestinian columnist and the Director of the Institute of Modern Media at Al-Quds University- Ramallah.

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### BUSH SHOULD SURPRISE SYRIAN LEADER WIEH AN INVITATION TO SUMMI WITH ISRAEL

Yossi Ben-Ari\*

Source: Ynetnews (<http://www.ynetnews.com>), October 28, 2006. Distributed by the Common Ground News Service with permission to publish.

While facing weapon—smuggling tunnels in Gaza and Iranian statements regarding Israel's upcoming disappearance, it is hard not to recall the explanation attributed to former PM Rabin regarding the need to advance the Oslo peace initiative despite the risks.

Rabin apparently feared the closing window of opportunity as a result of a triple threat: Iran's nuclearization, the quick boost in radical Islam's power, and the weakening of the IDF.

It is hard to believe how clearly he saw what was to come and how quickly his vision materialized. Let's not fool ourselves — the window has already closed, and so have the mesh and shutters behind it. The last hope is the lock, which may still remain unlocked. Regrettably, the keys are no longer in our hands; rather, they can be found hanging off President Bush's belt, yet he refuses to make use of them.

In the face of the limited American diplomatic imagination, and while the noose is growing tighter around Israel's neck, there is room for calling on the U.S. to adopt a new initiative, which may end the dead—end. The keyhole is of course Syria. This is where we must aim, and there's a decent chance to remove the deep rust that is making the act of turning the key difficult.

The duality characterizing Syrian President Assad's declarations in recent weeks may mean that he has not fully decided which path to take, and it may be possible to help him make the right choice.

To that end, President George W. Bush will need to slightly breach his strict worldview and surprise Assad with an invitation to a summit meeting. With the two of them sitting comfortably at a neutral location, Bush will offer a give—and—take package to be implemented simultaneously and include the following components:

Syria will recognize the damage caused by its support for terror and agree to remove from its territory the headquarters and infrastructure of Islamic Jihad, Hamas, and all Palestinian and other terror organizations, in accordance with the Jordanian model. In addition, Syria will cut its ties with Hizbullah and stop equipping it with weapons or being used as a pipeline for weapon transfers from other countries. Damascus will cut its military ties with Iran, but will be able to maintain diplomatic and civilian relations. Syria will also completely seal its border with Iraq, and secretly cooperate with Washington on intelligence and security in order to thwart terror acts in Iraq.

The US will officially remove Syria from the list of terror—sponsoring states and turn it into a significant beneficiary of its foreign aid plan, both in civilian and military terms. The Syrian military will enjoy a comprehensive modernization plan, based on the Egyptian model, and will be built in accordance with the highest standards of the 21st century. Washington will breathe new life into the diplomatic process and push Israel to return to the negotiations table based on understandings already reached in the days of Barak, Peres and Rabin — including the famous deposit given by the latter to Clinton in August 1993 regarding Israel's principled willingness to withdraw from the Golan Heights, and Hafez Assad's positive response.

#### **What are the benefits for all sides?**

Syria, following 40 years of "wandering in the desert", would regain the Golan, find a way to integrate into the Free World in a dignified manner, enjoy processes of modernization and economic prosperity, and maintain its unique characteristics without having American—style democracy dictated to it.

Syria's defense establishment would strengthen and would be able to more effectively help in stabilizing the regime over time (after all, this regime would also not enjoy automatic immunity in the face of the boost in the power of radical Islam in the region).

The U.S. and the Free World would be able to bring Syria into the circle of sanity, break a significant link in the global terror chain, and boost the bloc of countries resisting Shiite—Iranian influence in the Middle East.

Western countries would be able to use Damascus as a channel for dialogue with Teheran, and of course as an effective leverage for moving forward a diplomatic process between Israel and the Arab—Muslim world, that under those new conditions could lead to a quick comprehensive agreement.

Personally, Bush will significantly boost his leadership image, and if he is quick to declare such initiative, he may earn a few votes in the Congressional elections (this is true even if Assad declines the invitation).

Israel will seemingly have to pay a price (giving back the Golan and Syria's rearmament), yes this price pales in comparison to the expected benefit in this dark period. If this initiative is successful, Israel will also benefit from its success; if it fails, Israel won't sustain damages, as the Syrians will again be viewed as rejectionists.

\*Yossi Ben—Ari served in senior intelligence posts and was a senior instructor at the National Security College.

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#### **NO NEGOTIATIONS, NO PEACE**

Gershon Baskin\*

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The Israeli—Palestinian political arena has never looked worse. This is a reflection of the negative political situation internally in both areas. It seems that the main political agenda of the Israeli government today is survival, and once that becomes apparent to the people of Israel, the government's days are numbered.

On the Palestinian side, the choices range from political stagnation to civil war. Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas has continued to threaten the Hamas—led government of Ismail Haniyeh that it must accept international demands of recognizing Israel and moving forward toward peace, but so far, Hamas has rejected Abbas's demands. It doesn't seem that his threats are being treated too seriously, even within his own Fatah movement. Judging on his past performance, it is likely that Abbas's threats will not be implemented and the current status quo of a paralyzed PA will continue.

Abbas can declare a state of emergency and appoint a temporary government for 30 days or perhaps even 60 days, but there is no legal way that he can undo the decision of the electorate or even call for new elections. The only alternative to agreement between Abbas and Haniyeh, which seems unlikely, is civil war, and almost no one on the Palestinian side is interested in that disastrous adventure.

Both Israel and the PA have spoken about the need to renew the peace process. Abbas has been promised both by U.S. President George W. Bush and by Olmert that the peace process would be renewed, launched by an Abbas—Olmert summit. It seems that Olmert has no intention of convening the summit until the kidnapped IDF soldier, Gilad Shalit, is freed from his abductors. But even if and when Shalit is safely returned home, it is important to recognize that history did not begin with his kidnapping. The Israeli—Palestinian relation was dead—ended long before June 25, 2006. The Shalit kidnapping is but just another excuse not to renew the dialogue.

It is true that with the current chaos and almost complete breakdown of law and order on the Palestinian side, it seems almost absurd to renew the peace process. However, it is also absurd not to understand that the developing alternative to Hamas, if the situation there continues to deteriorate, is not a return of Fatah but the rise of al—Qaida and similar groups. There is a fundamental interest on both sides to prevent this negative trend, and a partnership in real deeds is the only preventative cure for this deadly ailment.

The Israeli—Palestinian relationship has always been a dialectic one in which the statements and actions of each side have a deep impact on the statements and actions of the other. In the political dreams of both sides, there has always been a desire to wish this relationship away. Israelis and Palestinians share the dream of having the land without the other people, but this will never happen. There is no political validity for even considering how to turn the clock back to the pre—Oslo era, even if many Israelis and Palestinians would actually prefer for that to happen. It simply is not possible. This is political fantasy and we must confront our dismal realities and not run away from them.

In the real world, the options for both sides are limited. Israel does not want to reoccupy Gaza, even in light of the apparent huge build—up of weapons and ammunition there. The Palestinians will not give up their struggle for freedom and statehood no matter how many losses they suffer. Neither would we if the situation were reversed.

Both sides believe that the other side is not a partner and does not want peace. There is no trust whatsoever across the conflict line, nor is there any particular reason why there should be any. Both sides hold responsibility for the catastrophic situation we are in, neither side can excuse its own responsibility by placing the blame entirely on the other. There is no luxury of time to even engage in the blame game. We can either continue to say that there is no one to talk to and watch as the situation continues to deteriorate, knowing full well that many more Palestinians and Israelis will pay with their lives, or we can do every thing humanly possible to rebuild a partnership with the hope that it will have an impact on the internal Palestinian political scene.

We know the results of the current policy of mutual no recognition, no negotiations and no peace. (And yes it is mutual, at least in the eyes of both societies.) There is no guarantee that political reengagement will produce the desired results of advancing real peace, but there are no alternatives that could do it either.

Most of the world believes that the Israeli—Palestinian conflict has deep impacts on the destabilization of the entire region. The current trends in the wider region pose even greater threats to Israel than the Israeli—Palestinian conflict. For the time being Israel has real allies in the region for advancing Israeli—Palestinian peace.

Egypt and Jordan have the strongest interests for advancing a renewed peace process. Both of these allies also understand very well the dangers of Islamic extremism in Palestine to their own regimes and would be willing to contribute even more significantly than they do today in helping to bridge gaps and reach understandings between Israel and the Palestinians. More importantly, both sides would be willing to play a constructive role in helping both sides to implement future agreements (this has been one of the weakest aspects of Israeli—Palestinian peacemaking until now).

The “mini—quartet“ of Israel, the PA, Egypt and Jordan can provide the mechanism for renewing the peace process. This partnership of four interdependent neighbours is the best, and perhaps, the only way that we can move forward toward a political horizon of hope.

\*Gershon Baskin is the Israeli co—CEO of IPCRI, the Israel/Palestine Center for Research and Information (<http://www.ipcri.org>).

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#### **LETTER FROM THE ISRAELI COMMITTEE FOR RESIDENCY RIGHTS (ICRR) ON THE DENIAL OF RESIDENCY IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES OF MANY PALESTINIANS**

In March 2006, the Israeli government initiated a policy of visa denial to individuals of Palestinian descent having foreign passports, many of whom Israel has arbitrarily denied residency rights to in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT). Many of these persons have lived in the OPT for years without succeeding to obtain residency rights even though they made Palestine their primary residence and place of employment/business, married local Palestinians, and had children who were born in Palestine.

These people have managed to stay in the Occupied Palestinian Territory by means of tourist visas issued by the Israeli government. Such visas are valid for three months. Their holders are obliged to go abroad to renew them. Those who cannot afford to travel abroad become illegal sojourners and live in perpetual fear of being deported, which confines them to their homes. Those who go abroad have no assurance that they will be allowed to return, and in recent years the number of people denied reentry has increased significantly. Indeed, at this time, most persons of Palestinian origin attempting to transit via Israel in order to return to their families and occupations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory have been denied entry. Additionally, just recently 105 passports that had been submitted for visa extension were returned by the Israeli authorities with no extension beyond the end of 2006, and all stamped "last visa," meaning that there would be no further visa extensions and that the holders of these passports would be forced to leave. And only today, December 5, 2006, we learn from the Palestinian campaign for entry rights, of an escalation in Israeli policy. The Ministry of Interior now refuses to process visa extensions at all (see Press Release below). As a result of this 'entry-denied' policy, families are torn apart, schooling for the children is disrupted, and economic disasters follow.

Among the entry-denied individuals are professionals from foreign countries who are not necessarily Palestinian. This group includes physicians, teachers, professors, students, social workers, and professionals in a variety of fields filling critically important positions in hospitals, schools, universities, and social institutions. Those being forced to leave by being denied entry or re-entry leave a vacuum in institutions unable to find replacements. This is devastating for all concerned, and has life-threatening implications particularly in the field of medical care. On the one hand, the ability of hospitals in the Occupied Palestinian Territory to treat Palestinians is constantly diminishing while on the other hand Israel's General Security Services ('Shabak') often denies access to Israeli hospitals for treatment.

A group of concerned Israeli citizens has organized to protest this injustice which stands in gross contradiction to Israel's self-declared image as a democratic state supportive of human rights and aspiring to a peaceful resolution of its conflict with the Palestinian people. We, the members of the Israel Committee for the Right of Residency, have been calling upon the Israeli public to join us in demanding that our government desist from denying residency rights in the Occupied Territories to Palestinians or persons of Palestinian descent with foreign passports, as well as to foreign professionals contributing to the welfare of the Palestinian population. We have been meeting with staffs of foreign embassies in Israel and have called upon them to use their good offices to intercede with the Israeli authorities to change the imposed restrictions. However, embassies do not make policy. They carry out the policies of their governments.

We therefore call upon you, people of conscience living abroad, to organize campaigns to inform your officials in your countries about Israel's policy of 'entry-denied.' We ask you to write letters requesting them to demand that Israel change its policy. We also ask Israelis and citizens of other countries to write letters of protest to the Israeli Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior.

For supplementary information about the present situation see: <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/chi-0611120452nov12,1,6508718.story?page=2&coll=chi-news-hed>, <http://www.haaretz.com/>, <http://cosmos.ucc.ie/cs1064/jabowen/IPSC/php/art.php?aid=41413>

Addresses of Israeli Officials to whom protest letters should be sent: Prime Minister, Ehud Olmert: Tele: 972-2-67 53227; 972-2-67 53547; fax 972-2-566 4838, [eulmert@knesset.gov.il](mailto:eulmert@knesset.gov.il) or [pm\\_eng@pmo.gov.il](mailto:pm_eng@pmo.gov.il). Minister of Interior, Ronnie Bar-on: fax 972-2-566 6376, [rbaron@knesset.gov.il](mailto:rbaron@knesset.gov.il) or, if faxing and Minister is not enabled, ask for Sabine (972-2-6294722 or fax: 972-2-6701628); Minister of Education, Prof. Yuli Tamir: Tel 972-2-675 3437, Fax 972-2-675 3976, [ytamir@knesset.gov.il](mailto:ytamir@knesset.gov.il), Minister of Health, Yakov Ben Yizry: Tel 972 2 675 3728, Fax 972 2 678 7662, [ybenyizri@knesset.gov.il](mailto:ybenyizri@knesset.gov.il), or [pniot@moh.health.gov.il](mailto:pniot@moh.health.gov.il). For the US You can find your Representative: <http://www.house.gov/writerep/> and your Senators: [http://www.senate.gov/general/contact\\_information/senators\\_cfm.cfm](http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm). The State Department can be contacted at: [http://contact-us.state.gov/cgi-bin/state.cfg/php/enduser/ask.php?p\\_sid=cL1kRPni&p\\_sp=cF9zcmNoPSZwX3NvcnRfYnk9JnBfZ3JpZHNvcnQ9JnBfcm93X2NudD0xMTEmcF9wcm9kcz0mcF9jY%3CP%20class=MsoNormal%20dir=ltr%20style](http://contact-us.state.gov/cgi-bin/state.cfg/php/enduser/ask.php?p_sid=cL1kRPni&p_sp=cF9zcmNoPSZwX3NvcnRfYnk9JnBfZ3JpZHNvcnQ9JnBfcm93X2NudD0xMTEmcF9wcm9kcz0mcF9jY%3CP%20class=MsoNormal%20dir=ltr%20style) or by calling (202)647-4000.

But if indeed there is to be a Palestinian State in the future, then why drive Palestinians out?

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### THINGS GO BETTER WITH RIGHTS

Zahi Khouri

Source: *The Wall Street Journal*, (<http://www.wsj.com>) September 30, 2006. is distributed by the Common Ground News Service (CGNews: <http://www.commongroundnews.org>) with permission to republish.

In 1995, I moved from a comfortable life in America to Ramallah, Palestine, to invest in the most American of businesses there. I was instrumental in bringing Coca-Cola to the Middle East in the early 1980s; after the Oslo Peace Accords were signed I decided to launch the Coke franchise in the West Bank and Gaza.

Over the last decade, the business has grown. Today, Coca-Cola employs hundreds of Palestinians and sells 10 million cases of Coke a year.

As a Palestinian American, this was more than a moneymaking venture. Each gleaming bottle, with that red Coca-Cola swirl in both Arabic and English, would be a miniature ambassador from America. And each potential investor who saw that Coke was successful might decide to invest as well. It seemed the perfect strategy: to promote American interests while helping to build an economy that could serve as the foundation of a viable, independent Palestinian state.

Following the peace accords, scores of other Palestinian Americans moved to the West Bank and Gaza. Professors came to teach at universities. Doctors came to help modernize the healthcare system and treat patients. Artists came to exhibit and perform. Other business professionals came to invest, modernize the economy and create jobs. Each, in their way, wanted to help build an independent Palestine. Each served as the real ambassadors of America, so different from the American-made Apache helicopters and F-16 fighter jets Israel uses to rain destruction on the Palestinian economy, cities and villages.

But Israel has decided that we Americans are not welcome. Many, like me, have lived in the West Bank for more than a decade. Unlike American Jews -- or Jews from anywhere -- who can receive instant citizenship upon arrival, we are unable to obtain residency. Instead, we Christian and Muslim Palestinians must rely on our American passports, renewing our tourist visas every three months. A hassle, yes, but the only way to stay in Palestine, often in the homes our families have inhabited for generations.

Since Hamas assumed government authority after democratic elections this year, Israel has begun to deny Palestinian Americans the right to enter. We are left to wonder why.

This new policy could be another turn of the screw to pressure Hamas. It could be manufactured as a painless concession for future negotiations. It could be one more tactic in Israel 's drive -- which began in 1948 with the expulsion of more than 700,000 Palestinians -- to empty as much land of as many Palestinians as possible.

We do not know the reason for denying entry to Palestinian Americans. But we do know the result. In addition to breaking families apart -- for example one spouse with children in the West Bank, and the other unable to return from visits to the U.S. -- it is discouraging investors. It is driving out the very people the U.S. State Department, the World Bank and other international organizations encouraged to return. We are the ones building businesses, creating jobs and inspiring hope for a better future.

Using the pretext of security, Israeli policies of home demolitions, land confiscation, restrictions on movement and construction of the separation wall have choked the Palestinian economy. According to the U.N., more than 540 checkpoints and other structures impede movement throughout the West Bank, and crossings into Gaza are rarely open. Gaza represents 30% of the Palestinian economy. Yet we cannot ship goods from the West Bank to Gaza. And Gaza cannot import raw materials for processing, even though it possesses a talented labour force. Israel has also been refusing to turn over nearly \$55 million a month (now totalling roughly \$400 million) in Palestinian tax revenue. With the cutoff of international aid, this has led to a humanitarian catastrophe. Since March, Palestinian Authority employees -- about one-quarter of the labour force -- have not received their salaries.

Israel will not gain security by creating Mogadishu next to Silicon Valley. Only an open and thriving Palestinian economy can lay the foundation for a sustainable peace.

Our humanitarian crisis is not the result of a natural catastrophe. There was no tsunami, earthquake or drought. We helped to build nations. We have the natural resources and human capital to build a thriving, stable Palestinian economy as well. We do not need international handouts. We need the free movement of people and goods. We need unrestricted gateways between the occupied Palestinian territory and the rest of the world.

American policy makers have tremendous influence with Israel. They should use it to insist on freedom of movement of people and goods, and to maintain access for Palestinian Americans and Palestinians with other foreign passports to continue to play a role in economic development. A vibrant Palestinian economy serves the interests of all -- Palestinians, Israelis and Americans.

\*Zahi Khouri is Chairman and CEO of the National Beverage Company / Coca-Cola in Palestine. This article >[www.commongroundnews.org](http://www.commongroundnews.org).

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## FOR A CONFERENCE ON GAZA'S ECONOMIC RECONSTRUCTION

Ephraim Sneh\*

Source: *The Jerusalem Post* (<http://www.jpost.com>), October 3, 2006, Distributed by the Common Ground News Service (CGNews) with permission to republish.

As the cease-fire in Lebanon slowly takes hold we must return our attention to the site of another military confrontation -- the Gaza Strip. The low-grade but persistent fighting there is a symptom of the impasse in resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Tehran-sponsored terror cells continue to launch rockets into Israeli towns, and Palestinian civilians pay the price.

It seems to me that everybody, out of despair, is accepting the status quo in defeat. Missiles hitting Israeli towns such as Sderot and Ashkelon, as well as the killing of Gazans, barely make the back pages of the daily newspapers. It is impossible to uproot Islamic extremism via military means only. An end to the reign of terror in Gaza requires a comprehensive economic plan, backed by the international community, followed by an integrated Palestinian Authority security strategy, and, finally, the reinstatement of diplomatic talks. As long as 1.4 million people live in poverty and despair, the Gaza Strip remains a fertile ground for Islamic preachers and arch-terrorists to recruit suicide bombers. More and more jobless youth will join the terror organizations that supply assault rifles as a substitute for a stable and prosperous future and for hope.

The time is ripe to take action. The implementation of an economic plan which would lay the basis for socioeconomic development in Gaza could be pivotal in strengthening Palestinian society and resolving this bloody conflict. Terror -- and, consequently, Israeli security measures -- strangle the main arteries of Gaza's economy; the proposed plan must therefore include a security component to ensure the smooth movement of goods in and out of Gaza. Gaza's most vital economic arteries, the Erez and Karni crossings, have been popular targets for Palestinian terrorists who have tried to destroy the last places where thousands of Israelis and Palestinians worked in harmony, clearly disregarding their operations' calamitous effects on the Palestinian economy.

Thus the most urgent step in an economic recovery plan is the reopening of these crossings, under a joint Israeli-Palestinian security mechanism. Such a move would dramatically boost the reconstruction of Gaza's economy. Israel should reopen the Karni terminal for secure, increased, and permanent traffic, while a Palestinian security force loyal to P.A. President Mahmoud Abbas, namely his Presidential Guard, should protect its side. The same can be said for the Erez crossing, where the adjacent industrial zone is deserted and looted. Turkish and Palestinian entrepreneurs have expressed interest in rebuilding and administering this industrial zone.

The Palestinian Presidential Guard need to be deployed in the northern Gaza Strip, replacing Israeli military forces, who frequently enter the area to prevent terror groups from launching rockets into Israel. This deployment should be gradual and conditional on its success in restoring law and order to the area.

The international community should convene a conference on Gaza's economic reconstruction. Instead of Hamas government members, a Palestinian delegation could consist of representatives of economic and financial organizations reporting directly to President Abbas.

The Palestinian private sector, ready to participate in the reconstruction of Gaza, should also take part. This would be an appropriate venue to reiterate and discuss in detail the G-8 pledge to allocate \$3 billion for the economic development of the Palestinian territories. Naturally, the active participation of the U.S., E.U., Egypt, Jordan, Turkey, the Gulf States, and the World Bank would be indispensable.

One of the projects that could boost Gaza's economy is the construction of a natural gas pipeline from Gaza's offshore reserves to the power station at the northern part of the Strip. Furthermore, Egypt should formulate and present an effective operational plan to seal its border with the Gaza Strip to prevent smuggling of arms and ammunition into Gaza. Finally, these economic measures will serve as a staging ground for the apex and ultimate goal of the entire process: the resumption of Israeli-Palestinian permanent-status talks.

If the respective parties adopt all of these measures, Gaza's Palestinians could live more respectably, improve their standard of living and restore hope for themselves and their children. The Palestinian moderates would become stronger, politically and militarily. It is much harder for terrorist organizations to act when the population has something to lose if the fighting continues.

It is not only Israelis and Palestinians who have a vital interest in reconstructing Gaza; a Somalia-on-the-Mediterranean would hardly benefit the United States, Europe, or the Arab States. Now is the time to take action. Secretary Rice's visit to the region is an appropriate opportunity to pool our energies into initiating positive economic political action.

\*Ephraim Sneh is a member of the Labor Party and has served as the Minister of Health, Deputy Minister of Defence, and Minister of Transportation until October 2002, when he resigned from the government together with the other Labor ministers.

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## PLEDGE OF NONVIOLENCE

Olek Netzer

Olek Netzer offers the following pledge for people to take a s a move toward nonviolence:

1. I realize and accept the fact that my adversary is a worthy human being as myself, endowed with a soul (human potential of unlimited value), free will, conscience, and reason; is potentially capable of responding to moral and reasonable demands.
2. In setting on a nonviolent action, I agree not to harm my adversaries psychologically or physically. I consciously renounce vengeance or punishment of my opponents, seeking to win them over rather than "win." My goal is to make opponents change some of their specific behavior that is unjust\harmful, not to destroy them.
3. In a nonviolent action, I agree to avoid any aggression in confronting my adversaries physically or verbally. I agree to refrain from any form of aggressive, abusive or derisive language in my contact with the adversaries, but rather use language that will help them reform their unjust behavior by affirming their dignity, moral standing, commitment to justice, and humanity. To that end, I agree to refrain from judgmental language with regard to my adversaries, limiting my moral condemnation to their wrongdoing, never applying it to what they **are**.
4. I agree to regard my nonviolent campaign as a conscious, responsible and planned process. I agree not to undertake any action without the following conditions are met:
  - Having a fairly strong feeling the action will attain its objective (objectives must be formulated in such terms, that even if the opponent has not been made to accept any of our demands, the objective could be attained in terms of specific behavior of other people, supporters, media etc.);
  - Before applying Nonviolent Power: (1) Having clear knowledge of what exactly I want my opponent to do (to change); (2) communicating it clearly to the Adverse Party; (3) calling it to agree or, if not, negotiate with me (us) within a definite time

limit; (4) If rejected, repeat my call and inform the Adverse Party that I shall not yield but undertake Nonviolent Action against it to further pursue my goal.

- Defining operationally how shall I know whether I have achieved my practical goal
- Defining and knowing what are the safeguards against having my action become a demonstration of weakness.

Contact: olek.netzer@gmail.com

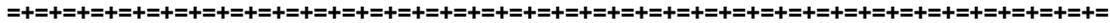


### WHAT WE READERS ARE ABOUT?

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

**Marilee Niehoff:** has published several book reviews in recent issues *Association for Humanistic Psychology (AHP) Perspectives*, including on Judeth Duerk, *Circle of Stones: Woman's Journey to Herself*, and Lewis Mehl-Madrona, *Coyote Wisdom, The Power of Story in Healing*. She continues to work for expanding individual consciousness, as a step toward Planetary consciousness, including in the practice of aquatic therapy.

**Steve Sachs:** I am most happy that the Democrats have taken the majority in both houses of Congress and can begin to exercise the missing and vitally needed oversight over the terribly corrupt and shockingly incompetent Bush administration. I now hope that the American people will put enough pressure on to get the congress to make some real, positive changes in policy, for the benefit of the country and the world. Internationally a great deal of inspired cooperative action is needed, especially with the fading away of bars to nuclear proliferation. There are already signs of an atomic arms race about to begin in East Asia and the Middle East, and if that occurs, the rest of the world could also rush to acquire nuclear weapons.



### ARTICLES

#### WHO IS AFRAID OF THE IRANIAN BOMB?

Uri Avnery, October 28, 2006, avnery@actcom.co.il

At The height of the epic Battle of Britain in 1940, when British airmen were killed at an appalling rate ("never was so much owed by so many to so few"), an official in charge of propaganda had a bright idea to raise morale. On the walls at the Royal Air Force bases a poster appeared with these words: "Who is afraid of the Ju-87?" (At the time, one of the most effective German planes.)

An anonymous pilot penciled in: "Sign here!" Within a few hours, all the pilots of the base had signed.

If today someone were to hang a poster with the slogan "Who is afraid of the Iranian nuclear bomb?" I believe that all the people in Israel, and many beyond, would sign.

It Seems that we Israelis are always in need of something to be afraid of. When we open our eyes in the morning, we must see the danger-of-the-day. Otherwise, what is there to get up for? Perhaps it's not the public that is to blame, but the politicians who use fear as a means of control.

Not so long ago, it was Hizbullah. Muslim fanatics, crazy Shiites, who want to annihilate Israel. A huge arsenal of rockets. God protect us!

In the meantime there was a war, the rockets were launched, the damage to life and property was comparatively slight (for those who were not hit, of course). The terrible danger of Hizbullah was pushed into a corner. True, Hizbullah remained where it has been, the rockets are being replenished and Nasrallah continues to infuriate, but all this has ceased to evoke any real interest. A used danger is not exciting anymore.

Now the army chiefs, bankrupted in Lebanon, are making a big effort to create a new fear: Hamas in the Gaza strip. Now, here we have an immediate and terrible danger. Tons and tons of "regular explosives" are coming in through the tunnels. Any moment now, Hamas will be equipped with modern anti-tank weapons, as well as anti-aircraft missiles. Hamas is building underground fortifications. Isn't that scary?

The military and political parrots in the media are fully mobilized. This entire media parrotry is repeating the bloodcurdling message morning, noon and night: Gaza is becoming a second South Lebanon! Something has to be done! We cannot wait! The army must go in, occupy the Strip, or at least parts of it!

Bur the public is not really buying it. It is hard to create fear when the enemy is not able to shoot back. Our aircraft and tanks and brave boys are killing there without hindrance. So what is there to fear?

But the Iranian story is something else altogether. There is indeed cause for fear. Here we have an enemy who declares that he is opposed to the very existence of our state, and who may soon be facing us with weapons of mass destruction.

The elected president of Iran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, is really enjoying letting loose provocative declarations. That's his private hobby, but also a successful domestic political ploy. He has said that the Holocaust did not happen at all, and if it happened, it was smaller than announced, and the whole thing has to be researched. He also prophesies the destruction of the "Zionist regime".

To tell the truth, he did not quite say that he intends to "wipe Israel from the map", as was reported. According to the most accurate translation that I have seen, what he actually said was "Israel will be wiped from the map of the future". But that is scary enough.

It is scary because in a few years, Iran may well have a nuclear bomb. It seems that this cannot be prevented. 25 years ago, Israel bombed an Iraqi nuclear reactor. Iran has learned the lesson and has distributed its nuclear facilities in many different places. Israel's capabilities are not sufficient for their destruction. The appointment of Avigdor Liberman, a proponent of Fascist ideas, as "Minister in Charge of the Strategic Threat", does not change anything in this respect.

If Israel, which is only the fourth or fifth military power on earth, cannot do it, what about the US, the No. 1 in almost everything? Well, they are not able to, either. Installations buried deep in the earth may not be destroyed, and the ensuing war cannot be won without putting forces on the ground. And after the fiascoes in Iraq and Afghanistan, there are not many sane American generals who long for that.

So it is quite possible that in a few years, the Iranian president will not only have boasts on his lips but also nuclear weapons in his hands. And if that isn't scary, I don't know what is scary.

If So, why am I not scared? I live in Israel, and I fully intend to continue living here. Israel is a small country, and a large part of its population lives in Greater Tel-Aviv. I live in the center of the city, in what the Americans would call Ground Zero.

If a small and primitive nuclear weapon of the Hiroshima type falls on the building where I live, a large part of the Israeli population will be annihilated. Two or three such bombs are enough to put an end to Israel (together with the neighboring Palestinian territories).

But I don't believe this will happen. In order to believe in such a possibility, one has to see the leaders of Iran as a bunch of lunatics. In spite of the efforts of Ahmadinejad to convince us that he is mad, I am not so sure.

I believe that the Iranian leadership, and especially the religious-political leadership, is composed of very sane people. Since assuming power, they have trodden with caution and competence. They have not started any war. On the contrary, they boast that in the last 2000 years Iran has not started any war at all. And in the Iranian establishment, the president is just a politician who is completely subservient to the Ayatullahs, who are in effective control. (Curiously enough, the same system prevails in our own fundamentalist parties, Agudat Israel and Shas.)

I do not ignore what Ahmadinejad has said. After Adolf Hitler and Mein Kampf, who would dare to ignore such statements of intent? But the Iranian president does not have the power of the German Fuehrer, the two countries are completely different, and so are the historical circumstances.

The annihilation of Tel-Aviv would inevitably bring about the annihilation of Tehran and the precious treasures of the ancient and glorious Persian culture. In chess terms, it would not be an exchange of queens, but an exchange of kings. It is much more reasonable to assume that between Iran and Israel a "balance of terror" will be established, like the one that prevented World War III between the US and the Soviet Union, and that is now preventing a renewal of the Indian-Pakistani war.

In spite of this, we should not wait inactively for the creation of a situation in which Israel, Iran and perhaps Arab states like Egypt and Saudi Arabia will possess nuclear bombs. The nuclear genie is out of the bottle, and is spreading throughout the world.

If there is no military option, what can be done? In order to forestall the danger, the main effort should be to make peace with the Palestinian people, and with the entire Arab world. People like Ehud Olmert may delude themselves that the Palestinian problem can be isolated from global and regional processes. But the problem is influenced by many factors, which are in constant flux.

The relative strength of the US, our only ally in the world (except for Fiji, Micronesia and the Marshall islands), is decreasing slowly but persistently. Iran is becoming a regional power. The nuclear aspects give the historic conflict a new dimension. As the Greek philosopher said: panta rhei, everything is flowing.

Generals can hallucinate about a huge victory over Hamas in Gaza, Olmert can ask himself Hamlet-like "to talk or not to talk" (with Mahmoud Abbas), but in the meantime things are happening that ought to accelerate the achievement of a historic reconciliation between the two peoples.

If the elected leadership of the Palestinian people signs an agreement with us announcing the end of the conflict, and if the entire Arab world makes peace with us along the lines of the "Saudi initiative", the rug will be pulled out from under the Ahmadinejads everywhere. If the Palestinians themselves accept the idea of the coexistence of Israel and Palestine, and if Egypt, Jordan and most of the Arab world endorse it, on behalf of whom will the Iranians liberate Palestine?

In the framework of the process of achieving Israeli-Palestinian peace, it will also be necessary to examine the idea of

creating a nuclear weapons-free region. Is effective mutual inspection possible? Can there be iron-clad guarantees? At the moment, that is difficult to assess. But it's worthwhile to find out.

Anyway, there is no reason for apocalyptic nightmares. Even a nuclear bomb in Tehran's hands is not the end of the world, and not even the end of Israel. A new situation will arise, and we must live with it.

The fathers of Zionism called on the Jews to take their fate into their own hands and return to the stage of history, and those who followed took upon themselves all the dangers involved. The world is a dangerous place, there is no existence without danger. I only hope that we shall have the good sense not to increase the dangers that are out there anyhow.

Like those brave British airmen, we have the right to be afraid. But we must face the new situation with a clear mind and sober resolution.

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### **CHARTING A PATH IN THE MIDEAST**

Samuel Lewis and Edward S. Walker\*

Source: *The Boston Globe* (<http://www.boston.com>), October 5, 2006. Distributed by the Common Ground News Service with permission to republish.

Based on a recent discussion convened by the Israel Policy Forum, which included former U.S. ambassadors to the Middle East, senior advisers to four U.S. presidents, former State Department officials, and academic researchers, there are five steps the United States should take that would have significant, positive impact in the region and on U.S. foreign policy.

Mediate a comprehensive Israeli-Palestinian cease-fire that would include the release of captured Israeli Corporal Gilad Shalit from Gaza and a cessation of all attacks on Israeli civilian and military targets. In return, and assuming that the Palestinians keep their side of the bargain, Israel would need to halt its incursions into Palestinian territory and its targeted killings.

Focus on what the Palestinian government does and not what it says. Restoring economic aid and engaging with the new government should depend on the absence of violence and terrorism, for instance, rather than the contents of the Hamas charter. The United States cannot abandon the three conditions set for restoring aid to the Palestinians: Hamas's renouncing terrorism, recognizing Israel and accepting previous agreements. However, these conditions should not prevent our testing whether a unity government could be effective in implementing a comprehensive cease-fire.

Work with the Saudi initiative. The United States should consult with the Saudis, Egyptians and other backers of this initiative so that it would be revised in ways that would meet U.S. objections. This initiative, as currently constituted, would almost certainly have to be vetoed by the United States if it were brought to the United Nations, which would constitute a setback for Washington.

Engage Syria. The United States should reengage with Syria and test the intentions of the Assad regime. Syria's president, Bashar al-Assad, seems almost desperate to get back in the diplomatic game. Even though it would be difficult to wean his regime away from its alliance with Hizbullah and Iran, conditions are ripe for making an effort. The transformation of Libyan behaviour should be the model for American dealings with Damascus.

Strengthen Lebanon's government. Hizbullah's rearmament could re-ignite the conflict with Israel and jeopardize U.N. Security Council Resolution 1701. Therefore, it is essential for the United States to engage Syria specifically on this issue, and also take steps to strengthen the central government in Lebanon, loosen restrictions and increase support for nongovernmental organizations, and assist the expanded UN peacekeeping force in the south.

Two specific ways to strengthen the Lebanese government vis-à-vis Hizbullah would be: an Israeli withdrawal from Shebaa Farms in favour of a temporary U.N. trust, if the Lebanese government were given direct credit for Israel's action, and an exchange of prisoners by Israel directly with the Lebanese government, with no appearance of a Hizbullah role.

Implementation of these five points would help America take the lead in ending the violence in the Middle East.

\*Samuel Lewis, senior policy adviser to the Israel Policy Forum and Chairman of the Middle East Advisory Board of Search for Common Ground, was the U.S. ambassador to Israel under Presidents Carter and Reagan and the director of policy planning at the State Department in the first Clinton administration. Edward S. Walker Jr. served as U.S. ambassador to Israel (1997-1999), the Arab Republic of Egypt (1994-1997), and the United Arab Emirates (1989-1992) and as assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern Affairs in the George W. Bush and Clinton administrations

**AVAVAVA**

### **THE GREEN LINE IS THE BORDER**

Ze'ev Sternhell\*

Source: *Haaretz* (<http://www.haaretz.com>) 15 December 15, 2006. Distributed by Common Ground News Service (<http://www.commongroundnews.org>) with permission to republish.

With one stroke of a pen, Education Minister Yuli Tamir managed to restore to the public agenda the basic question that should not have been marginalized in the first place on the validity, significance and legitimacy of the Green Line. The decision is an ideological one, as was the decision to erase the 1949 cease-fire line from textbooks.

It is hard to understand why the line's deletion was justified and its restoration deemed unacceptable by settlers and their supporters. It is true that there is no sanctity in the cease-fire line beyond the fact that turning it into an official border is the only possible basis for determining Israel's final territorial arrangements and for ending the war both with the Palestinians and with the Arab countries.

A country needs recognized and agreed-upon borders, and in their absence, it would be sentenced to generations of war. One of the sources of the disasters that befell Europe in the 20th century is the 100-year war for political and cultural reunification of Germany, which ended in the strongest country in the heart of the continent not having borders it considered final.

Most of the recognized borders in the Western world are political constructions, for the most part arbitrary, a result of wars and struggles that at some point had to be put to an end. This is true not only of the eastern and western borders of Poland and Germany, but also of the lines separating Italy from Switzerland, France from all its neighbours and Belgium from Holland. The same is true of the borders between the United States and Canada, and those between the U.S. and Mexico. In Western Europe the borders cut across populations with the same culture, ethnic identity and language. These are artificial borders whose existence is justified because they serve the common good. Even these territories once saw wars.

This is the point where the debate between the camps in Israel begins. It should immediately be said that the settlers are correct when they claim an absence of roots and a historical basis to the existence of the Green Line. But this is a double-edged sword: If Israel erases the 1949 line, the Arab world is not bound by it either. If the Israelis are permitted to overturn the results of the 1948 War of Independence, why should the Arabs and the rest of the world be obliged to recognize the facts established then? Is there an Israeli interest in destroying the legitimacy of the achievements from the time the Jewish national state was established?

Therefore, we now have to raise awareness and secure the status of the cease-fire line among young Israelis, victims of brainwashing by right-wing governments, so that there will not be any backtracking from the outcome of the War of Independence. In other words, Israelis will not try to move the border east, while the Palestinians will stop dreaming of returning to the territory to its west.

Peace is a package deal. Though the settlers' camp is justified in saying there is no essential difference between a settlement in Kfar Sava and a settlement in Ariel, it is seriously mistaken in the other aspect of the problem: The conquest of the country until 1949 was vital, and therefore justified, because it meant the realization of the Jews' right to independence and self-determination. On the other hand, the post-1967 conquests are not legitimate, as they do not serve any vital national purpose.

Historical rights in themselves do not justify incessant bloodshed. Moreover, the Palestinians also have historical and natural rights to freedom and independence. Trampling these rights will push Israel to the peripheries of the Western world and will endanger its genuine interests. Israel, more than many other countries, needs international support just as it needs air to breathe.

From its inception, the Jewish nationalist movement was guided by the feeling that the earth was burning beneath its feet. In order to save as many people as possible it was necessary to conquer the land. Building a national home and establishing independence served this basic goal, and until 1967 it was proved possible to achieve all the Zionist goals within borders that existed until then. There was no need to move eastward: The territories are a burden, a moral, political and financial millstone around the neck of Israeli society.

The disengagement from Gaza showed most Israelis shared this opinion. And in spite of the personal pain they felt over the expulsion of people from their homes, the majority understood that the occupation is unnecessary and unjust. Who knows this as well as the education minister? She is working within her province to implement principles and policies for which she was elected. If only the same could be said of the entire government.

\*Zeev Sternhell is the Léon Blum Professor of Political Science at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

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### **HAVE WE NOT LEARNED A THING?**

Amos Oz\*

Source: Ynetnews (<http://www.ynetnews.org>), 19 December 19, 2006. Distributed by the Common Ground News Service with permission to republish.

Syrian President Bashar Assad is repeatedly calling on Israel to engage in peace talks. In recent days he added that he has no preconditions for entering such talks - Assad is not even demanding the return of the Golan Heights as a precondition.

Prime Minister Ehud Olmert gave an extraordinary response to Assad's overture: Engaging in dialogue with Syria at this time would be "against the position of (U.S. President) George Bush, Israel's greatest friend," who is not interested in a peace agreement between Israel and Syria. Thus, Israel is rejecting Syria's outstretched hand.

There were times when Israel still behaved as if it were an independent state rather than an American protégé, and when direct negotiations without preconditions were at the heart of Israel's Mideast policies. David Ben Gurion, Moshe Sharef, Levi Eshkol, Yitzhak

Rabin and Menachem Begin all urged the Arab nations to sit with us at the negotiating table without any preconditions on either side. The various demands made by the two sides, as stated by Israel for years, could be clarified during the negotiation process itself. This is no longer the case.

In response to the Syrian proposal, it is now Israel that is stipulating a series of preconditions: Expel Hamas leadership from its territory; sever its ties with Hizbullah; disengage from Iran and cease military build up opposite the Golan Heights -- Israel is demanding all this prior to engaging in talks.

And if Syria does indeed fulfil these preconditions in full, Israel would have no reason to negotiate with Syria over the future of the Golan Heights. In fact, Syria's acceptance of all Israel's preconditions would make peace with Syria unnecessary.

In 1967, in wake of the Syrian attack, Israel captured the Golan Heights from Syrian hands. Since then, Syria has not ceased demanding that Israel return the Heights, while Israel has demanded peace, recognition and cessation of hostilities.

We've been there before.

Now Israel is setting a precondition that Syria give it all it has, even before convening at the negotiating table. This is a baseless demand. Even more groundless is Israel's reasoning for rejecting the Syrian overture, namely, we must not engage in talks with Syria lest we burden President Bush with his internal U.S. debate regarding Middle Eastern affairs.

Why is Israel interfering in internal issues between American hawks and doves? Why should Israel have to delay a supreme national interest -- peace with all its neighbours -- in favour of pleasantness or unpleasantness in its relations with a foreign government? Primarily, however, this is the first time an Israeli prime minister has admitted and has even boasted that the fate of an Israeli national priority lies in foreign hands.

On the eve of the Yom Kippur War former Egyptian President Anwar Sadat proposed a peace agreement with the Israeli government in exchange for the return of the Sinai. Golda Meir's destitute government ignored the proposal with similar arguments to those now being used by Olmert's cabinet to justify its refusal for engaging in talks with Syria.

A total of 2,700 Israeli soldiers were killed, and thousands were wounded in the Yom Kippur War, in wake of which Israel accepted the same proposal made by Sadat prior to the war: land for peace.

Have we really not learned anything?

\*Amos Oz is an Israeli writer, novelist, and journalist. He is also a professor of literature at Ben-Gurion University in Be'er Sheva  
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## TOWARD A COMPREHENSIVE SETTLEMENT OF THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT

Gareth Evans\*

Source: *Al-Hayat* (<http://www.daralhayat.com>), October 22, 2006. Distributed by the Common Ground News Service with permission to republish.

With the recent Lebanese—Israeli and Palestinian—Israeli crises, a new global Middle East peace initiative is urgently needed to generate a final and comprehensive settlement of the Arab—Israeli conflict. As we are all acutely aware, the Middle East has been immersed in its worst crisis in years, with serious concern about developments in Iraq and Iran but the Arab—Israeli conflict still at its heart. So long as that conflict continues, everyone will be losers except the extremists throughout the world who prosper on the rage it continues to provoke.

After the last few months' chaos in Lebanon, the Palestinian Territories and Israel, the urgent need for a comprehensive, just and sustainable peace could not be more obvious. But the spark has to be somehow lit, and a serious new Middle East peace process started. Unfortunately, there is a continuing absence of the necessary political will to achieve this.

But there is also today broad international understanding of what is needed to ultimately resolve the outstanding, and closely inter—related, Israeli—Palestinian, Israeli—Lebanese and Israeli—Syrian issues. The outlines should be based on U.N. Security Council resolutions 242 and 338, the Arab League Initiative of 2002, the Clinton Parameters and the Roadmap proposed in 2003 by the Quartet (the U.S., the EU, Russia and the U.N.). The goal must be security and full recognition of the state of Israel within internationally recognized borders, an end to the occupation for the Palestinian people in a viable independent, sovereign state, and the return of lost land to Syria.

The International Crisis Group believes that such a peace process is possible. It should start by the mobilization of an adequate political/diplomatic momentum in support for a comprehensive settlement, and a new peace process to achieve it. It can possibly involve an international conference to kick—start serious and detailed negotiations. The leadership role of the Quartet should be reinforced by greater participation from the Arab League and regional countries.

Nobody underestimates the intractability of the underlying issues or the intensity of feelings they provoke. But if the Arab—Israeli conflict, with all its terrible consequences, is ever to be resolved, there is a desperate need for fresh thinking and the injection of new political will replacing the present policy vacuum.

In the absence of a viable alternative provided to moderates in the region on both the Israeli and Arab sides, the political vacuum will keep on stemming the slide toward greater instability. With the prevailing moods in the region, and among the key international players, any move toward compromise will be extremely difficult. However, the extreme fragility of the situation, and the renewed willingness of leading Arab countries to find a new path to peace, offers a significant opportunity. New ideas can and should emerge and pushed forward towards a final comprehensive settlement of the Arab—Israeli conflict.

\*Gareth Evans is President and CEO of the International Crisis Group

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## **ABBAS AND THE ROCKETS**

Ray Hanania\*

Source: Ynetnews (<http://www.ynetnews.org>), 31 December 31, 2006. Distributed by the Common Ground News Service with permission to republish.

While I understand Palestinians who argue with me that the Israelis have killed more Palestinians than Palestinians have killed Israelis, I also feel it is more important that the Palestinians clean up their own house before pointing any fingers of accusation. What that means is that Palestinians have a moral responsibility to first acknowledge the injustices committed by their own before pointing to injustices committed by Israelis. Then and only then can the cry for justice resonate with a powerful moral depth. If Palestinians can stand up for the principle of justice and speak out against the killing of Israelis, then their cries for justice when Israelis kill Palestinians will carry the moral weight of righteousness.

But when Palestinians only complain that the Israelis have committed crimes, and close their eyes when Palestinians commit similar or worse crimes, it is hypocrisy and their cries for justice ring hollow. The failure of Palestinians to stand up and denounce injustice across the board is exactly why many in the Western world shrug their shoulders at the recent report by the Israeli civil rights organization B'Tselem that 660 Palestinians were killed, including 141 children, in 2006, three times more than the past year. In comparison during 2006, only 23 Israelis were killed, down from 50 the previous year. These are stunning statistics that address the true imbalance in power between Israel's excessive use of force in the Territories and the often more dramatic acts of violence by Palestinians.

Although Israelis also shrug off this tragic and lopsided toll, the fact remains, these numbers beg the question, "Who is more engaged in violence, Palestinians or Israelis?" But that question can never be answered because of the Palestinians' failure to address their own actions and misdeeds.

This week, as Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas was meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert to pursue peace and resumption of negotiations, Palestinian extremists in the Gaza Strip fired Qassam missiles into Israel to provoke conflict and block peace. This time, the Qassam rockets were fired by Islamic Jihad, a religious terrorist organization that seeks to destroy Israel, secular Muslim institutions and all Christians. Islamic Jihad shares the same corrupt vision of Hamas, which managed to slip into government control by exploiting the "societal disarray by suffering" of the Palestinian public.

### **Crack down on extremists**

It's the story of the Palestinian tragedy. The Palestinian leadership engages in peaceful negotiations to lift Palestinians out of their misery and suffering, only to be embarrassed and undermined by freelance terrorists, many allied with the so-called "Hamas Government".

If the Palestinian National Authority has any legal authority, and if it is in fact a "government", then its first responsibility should be to crack down on these extremists firing Qassam rockets into Israel. No one in Palestinian society has a right to engage in violence against Israel, except the government. That's not to say that Abbas should authorize a war against Israel. It is to say that there is a legal principle of authority here that must be enforced and respected. Those individuals firing Qassam rockets at Israel are criminals because they are violating Palestinian laws against violent behaviour. It is not resistance to fire Qassam rockets into Israel when at least one major force in the Palestinian government is engaging Israel in peaceful negotiations.

### **Qassams not justified**

Individuals have no legal right to engage in any form of violence when they have a government. The history of Hamas and other Palestinian extremists is clear. Whenever Israeli and Palestinian governments have taken steps towards a negotiated peace, Hamas and the extremists have used violence to derail the process.

The Qassam rocket is no different from the suicide bomber. Neither is justified. That means that Abbas is obligated to crack down on those extremists: to arrest them; to disarm them; to even jail and prosecute them, because while those terrorists hide behind the noble claim of "resistance", their real motivation is the intentional destruction of the peace process. If Palestinians want justice in the New Year, they must change. It may be unfair that they are being killed at a rate 11 times faster than Israelis, but life is unfair. Yet unfairness can be overcome.

## Stand up to renegades

Palestinians must fight for principle, not plight. Palestinians must change how they respond to the crisis around them. The majority of Palestinians are not engaged in the violence. The violence is orchestrated by small bands of extremists, mostly associated with Hamas and Islamic Jihad, but some are associated with the mainstream political groups.

Yet these extremists remain as renegades operating outside of Palestinian law. They should be arrested, jailed and prosecuted. Palestinians must stand up to these renegades who are destroying the hope for a Palestinian independence as surely as the illegal Israeli settlements of Ariel, Har Homa, Gilo and hundreds of others threaten the future state's sovereignty. And before Palestinians should demand the release of the thousands of political prisoners held in Israeli concentration jails, they should first demand the release of the Israeli soldier being held by Palestinian terrorists. That is the stand of the principled, moral and the just.

Some Israelis will debate the legality of these settlements, but it is a debate better saved for the future. Instead, Israelis should now be addressing the B'Tselem report in their own context, asking themselves if Israeli policy in the occupied territories has been as just.

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## FLOURISHING QIZ

Gamal Essam El-Din\*

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When the Israeli-Lebanese war flared up in July, many in Egypt pressed for severing economic relations with Israel and imposing "a popular boycott" of American products. Several MPs, mostly of leftist and Islamist backgrounds, described Israel and America as "enemies" that should not be rewarded for their war against Lebanon. Three months later, however, it is obvious that the calls for boycott went unheeded and, in fact, an uninterrupted trade boom between Egypt and the U.S. and Israel is evident in the recent nine months.

During a visit to the industrial 10th of Ramadan City on 5 October, U.S. Ambassador to Cairo Francis Ricciardone indicated that the U.S.- brokered Qualified Industrial Zones (QIZ) agreement between Egypt and Israel has dramatically boosted the volume of trade between Egypt and the U.S. The QIZ agreement was signed in December 2004 to enable Egyptian exports to enter the U.S. market tariff-free, as long as 11.7 per cent of the product's components -- material, dyes, packaging, etc. -- are made in Israel.

As a result of the QIZ agreement, over 500 textile companies have registered in 13 QIZs, according to Ricciardone. Out of these, 100 Egyptian textile companies have already begun exporting goods to the U.S. This caused Egypt's textile exports to the U.S. to rise by more than 30 per cent, from \$192 million to \$252 million during the first four months of 2006.

The U.S.-Egypt trade boom took place against a political background that was distorted by hostilities between Israel and Lebanon last July. "There is no question that the bad political atmosphere in the Middle East is by no means helpful in creating a better environment for business and trade," said Chairman of Parliament's Economic Affairs Committee Mustafa El-Said. Nonetheless, El-Said continued, the fact that Egypt enjoys a good degree of stability helps business flourish with the U.S., and even with Israel. "The existing generation of Egyptian businessmen and politicians in the [ruling] National Democratic Party [NDP] no longer accept that business be governed by politics, even if it involves a war between an Arab country and Israel," he opined.

The committee chairman explained that the ideology of these businessmen and young politicians -- led by the president's son Gamal Mubarak, is that Egypt's economic and business interests should be paramount, even above all Arab considerations. "They say that while Egypt was at war with Israel, none of the Arab countries -- especially the oil-rich Gulf ones -- hesitated in doing business with any other country," noted El-Said. "This rule, they say, should apply now; and no Arab country should blame Egypt for doing business with Israel."

Statistics show that there is an unofficial trade worth \$400 million a year between Israel and Arab Gulf countries, which is about two and a half times the volume between Israel and its official Arab peace partners -- Egypt and Jordan -- in 2004.

Contrary to earlier expectations, Israel's onslaught on Lebanon did nothing to stem the current high flow of trade between Egypt and Israel. Although the ministers of tourism, agriculture and oil said at that time that they would freeze relations with Israel, this did not happen. Previous crises in the region did not prevent the two countries concluding hefty deals on natural gas and agricultural products.

Last May, Israel's Export Institute said Israel's exports to Egypt rose sharply in March, as compared to the same month in 2005. Exports jumped by 123.5 per cent to a total of \$11.4 million. Israeli figures even show that Egypt's trade with Israel is expected to rise by 130 per cent by the end of 2006 -- largely thanks to the current boom in QIZ deals.

Even more significantly for long-term growth, the textile sector is witnessing fast-increasing foreign investment as a direct result of the QIZ agreement. At the end of his 10th of Ramadan City visit, Ricciardone revealed that he would be leaving for the U.S. to participate in a conference which will include more than 200 American companies. He will address participants at next week's conference in Washington,

New York, Los Angeles and Chicago about the unique investment opportunities in Egypt. In his address, Ricciardone promised to highlight the lucrative benefits of joining the QIZ agreement and investing in Egypt.

U.S. statistics show that at the end of 2005, the U.S. was again the top investor in Egypt. U.S. investments of \$2 billion accounted for more than half of the \$3.8 billion total foreign investment in Egypt in fiscal year 2004/2005.

According to Ministry of Trade and Industry statistics, the volume of trade between Egypt and the U.S. has jumped to more than \$5 billion -- with a \$1 billion increase in one year. More significantly, statistics show that for the first time in history, the balance of trade between Egypt and the U.S. has registered a surplus of \$395 million in favour of Egypt over the last nine months.

U.S. Department of Commerce statistics also confirm the QIZ-driven growth in trade between Egypt and the U.S. They indicate that the 2004 QIZ agreement made Egypt's exports to the U.S. climb by 57.2 per cent in one year, from \$1.32 billion in 2004 to \$2.09 billion in 2005. Out of this dramatic increase, 18 per cent is attributable to the QIZ agreement. The same statistics, however, show that the U.S.'s exports to Egypt also increased but by a mere 2.1 per cent, from \$3.10 billion in 2004 to \$3.16 billion in 2005. At the same time, the U.S.'s surplus in trade with Egypt dropped by 32.2 per cent.

The QIZ has proven to be so popular that Egyptian businessmen and workers have successfully managed to expand the QIZ tariff-free zones to the whole of Greater Cairo, the Suez Canal cities of Ismailia and Suez, and four Nile Delta provinces. Ricciardone vowed that these zones would eventually include North Sinai.

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>[www.commongroundnews.org](http://www.commongroundnews.org).



## LUNCH IN DAMASCUS

Uri Avnery, October 7, 2006

Once, while traveling in a taxi, I had an argument with the driver - a profession associated in Israel with extreme right-wing views. I tried in vain to convince him of the desirability of peace with the Arabs. In our country, which has never seen a single day of peace in the last hundred years, peace can seem like something out of science fiction.

Suddenly I had an inspiration. "When we have peace," I said, "You can take your taxi in the morning and go to Damascus, have lunch there with real authentic Hummus and come back home in the evening." He jumped at the idea. "Wow," he exclaimed, "If that happens, I shall take you with me for nothing!" "And I shall treat you to lunch," I responded. He continued to dream. "If I could go to Damascus in my car, I could drive on from there all the way to Paris!"

Bashar al-Assad has done it again. He has succeeded in confusing the Israeli government. As long as he voices the ritual threat to liberate the Golan Heights by force, it does not upset anybody. After all, that only confirms what many want to hear: that there is no way to have peace with Syria, that sooner or later we shall have a war with them.

Why is that good? Simple: peace with Syria would mean giving back the Golan Heights (Syrian territory by any definition). No peace, no need to give them back.

But when Bashar starts to talk peace, we are in trouble. That is a sinister plot. It may, God forbid, create a situation that would compel us to return the territory.

Therefore, we should not even speak about it. The news must be buried in some remote corner of the papers and at the end of the news on TV, as just "another speech of Assad". The government rejects them "on the threshold", adding that it cannot even be discussed until...

Until what? Until he stops supporting Hizbullah. Until Syria expels the representatives of Hamas and the other Palestinian organizations. Until regime change takes place in Syria. Until a Western-style democracy is installed there. In short, until he registers as a member of the Zionist organization.

The relations between Israel and Syria have a documented history of at least 2859 years. In the year 853 B.C. Israel is mentioned - for the first time, it seems - in an authentic document outside the Bible. Twelve monarchs of the region, led by the kings of Damascus and Israel, united against the growing threat of Assyria. The decisive battle took place at Karkar (in the north of today's Syria). According to an Assyrian document, 20 thousand soldiers and 1200 chariots of Damascus fought side by side with 10 thousand soldiers and 2000 chariots of Ahab, king of Israel. It is not quite clear which side won.

But that was a temporary alliance. For most of the time, Israel and Aram-Damascus fought against each other for regional supremacy. Ahab died a hero's death in one of these wars against Aram, just two years after the battle against the Assyrians.

In modern times, the Syrians (although then still under French colonial rule) strenuously opposed the Zionist enterprise right from the beginning. But they also opposed the Palestinian national movement. That is grounded in history: in the Arabic language, the name al-Sham ("the North"), as Syria is called, includes the entire territory between Egypt and Turkey. Therefore, in Arab consciousness, not only Lebanon, but Jordan, Palestine and Israel as well are really part of Syria.

When Yasser Arafat created the independent Palestinian national movement at the end of the 1950s, the Syrians demanded to be acknowledged as the protectors of the Palestinian people. When he refused, the Syrians threw the entire Palestinian leadership into prison. (Only the wife of Abu Jihad, Intissar al-Wazir, remained at liberty and took over the command of the Fatah fighters - thus becoming the first woman in modern times to command an Arab fighting force.)

Naturally, all the enemies of Arafat found refuge in Damascus, and that is the original reason for the presence of some leaders of Hamas and other organizations there. They were more of a threat to the PLO than to Israel. In the 1948 war, the Syrian army was the only Arab army that was not defeated. They continued to occupy some Israeli territory. Along this border, many incidents took place (mostly initiated by an officer by the name of Ariel Sharon). In the end, the Israeli army occupied the Golan Heights in the Six-day war, for the outbreak of which Syria bears some responsibility.

Since then, all the relations between Israel and Syria have been centered on this occupied territory. Its return is a paramount Syrian aim. Israel has applied Israeli law there (which, contrary to the accepted view, means less than annexation). Hafez al-Assad reconquered it in the 1973 war, but in the end was pushed back to the approaches of Damascus. Since then, the Syrians have been trying to harass Israel mostly by means of Hizbullah.

Once upon a time, the idea of an "Eastern Front" - a coordinated attack by Jordan, Syria and Iraq - used to cause nightmares in Israel. The prophecy of Jeremiah (1, 14), "Out of the north an evil shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land", echoed through the war-rooms of the army High Command. Since then we have made peace with Jordan, Iraq has been blown to smithereens by the Americans, with the enthusiastic support of Israel and its American lobby. But the Syrians are still considered a menace, because they are allied with Iran and connected with Hizbullah.

Is it worthwhile for us to live in this situation in order to keep the Golan Heights? Common sense says no. If we reach a peace agreement with Syria, it will automatically entail an agreement with Hizbullah, too. Without Syrian consent, Hizbullah cannot keep an efficient military force, since practically all Hizbullah's arms have to come from Syria or pass through Syria. Without Syrian support, Hizbullah will become a purely Lebanese party and cease to constitute a threat to us.

Moreover, Syria is a thoroughly secular country. When the Muslim Brotherhood rebelled against Assad Sr, he drowned them in blood. Also, the great majority of Syrians are Sunni. When Syria makes peace with Israel, it will have no reason to remain allied with the fanatical Shiite Iran.

So why don't we make peace with Syria? At this time, there are two reasons: the one domestic, the other foreign. The domestic reason is the existence of 20 thousand settlers on the Golan Heights, who are far more popular than the West Bank settlers. They are not religious fanatics, and their settlements were set up under the auspices of the Labor Party. All Israeli governments have been afraid to touch them.

That is the real reason for the failure of all the attempts to negotiate with Syria. Yitzhak Rabin thought about it and drew back. He argued that we should first of all concentrate on settling the Palestinian issue. Ehud Barak almost came to an agreement with Syria, but escaped at the last moment. The only question that remained open was almost ludicrous: should the Syrians reach the shoreline of the Sea of Tiberias (the situation prevailing before the Six-day war) or stay at a distance of a few dozen meters (according to the border fixed between the British, then ruling Palestine, and the French, then ruling Syria). In popular parlance: will Assad dangle his long feet in the water of the lake? For Assad Sr. that was a question of honor.

Is it worthwhile to risk for this the lives of thousands of Israelis and Syrians, who may die in another war? Until Israel has a government ready to answer this question and to confront the settlers, there will be no agreement with Syria.

The second reason for rejecting peace with Syria is connected with the United States. Syria belongs to George Bush's "axis of evil". The American president doesn't give a damn for the long-range interests of Israel, what is important to him is to achieve some sort of victory in the Middle East. The destruction of the Syrian regime ("a victory for democracy") will compensate him for the Iraq fiasco.

No Israeli government - and certainly not that of Olmert - would dare to disobey the American president. Therefore, it is self-evident that all peace feelers from Assad will be rejected "on the threshold". Tsipi Livni, who last week opened a new front against Olmert and presented herself almost as a peace-lover, opposes the start of negotiations with Syria as well.

This Affair throws some light on the complex relations between Israel and the United States: who is wagging who - does the dog wag its tail or the tail its dog?

Olmert says that we must ignore Assad's peace offers, because we must not help him to escape Bush's wrath. Let's dwell on this utterance for a moment.

An Israeli patriot would, of course, have said exactly the opposite: If Assad is ready to make peace with us - even if only because he is afraid of the Americans - we should jump at this opportunity and exploit this situation to achieve at long last peace on our northern front.

Last week Olmert made a remarkable declaration: "As long as I am Prime Minister, we shall not give up the Golan for all eternity!" What does that mean? Either Olmert believes that his term of office coincides with God's term of office, and he will rule in

eternity - or in Olmert's world, eternity extends to four years, at most.

Anyhow, until then, my taxi-driver and I shall have to wait for our lunch in Damascus.

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## HONORING THE SIX MILLION

MJ Rosenberg\*

Source: *Israel Policy Forum* (<http://www.ipforum.org>), September 29, 2006,. Distributed by the Common Ground News Service with permission to republish.

I would not have expected that I could still be utterly shaken by a book about the Holocaust. I have been to the museums, read the books, seen the films, visited the camps, and listened to lectures and first-person testimonies. But a new book called "The Lost: A Search for Six of the Six Million" by a 45-year-old American, Daniel Mendelsohn, managed to take all I thought I knew about the Holocaust and render it obsolete. I don't mean obsolete in the sense of "wrong" but rather "old". Mendelsohn took what I thought I knew and made it outdated. This book, for better or worse, makes the Holocaust new again.

This is not something everyone will welcome. It is safer to let one's images and thoughts of the Holocaust remain stale. That way they are safe and no longer so disturbing. Learning about it as if you have never heard about it before, is not pleasant, although for many, including myself, it is necessary.

The book itself is reminiscent of the two Holocaust books I most often recommend: "The Last of the Just" by Andre Schwarz-Bart and "The Diary of Anne Frank." Like those volumes, this one evokes the meaning of the loss of 6,000,000 by describing what happened to just a few. The few here, just six, are Mendelsohn's relatives: his uncle, Sam Jager, 48, and aunt, Ester Jager, and their four daughters, ranging in age from 13 to 23.

These are ordinary people, neither wealthy nor prominent. The only thing that distinguishes them from any other half-dozen Holocaust victims is that their American cousin, born more than two decades after their murder, has the will and the ability to find out what happened to them -- not to mention the talent to tell the story.

It would seem to have been an impossible task to discover, 60 years later, what happened to six random people. To find out, Mendelsohn and one or more of his siblings travelled to Poland, Ukraine, Australia, and Israel trying to find people who knew them and what happened to them.

Remarkably, he succeeded. This book is the product of that success and it is a masterpiece, the best work about the Holocaust that I have experienced. Daniel Mendelsohn is an astonishing writer -- sometimes his prose forced me to simply close the book, unable to read another word, until I collected my thoughts and myself. He actually manages to bring these people back. And, because this is non-fiction, just when you get to know them and care about them, they have to be murdered.

I should say that I read the book in a particular context. My wife, Mindy, was born in a Displaced Persons camp in Germany to Polish Jews who survived the Holocaust, and she and I are the parents of two children who are first-generation Americans: i.e., just one generation away from the events described in the book.

Also, because of the nature of my work -- advocating for Arab-Israeli peace -- I could not help but read this book in that context as well. I have always been involved in the struggle to secure Israel. I grew up believing, as I still do, that the State of Israel is essential not because Jews have a Biblical claim to Palestine but because, in the wake of the Holocaust, it is plain that Jews need one place on earth where they control their own destiny.

Some people visit the holy sites of Jerusalem and wish that the Jews who died in the Shoah knew that these sites are now in Jewish hands. But the survivors I knew believed that infinitely more significant to the Jews of Europe would be the knowledge that the Israel Defense Forces exist and that they provide an umbrella of protection to all Jews, everywhere. (I know that last sentence is controversial but I am a Zionist and believe that that Israel's existence provides security even to Jews like myself who choose not to live there and who consider the United States to be our home and country).

Reading this book, I kept imagining how different the story might have ended if the six members of Mendelsohn's family had a Jewish state to flee to in 1939. It would not have had to be a large Jewish state. It might have been based on one of the British proposals of the 1920s and 1930s for a strip of land essentially running from Tel Aviv to Haifa. It would only need to be large enough to accommodate the fleeing Jews of Europe and to control its own borders so the refugees would be allowed to enter. The Zionists, in fact, did accept plans for a state of that size, but the Arabs did not, and eventually the British backed away from the offer. There was to be no refuge.

The world in 2006 is very different from it was in 1942 but, just as in 1942, Jews need a state. Miraculously, they have one. But it is a state whose security, and very existence, is threatened by the continuation of the Arab-Israeli war and, in particular, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In fact, just yesterday I spoke to a Middle East analyst of some renown who said that he fears that Israel could be "overrun" within the next few years ("the Israelis could lose their state") unless a peace agreement is reached.

Fortunately, the terms of the conflict have changed. Today the Palestinians and the Arab world in general have largely come around to acceptance of Israel's right to security within the pre-'67 borders. The differences dividing the two sides are not about pre-'67 Israel, but about the territories and East Jerusalem.

That is very significant. Before 1967, Israel had no extra territory it could trade for peace. But it does now and has for 40 years. But, sad to say, Israel has not seized the opportunities that have arisen since 1967. How many times has the media reported, as it did yesterday, that "Olmert Says He Will Meet Abbas Soon?" How many times have Palestinians come up with some tentative formula for peace, one still in the process of being sold to the more radical factions, when Israeli officials pre-empt the process by saying they won't accept the formula anyway? How many times has there been a long period without terror that Israel has refused to acknowledge only to have it end when some act of violence by Israel or the Palestinians explodes the ceasefire and sends everything back to square one?

I understand that I am only talking about Israel's failures here, not the Palestinians'. But I just read a book about the Holocaust, not about the Palestinian tragedy. Nor am I a Palestinian. As a Jew, the central lesson I learned about the Holocaust is that Israel is simply too significant for its survival to be trifled with. If there is an opportunity to talk, then talk. And, for us in America, if our government tries to get Israelis and Arabs back to the negotiating table, then our mission must be to support it, not to demand that Congress prevent the White House from acting. We all need to understand -- especially with the looming Iranian threat -- that to be pro-Israel means being pro-negotiations and pro-peace.

Read this book. And note the last letter from Mendelsohn's uncle, Sam Jager, to the relatives in America. Sam Jager had no place to go, no one to turn to. But he had a plan: "For my part," he wrote, "I am going to post a letter to Washington, written in English to President Roosevelt and will write that my entire family are in America and that my parents are even buried there. Perhaps that will work. I really want to get away from this Gehennem (hell) with my dear wife and darling four children." That's it. In the end all he could hope for was that FDR would read his letter and decide to personally intervene.

Today, there is Israel. With all its problems, all its defects, we are blessed to be living in the era of Israel reborn. But if we want it to be there for our kids and grandkids, we need to do some serious re-thinking. There is absolutely nothing pro-Israel about supporting a status quo that is deteriorating every day. Forget the sound-bites, the slogans, and the simplistic sabre-rattling from people who should know better. Israel is seriously endangered by the continuation of this conflict. As we liked to say in the 60's, if you are not part of the solution, you are part of the problem. It's that simple.

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## **NEGLECT PALESTINE, BE IRRESPONSIBLE**

Hussein Ibish\*

Source: *The Daily Star* (<http://www.dailystar.com.lb>), September 22, 2006. Distributed by the Common Ground News Service with permission for republication.

The one obvious lesson to be drawn from this summer's conflict between Israel and Hizbullah is that an agreement between Israel and the Palestinians is indispensable for the two principals, the region and the world. The problem is, a great many people haven't learned a thing.

The Israeli establishment has apparently failed to notice the total bankruptcy of a strategy based on force and unilateralism, and is busy debating technical issues. A consensus now rejects "over-reliance" on air power in the vain hope that better intelligence and more commando forces will produce a better outcome "next time."

Some Israelis and their American supporters are even trying to spin the Lebanon fiasco into some sort of "success", so unwilling are they to acknowledge the political limitations of the science of killing.

Meanwhile, far too many Arabs have been seduced by the illusion of a "divine victory" that may have enhanced Hizbullah's image as a vanguard in the struggle with Israel, but which left much of Lebanon and its economy in ruins. Once again one hears the old siren song that if the Arabs were only united enough, steadfast enough, or religiously fanatical enough, they would defeat Israel on the battlefield.

The truth, of course, is that neither Israel nor the Arabs can improve their position by blowing each other up.

Can any Palestinian or Israeli -- other than self-serving demagogues -- seriously claim to have gained anything from the incessant violence that has wracked the Occupied Territories and, from time to time, Israel since September 2000?

Which Palestinian honestly believes that Israel can be driven out of the West Bank and East Jerusalem by guerrilla warfare or suicide bombings? Is there a single Israeli still clinging to the delusion that disproportionate force, the unilateral drawing of borders and concrete walls, especially after Hizbullah's rocket attacks, constitute a security strategy?

The second intifada was a disaster for Palestinian diplomacy because of some of the indefensible tactics that came to define it. Israel's already very poor international reputation suffered badly as well, and took an even more severe blow following its bombardment of

Lebanese civilians and infrastructure last July and August. For much of the rest of the world, Israel has become synonymous with racism and brutality, and Palestinians synonymous with terrorism.

Another clear lesson of this summer's bloodletting is that the region, Lebanon above all, will continue to be destabilized as long as there is an ongoing struggle between Israel and the Palestinians.

It is simply extraordinary that some Lebanese commentators would suggest that the best course of action for the international community would be to allow the Israelis and Palestinians to continue to battle it out until exhaustion might bring them closer to an agreement -- apparently without recognizing that this sentences Lebanon to the certainty of continued chaos and probable periodic calamity.

It is obvious that Israelis and Palestinians, as well as their neighbours, all urgently require a negotiated agreement to end the conflict. Solid majorities of both peoples consistently say this is what they want.

The outlines of such an agreement are well-known: mutual recognition of Israel and a Palestinian state in the Occupied Territories with some agreed land-exchanges; both parties' enjoying sovereignty -- separate or joint -- over Jerusalem; and a compensation package and the return of some refugees, within a framework that does not undermine the concept of two ethno-national states living alongside each other.

Some suggest that, given the numerous failed efforts in the past to craft such an agreement, and the intransigence of both Israel's Kadima-led government and the Hamas-led Palestinian government, there is no point in the rest of the world's wasting any further effort on the quest for a diplomatic resolution. And, indeed, the international community, led by the United States, has expended very little real energy on this issue over the past five years.

However, the conflict cannot be left unresolved without dire consequences for the entire world, because of its political and emotional significance for hundreds of millions of people. As Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf put it, "The tragedy of Palestine is an open wound of the psyche of every Muslim."

The question of Palestine has been infused with a reservoir of political energy that will not dissipate because the issue is being ignored by the international community. That energy is being increasingly harnessed by a variety of radical groups reaping huge political benefits, while casting moderates committed to peace as weaklings or even quislings.

Resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not a panacea for all ills in the Middle East. Dysfunctional political systems will not be suddenly transformed. Neither the war in Iraq nor the menace of Al-Qaeda will vanish overnight.

But ending the conflict would make those problems, and many more, including the increasing alienation between Arab and Western societies, much more manageable. Nothing else could have a comparable healing effect.

It is no longer enough to say that the parties are not ready for an agreement. Given the asymmetries of power, it's not surprising that, left to their own devices, Israelis and Palestinians cannot untie the bloody knot binding them together.

The Arabs, the Europeans, and above all the Americans, should stop enabling this recalcitrance and must induce the parties to come to terms. Political forces in the West and the Middle East that prefer to see the conflict continue instead of making difficult compromises must give way to bolder leadership.

A tall order, perhaps, but that's what it was always going to take to end the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. And as the recent Lebanon war demonstrated, the stakes have never been higher for everyone.

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## **AN OPPORTUNITY FOR PEACE**

Miguel Angel Moratinos Cuyaubé\*

Source: *Al-Hayat* (<http://english.daralhayat.com>), September 27, 2006. Distributed by the Common Ground News Service (CGNews: <http://www.commongroundnews.org>) with permission to republish.

A few days before the fifteenth anniversary of the Madrid Conference, it should be clear by now that we are carrying forward a problem from the last century into the new millennium. It must not be allowed to drag on any longer. The latest violent clashes between Israel and Lebanon have not resolved any of the pending issues between them. Once again, the resort to violent conflict in order to reach a global or partial solution to the Middle East conflict has proven useless. Far from contributing to any solution, the fifty-year-long outbreaks of war in the region have only served to spread suffering and to exacerbate the political, economic and social divisions among the people in the region.

The recent crisis has once again shown that policies stemming from a unilateral definition of the future status quo of the region are simply not feasible. On the other hand, peace agreements with Egypt and Jordan have allowed Israel to feel safe with those neighbors and are clearly more useful to consolidate Israel's relations with its neighbors. However, this argument works both ways: Denying Israel its right



Ann Jordan. *Hidden Voices; working creatively with conflict, A Collection of Personal Stories* is \$15.95 from: [www.Virtualbookworm.com](http://www.Virtualbookworm.com).

Recent publications from Conciliation Resources (CR) include, *Dilemmas of third party involvement in peace processes: reflections for policy and practice from Colombia and the Philippines*, describing third parties' different characteristics, as well as offering insights into the dilemmas they face in the course of their involvement in peace processes and how these can be addressed in practice; *Accord 17, The limits of leadership: elites and societies in the Nagorny Karabakh peace process*, now available in Armenian and Azeri; *Accord 18: Peace by piece: addressing Sudan's conflicts*, providing a balanced account of the peacemaking efforts to resolve violent conflict in Sudan (in English and Arabic); *South Caucasus radio diaries book and CD in Russian*, a collection of stories recorded by ordinary people talking about life after war; and CR's leaflet, *Supporting people building peace*. All are available, including some items on the web, from CR at: <http://www.c-r.org>. If you would like to sign up for regular CR e-bulletins, register at: <http://www.c-r.org/about/sign-up.php>.

The *7th edition of the Global Directory of Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution Programs*, a joint project of the Peace and Justice Studies Association (PJSA) and the International Peace Research Association Foundation (IPRAF), is available by going online to: <http://www.peacejusticestudies.org/globaldirectory/purchase.php>.

Publications of the International Peace Bureau (IPB) include: *Warfare for Welfare? Disarmament for Development in the 21st Century* (100 pp. for : £5 per single copy plus £1 postage); and Caroline Guinand, *From War to Peace*, on lessons learned from achievements and failures in peace agreements over the past decade: a strategy for peace process optimization (176 pp. for \$20) from to Bruce Kent at: Movement for Abolition of War, 11 Venetia Rd, London N4 1EJ, UK, or IPB: [www.ipb.org](http://www.ipb.org).

Joan Chittister, OSB, Neil Douglas-Klotz, Rabbi Arthur Waskow, *The Tent of Abraham: Stories of Hope and Peace for Jews, Christians, and Muslims* is 218 pp. for \$24.95 cloth, is published by Beacon Press

Chiapas Media Project currently has the following films available for screenings and purchase, at: [www.chiapasmediaproject.org](http://www.chiapasmediaproject.org): *The Land Belongs to Those who Work it* (Tzeltal and Spanish with English Subtitles, 15 minutes, 2005), discussing the situation in the town of Bolon Aja'aw, located in the north of the state near the famous Agua Azul river system, where the federal government sold the land in Bolon aja'aw to a private company to create an eco-tourism center without the permission of the community members. The video documents a meeting between Zapatista authorities and Mexican Government functionaries, and offers a critical look at the practical implications of so-called eco-tourism; *We are Equal: Zapatista Women Speak* (Spanish and Tzeltal with English subtitles, 18 minutes, 2004), in which Zapatista women speak about what their lives were like before the uprising in 1994 and how their lives have changed since.; *Eyes on Whats Inside: The Militarization of Guerrero* (Tlapaneco and Spanish with English subtitles, 2004).

The Berkeley Electronic Press publishes the *Muslim World Journal of Human Rights (MWJHR)* at: <http://www.bepress.com/mwjhr>.

*In Factis Pax (In Knowledge there is Peace): A Journal of Peace Education and Social Justice* is published semi-annually by graduate students in the Judith Herb College of Education at the University of Toledo, in association with the Center for Non-violence and Democratic Education. For information go to: <http://www.infactispax.org/> of contact Dale T. Snauwaert, Chair, Department of Foundations of Education, Director, Center for Nonviolence and Democratic Education, Judith Herb College of Education, The University of Toledo, Mail Stop #923, Toledo, OH 43606-3390 (419)530-2478. 419.530.8447 Fax

#### USEFULL WEB SITES

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

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

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

**Europa World Plus**: Europa World/Regional Surveys of the World On Line is at: [www.europaworld.com](http://www.europaworld.com).

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

**Association for Conflict Resolution (ACR)**: [www.acr.net](http://www.acr.net).

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

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

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

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

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

