

"Exposing
the true costs
of war"

The War Crimes Times

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In this issue

Challenging the Pulpits and the Pundits

War is good – and necessary, just, moral, legal, honorable, holy, productive, and natural. This message is preached from pulpits and promulgated by pundits: pray for the troops (but not the innocent victims of war and certainly not the "enemy"); support the troops (but do not question the arguments that support the American institution of perpetual war). In these pages, we present some clear and critical thinkers who challenge the myths and the misconceptions propagated by the institutions of the Church and the media:

Alan Storey, conscientious objector and ordained minister, issues a bold – and quite unsettling for some – challenge (p.5) to clergy and congregants, reminding them what religious fundamentals really are supposed to be.

Robert Higgs (p.1) takes on the spurious arguments offered by the military-industrial-congressional complex and their media lackeys to justify war. And **Marti Hiken** (p.2) comments on another hallowed institution: "blind, unwarranted patriotism."



With war thus discredited, **John Dear** (p.1) writes of young Afghan peacemakers who espouse nonviolence and seek friends around the world; the **Blue Scarf Movement** (p.20) offers a highly visual symbol of global solidarity; and **Carlos Steward** and **Hamid Dabashi** (p.10) promote a better understanding of Iranian culture.

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"War Is Horrible, but ..."

by Robert Higgs

Those who are quick to support unnecessary wars typically pay lip service to war's horrors, but then support fighting anyway. Their excuses often follow predictable patterns based on historical errors, ill-founded speculations, and appeals to patriotic emotion and knee-jerk loyalty, rather than on fact-based argumentation.

Anyone who has done even a little reading about the theory and practice of war – whether in political theory, international relations, theology, history, or common journalistic commentary – has encountered a sentence of the form "War is horrible, but ...". In this construction, the phrase that follows the conjunction explains why a certain war was (or now is or someday will be) an action that ought to have been (or still ought to be) undertaken, notwithstanding its admitted horrors. The frequent, virtually formulaic use of this expression attests that nobody cares to argue, say, that war is a beautiful, humane, uplifting, or altogether splendid course of action and therefore the more often people fight, the better.

Some time ago – in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, for example – one might have encountered a
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Peace is Possible

2 Million Friends for Afghanistan

by John Dear

In October, the U.S. war against the people of Afghanistan entered its twelfth year. It's the longest war in our history, but you'd hardly know we've been at war, or that we continue to kill Afghan civilians. But on top of this, few Americans realize that Afghanistan has suffered almost continuous warfare for the past four decades. Some two million Afghans have died over the last forty years!

It's hard to imagine what the people of Afghanistan feel about this, because we are not permitted to hear their voices. We know so little about the Afghan people.

But a remarkable group of young people in Kabul who espouse nonviolence and call themselves the Afghan Peace Volunteers have decided to tell us what they think, how they feel, and what they want us to do. Recently they called upon the whole world to join their campaign for the end to the war on Afghanistan by signing their appeal, "Two Million Friends for Afghanistan."

Instead of anger or revenge for the ongoing killings, these young Afghan peacemakers want two million people around the world to sign their petition to the United Nations calling for a ceasefire and an end to the U.S./NATO war on Afghanistan, and to pledge their friendship to the people of Afghanistan. I urge you to visit their website, www.2millionfriends.org, to sign on and join this historic campaign for peace.

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Poster art and printing by Jeremy Taylor and Ryan DeRamus, Random Row Books, Charlottesville, VA randomrow.wordpress.com

Drones, My Lai, and Prosecuting the Powerful

by John Glaser

In April of 2012, President Obama approved the CIA's request to begin launching targeted assassinations in Yemen through drone strikes even when the identities of those being targeted is not known. The U.S. government calls these "signature strikes," and they are being deployed constantly in both Yemen and Pakistan. Drone operators thousands of miles away

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Letters

Australian PM Howard – Deputy Sheriff

Just discovered your web site via Information Clearing House. Brilliant! I will be watching it closely.

However, I am wondering if you could help me. I recently discovered the 9/11 War Crimes Tribunal and I wanted to subscribe, but their subscribe page is just formatting text, and they have no contact address that I could see, and, as you are both in general agreement about getting at the truth, I thought maybe you could help.

The reason I wanted to make contact with them was to ask if they could add the name our former Prime Minister, John Howard, to those of Blair and Bush in their indictments. Howard was PM when “Dubya” decided to invade Afghanistan and Iraq, and couldn’t get there quick enough as he groveled and sucked up to “Dubya” to be his “Deputy Sherriff” in the Asia Pacific region.

For background, I am a former member of the Australian Army and I did 2 tours in Vietnam with the Australian Army. I mention that as many Americans have no idea that the Australian Army deployed to Vietnam as a U.S. ally. Just another U.S. war also based on a lie: the Gulf of Tonkin incident. I now live on a pension due to that war and live with the guilt of my, albeit small, part in the suffering of that beautiful country and her people.

My sincere best wishes in your quest for change. Take care and keep well and thank you for doing what you do.

Brad Golding
Mount Seaview, NSW, Australia

Couldn't help with the request, but thanks for the good wishes. - Ed.

Read All About it!

So glad to see we are back to getting the WCT regularly. I love leaving them on the bus and MAX trains and at the cafes and restaurants. Some days it is fun to go out in a VFP T-shirt with a stack of them and do the paperboy routine: “Hurry, hurry, read all about it! Homeland INsecurity, Government Mal-feesance and Innocents Blown to Bits! Read all about it in the *War Crimes Times* – Free, like the air you breathe!”

Marion Ward
Vancouver, WA

Thank You, John Grant

Haven’t had the pleasure of meeting John Grant [“The Vietnam War and the Struggle for Truth”, *WCT*, Fall 2012], but I would welcome the opportunity to shake his hand as I welcomed the opportunity to meet a local Vietnam vet a few years ago.

An article in the *Morning Call* (Allentown, Pa.) – this was back when it still hired reporters and had an editor – told of this vet’s experience when he came home to this area. His neighbors slapped him on the back and said “Well done, son, we’re proud of you.” He told the reporter, “What I had just done was the most abominable thing I ever did or ever hoped to do.” [See *Marti Hiken’s essay on page 3. - Ed.*]

The two local newspapers have done an exemplary job of keeping the local public in a

state of invincible ignorance about Vietnam, what with almost daily flag-waving stories about our Vietnam “heroes.” They (the readers) will no doubt be orgasmic over the Vietnam War Commemoration Project. The aforementioned local Vietnam vet on his return from our scene of massive war crimes participated in a demonstration atop the Statue of Liberty where a group of VVAW [Vietnam Veterans Against the War] hung Old Gory upside down (international distress signal).

Me? I put my life on the line in the Cold War (1958-1961), helping to keep the sea lanes safe for United Fruit Co. et al. I was the staff communications officer for a squadron of LSTs, home ported in Yokosuka, Japan. Our main job was to ferry Third Marine Division artillery battalions between Okinawa and Numazu, where they practiced destroying the environment at the foot of Mt. Fuji. Our last mission was to sail the flagship to Kota Belud, North Borneo (I can’t even find it on the map) for war games before going on to test the feasibility of landing LSTs on the banks of the Chao Phraya river in Bangkok, Thailand. It was an early preparation exercise for our stopping the spread of the international Communist menace.

I was a ninety day wonder who couldn’t get a job as a geologist because the oil companies weren’t hiring in 1958 due to “recession.” It was a chance to “see the world.” Clueless about U.S. foreign policy, I had no problem wasting three years of my life polluting the oceans, and went through 5 years of seminary still clueless, before reading Dan Berrigan’s book, *No Bars To Manhood*.

It then began to dawn on me that Richard Nixon might not be a boy scout. As someone recently observed, we’d have to go back to 1945 to find a U.S. president that wouldn’t be eligible for swinging from the yardarm for war crimes, according to the Nuremberg protocols.

I hope and pray that the *WCT* with writers like John Grant will continue to hammer the heads of the Amerikan Public until a crack in their brains allows a little light to break through the darkness and get them over their John Wayne adulation of Green Berets. Better to sing the praises of the Black Berets (like Che wore).

Semper Fidel,

Bernard J. Berg
Easton, PA

John Grant responds:

Dear Bernard,

Thanks for the wonderful, funny letter. I clearly share your jaundiced view — and the sanity of satire & humor. Hope you someday find Kota Belud on the map! North Borneo. Wow.

I forgot the WCT was running my piece. Here’s the site I write for and where it came from: www.thiscantbehappening.net.

I now have on top a long piece on “imperialism,” the word that Americans have been taught to deny and run from screaming into the night like Pavlovian dogs.

Also check out: www.inthemindfield.com.

Hope this finds you well and thinking free thoughts up there in Easton.

John

THE OLD VETERAN by Ed Tick

I met him on the island of Mykonos, Greece, where we sat together under a windmill. He was sent north to counter the Italian invasion of Greece during WWII. War had given him the only off-island adventure of his life. The beauty surrounding him and his culture’s tradition of honorable warriorhood enabled him to carry his story with dignity.



By the flapping cheeks of the south wind this mill ground grain to meal.

Now in its empty spars I hear the sighing of dead sea captains.

Only once did I sail from this floating marble to the cold north where I wrestled the invader until bleeding mountains stained the sea.

Now cracked and fissured, resting beneath the molten wheels my island is a bowl kneaded, thrown and shaped by a god and I am its painted old warrior.

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The War Crimes Times provides information on war and the war crimes that invariably accompany war, the need to hold war criminals accountable, the many costs of war, and the effects of our war culture on our national character and international reputation. Additionally and importantly, we also report on the efforts of the many people who sacrifice their time, money, and comfort to work for peace.

Our contributors include journalists, legal experts, poets, artists, and veterans speaking from experience. While their views may not always be entirely consistent with ours, their topics address the concerns of the *War Crimes Times*.

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(memo “WCT”)

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WarCrimesTimes.org.

Contact:

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VeteransForPeace.org

Thank You's

The blind, unwarranted patriotism of Americans is harming us, not helping us.

by Marty Hiken

Every football game now includes a patriotic salute with a huge flag displayed in the center of the playing field, jets flying overhead and pictures of vets and GIs in uniform.

The advertisements for joining the military or honoring our vets run all day long on the television. (The military has an endless supply of *our* money to spend on advertisements.) One poignant propaganda piece even brought tears to my eyes it was so well staged and effective. It portrayed a young female GI in uniform who looked worried, maybe scared, not lost, but forlorn, as she departed from an airplane in a busy airport. As she left the plane an elderly man sitting in the airport witnessed her lost look. Clearly a vet, he stood up and proudly saluted her.

The local news has its hand in the pie, too. Not a news show goes by without some vet, sometimes disabled or clearly suffering from PTSD, singled out for a “thank you for your service” from somebody.



I joined the Army National Guard at 17 years old. I could train to kill people in preparation for war but I could not yet legally drink alcohol, smoke cigarettes, or vote in an election. I had been through the brainwashing by our military and government for 3 years by the time I deployed to Iraq in 2004. But despite the mental manipulation, I still questioned our involvement in overseas operations. While in Iraq, I learned that I was right to question the U.S. involvement in the country as these people were clearly not our “enemy” and obviously did not want or need us there. What our country did in Iraq was kill, torture and poison innocent people, all in an imperialist effort to CONTROL and STEAL. I returned home in 2005 with mental and physical scars; it is a miracle and by the grace of my mother that I did not end up as another suicide/drug abuse/ homeless vet statistic. I will not sit idly by and let the United States government get away without paying for their crimes and neither should YOU.

The “Thank You’s” have become a national pastime, a politician’s wet dream, and a patriotic duty. It has come to the point where anti-war Americans (the vast majority) have no say in either the policies of this country, or the patriotism that is one-sidedly pro-war, pro-drones, and pro-military. It has become a veritable duty to support the entire war machine, including the drone-makers, weapon manufacturers, and the lobbyists/politicians who run the government.

Veterans and service members are being used and abused in the process. They are nothing but cannon fodder and helpless pawns who are sacrificed in order to keep the military budget rising, for the perpetuation of the lies, for enticing our young people to join the military, and for electoral victories.

Scratch beneath the image of any patriotic woman or man who says the deeply felt “Thank You” to the veteran and you find someone who would support all wars – regardless of their legitimacy. Such people usually have a family member currently serving in the military, served themselves, or feel it is necessary and politically correct to publicly thank someone. What she doesn’t consider is that the GI might be very much against the wars, someone who is suffering from PTSD, or who doesn’t want to hear the words at all: they know better. They’ve seen first hand the atrocities being committed in our name.

Why don’t these “thankful patriots” consider the infant bombed by a “wayward” drone missile, who has been killed or lost a limb, who also will suffer from PTSD, or whose father has been killed during a brother’s wedding celebration? Why don’t they consider the weapons manufacturers who are profiting from that drone? Why don’t they consider someone the President has decided to assassinate because his name appears on a “kill list”? Why don’t they consider and mourn for the people in far away lands who have had no military and have had their countries overrun by foreigners – namely, Americans, Norwegians, Swedes, British, Australian and so forth? Why don’t they consider Guantanamo an abomination?

Maybe those who say the “Thank You’s” should light a candle for all those who have been maimed and killed by U.S. servicemen and women. Maybe at the next football game the audience should rise for a moment of silence for all children who have lost their parents and limbs.

The blind, unwarranted patriotism of Americans is harming us, not helping us. “Support our Troops” does not mean “Bring them home” in



Washington Redskins cheerleaders perform a routine at a show on Contingency Operating Base Speicher, Tikrit, Iraq, November 24, 2007. The cheerleaders visited during a tour of Iraq to show support for the troops. (U.S. Army photo)

their patriotic lexicon, but rather, it means “Support their Illegal Wars” throughout the world. We look forward to the day when our soldiers return to their appropriate status, as defenders of our country, who protect us against real, not imagined enemies.

Marti Hiken is the director of Progressive Avenues (progressiveavenues.org), the former Associate Director of the Institute for Public Accuracy, and former chair of the National Lawyers Guild Military Law Task Force.

Our Lives, Our Rights is a March Forward! campaign led by active-duty troops, veterans, and war resisters to educate U.S. service members about their rights and help exercise and advocate for those rights, among which is the right to be a Conscientious Objector to war and refuse deployment to Afghanistan.



My name is Alla. I’m an Iraqi from Baghdad. I lost my home, friends, sisters, and every beautiful memory I had there. Now I live in the U.S. on my own with PTSD, ADD, and bad mental health. I hope everyone with a shred of conscience will reject military orders to participate in war.



I’m an Afghan woman. You cannot bomb us to liberation! NATO ≠ Progress.

Dear Mr. President,

A Proposal For Peace

Yesterday I read an article that described the newest high-tech weapon in development, a self-contained fully automated robot that can roam, Terminator-like, and select and fire on targets without human intervention. Forget drones and satellite links, these robotic killers are straight out of the 1982 movie, *Blade Runner*. Human Rights Watch and Harvard Law School’s International Human Rights Clinic have called on governments to preemptively ban these weapons because of the danger posed to civilians, but this strikes me as futile, for the military-industrial-government complex can and will develop new weapons faster than people can mobilize and respond to the threat. It also plays the game according to your rules—trying to stop new weapons and wars, new atrocities and crimes against humanity, one at a time—like that Dutch boy sticking his fingers in the dike to hold back the waters. Rather, it seems the only effective approach is to change the consciousness of a society focused on war and move it to a consciousness focused on peace, thereby eliminating the necessity or incentive to develop new weapons or start new wars. I realize this is a far-fetched idea, not likely to succeed in our lifetime, but imagine if a Nobel Prize-winning leader such as yourself would take up the challenge and begin the process of demilitarizing not only our armies but our national consciousness, eliminating war, terrorists, and enemies from speeches and news conferences, from legislation, indeed, from our lexicon and our dictionaries, and pursue alternatives like peace and respect for our fellow man and the planet we inhabit. I’m not suggesting we all join hands and sing Kumbaya, but that we stop the killing and violence, stop spending our treasure and energy on the illusion of “defense” and “national security” and start spending it on education and the betterment of all mankind, that we address the real threat—global warming—and stop the assault on the environment and our future. Imagine the legacy, Mr. President, if you did this, if you took that first step. Your legacy at this point is not something to be proud of: the man who sold his country to the Whores of War and lost democracy in America for the illusion of power and wealth. To even start the shift in thinking from war to peace would earn you a place in the pantheon of great leaders, not to mention that Nobel Peace Prize you received under false pretenses. Think about it, Mr. President. For all our sakes.

– Robert Yoder

Robert writes a letter each day at dearmrprezident-letters.blogspot.com

War is Horrible but...

(Continued from page 1)

writer such as Theodore Roosevelt who forthrightly affirmed that war is manly and invigorating for the nation and the soldiers who engage in it: war keeps a nation from “getting soft” (Morris 1979). Although this opinion is no longer expressed openly with great frequency, something akin to it may yet survive, as Chris Hedges has argued in *War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning* (2002). Nowadays, however, even those

Whatever else war may be, it surely qualifies as the most indecent type of action people can take: it reduces them to the level of the most ferocious beasts and often accomplishes little more than setting the stage for the next, reactive round of such savagery.

who find meaning for their lives by involvement in war, perhaps even only marginal or symbolic involvement, do not often extol war as such.

They are likely instead to justify a nation’s engagement in war by calling attention to alternative and even more horrible outcomes that, retrospectively, would have occurred if the nation had not gone to war or, prospectively, will occur if it does not go to war. This seemingly reasonable “balancing” form of argument often sounds stronger than it really is, especially when it is made more or less in passing. People may easily be swayed by a weak argument, however, if they fail to appreciate the defects of the typically expressed “horrible, but” apology for war.

Rather than plow through various sources on my bookshelves to compile examples, I have availed myself of modern technology. A Google search for the exact phrase “war is horrible but” on May 21, 2012, identified 58,100 instances of it. Rest assured that this number is smaller than the entire universe of such usage – some instances most likely have yet to be captured electronically. Among the examples I drew from the World Wide Web are the following fourteen statements. I identify the person who made the statement only when he is well known.

1. “War is horrible. But no one wants to see a world in which a regime with no regard whatsoever for international law – for the welfare of its own people or for the will of the United Nations – has weapons of mass destruction.” (U.S. deputy secretary of state Richard Armitage [2003])

This statement was part of a speech Richard Armitage gave on January 21, 2003, shortly before the U.S. government unleashed its armed forces to inflict “shock

and awe” on the nearly defenseless people of Iraq. The speech repeated the Bush administration’s standard prewar litany of accusations, including several claims later revealed to be false, so it cannot be viewed as anything but bellicose propaganda. Yet it does not differ much from what many others were saying at the time.

On its own terms, the statement scarcely serves to justify a war. The conditions outlined – a regime’s disregard of international law, its own people’s well-being, and the will of the United Nations, combined with possession of weapons of mass destruction – apply to several nations. They no more justified a military attack on Iraq than they justified an attack on Pakistan, France, India, Russia, China, the United Kingdom, Israel, or the United States itself.

2. “War is terrible, war is horrible, but war is also at times necessary and the only means of stopping evil.”

The *only* means of stopping evil? How can such singularity exist? Has evil conduct never been stopped except by war? For example, has shunning – exclusion from commerce, financial systems, communications, transportation systems, and other means of international cooperation – never served to discipline an evil nation state? Might it do so if seriously tried? (If these questions give the impression that I am suggesting the possibility of resorting to embargo or blockade, that perception is not exactly correct. Although I support various forms of voluntary, peaceful withdrawal of cooperation with evil-doing states, I do not endorse state-enforced – that is, violent or potentially violent – embargoes and blockades.) Why must we leap to the conclusion that only war will serve, when other measures have scarcely even been considered, much less seriously attempted? If war is really as horrible as everyone says, it would seem that we have a moral obligation to try very hard to achieve the desired suppression of evil-doing by means other than resort to warfare, which is itself always a manifest evil, even when it is seemingly the lesser one.

3. “No news shows [during World War II] were showing German civilians getting fried and saying how sad it was. It was war against butchers and war is horrible, but it’s war, and to defend human decency, sometimes war is necessary.” (Ben Stein [2006])

Ben Stein is a knowledgeable man. He surely knows that the U.S. government imposed draconian censorship of war news during World War II. Perhaps the censors had their reasons for keeping scenes of incinerated German civilians away from the U.S. public. After all, even if Americans in general had extraordinarily cruel

and callous attitudes toward German civilians during the war, many of them had relatives and friends in Germany.

Stein appears to lump *all* Germans into the class of “butchers” against whom he claims the war was being waged. He certainly must understand, however, that many persons in Germany—children, for example—were not butchers and bore absolutely no responsibility for the actions of the government officials who were. Yet these innocents, too, suffered the dire effects of, among other things, the terror bombing that the U.S. and British air forces inflicted on many German cities (“Strategic Bombing,” no date).

To say, as Stein and many others have said, that “war is war” gets us nowhere; in a moral sense, this tautology warrants nothing. Many people, however, evidently consider all moral questions about the conduct of war to have been settled simply by their having labeled or by their having accepted someone else’s labeling of certain actions as “war.” Having chanted this exculpatory incantation over the state’s organized violence, they believe that all transgressions associated with that violence are automatically absolved – as the saying goes, “all’s fair in love and war.” It does not help matters that regimes treat some of the most egregious transgressors as heroes.

Finally, Stein’s claim that “to defend human decency, sometimes war is necessary” is at best paradoxical because it says in effect that human indecency, which war itself surely exemplifies, is sometimes necessary to defend human decency. Perhaps he had in mind the backfires that firefighters sometimes set to help them extinguish fires. This metaphor, however, seems farfetched in connection with war. It is difficult to think of anything that consists of as many different forms of indecency as war does. Not only is war’s essence the large-scale wreaking of death and destruction, but its side effects and its consequences in the aftermath run a wide range of evils as well. Whatever else war may be, it surely qualifies as the most indecent type of action people can take: it reduces them to the level of the most ferocious beasts and often accomplishes little more than setting the stage for the next, reactive round of such savagery. In any event, considered strictly as a way of sustaining human decency, it gets a failing grade every time because it invariably magnifies the malignity that it purports to resist.

4. “War is horrible, but slavery is worse.” (Winston Churchill as quoted in Dear and Foote 1995, xv)

Maybe slavery is worse, but maybe it’s not; it depends on the conditions of the war and the conditions of the slavery. Moreover, if one seeks to justify a war on the strength of this statement, one had best be completely certain that but for war, slavery will be the outcome. In many wars, however, slavery was never a possibility because neither side sought to enslave its enemy. Many wars have been fought for



August 10, 1945 Nagasaki – victim of atomic bomb; she was a 14-year-old student. (Photo credit: Masao Shiotsuki)

“to defend human decency, sometimes war is necessary”



Nine-year-old Mohammad Khan was wounded on November 11, 2001 when a U.S. B-52 bombed Korang village in southern Afghanistan. He had still not recovered from his painful wounds when this photo was taken on December 12, 2004 at a hospital in Jalalabad. (Photo credit: RAWA.org)

limited objectives, if only because more ambitious objectives appeared unattainable or not worth their cost. No war in U.S. history may be accurately described as having been waged to prevent the enslavement of the American people. Some people talk that way about World War II or the Cold War, if it be counted as a war, but such talk has no firm foundation in facts.

Some may object that the War Between the States was fought to prevent the ongoing slavery of the blacks then held in thrall. But however deeply this view may be embedded in American mythology, it is contrary to fact. As Abraham Lincoln made crystal clear in his letter of August 22, 1862, to *New York Tribune* editor Horace Greeley, he had not mobilized the armed forces to free the slaves, but only to prevent the seceding states from leaving the union: “My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and is not either to save or to destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slave I would do it, and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves I

(Continued on page 8)

From Genesis to Bradley Manning, with the 12-step program in between

An Old Story with a Lesson for Today: “Not even God can use violence successfully”

Editor’s introduction: *This is a transcription of the final presentation of a four-day peace conference held at Lake Junaluska, NC, November 8-11, 2012. It was delivered on a Sunday morning, at a United Methodist conference center, by an ordained minister, to an audience largely consisting of religious folks including a good number of clergy men and women (many retired – well “past half time”), and it began with a scripture reading. By all indications, it was a sermon, a lecture on a topic of morality.*

But the lesson, the moral, of this sermon was intended for more than the flock of faithful, mostly Christians, gathered that morning. This lesson needs to reach people of all faiths, people of no faith, and people in the highest offices of governments around the world. It is a lesson of peace.

At its conclusion, this sermon received a standing ovation. But not everyone rose. The few who didn’t were, I suspect, clergy too stunned by the bold challenges of Alan Storey’s concluding remarks.

The speaker made references to other conference presenters. The Rev. Dr. Bernard Lafayette, a co-founder the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, who endured many beatings and arrests as a civil rights activist, had spoken of how the kindness and trust bestowed on him as a 14-year-old in a multi-cultural neighborhood helped form his character. Liberian activist and Nobel Peace Prize winner, Leymah Gbowee, had remarked on the importance of channeling anger into a proper container. (A documentary film on her work was also shown.) Michael Nagler, author, teacher, and founder of the Metta Center for Nonviolence, had shared his definition of “nonviolence.”

Alan Storey’s remarks were introduced with a reading from Genesis (excerpts of chapters 6 through 9) – the account of the Great Flood, when God punished the evil people and spared the righteous. But when the waters receded, God promised to never again resort to such destruction, setting God’s rainbow in the clouds as the sign of God’s covenant.



Rev. Alan Storey. The words on his shirt: “Blessed are the truth tellers – Bradley Manning in jail yet free.”

“... if we can just get rid of the bad people, then we will have peace. There is an axis of evil in the world and if we can just destroy the axis of evil, then all will be safe and secure.

“The persons who act on this notion of dividing the world into wicked people and righteous people should be brought before the International Court of Justice for crimes against humanity and all of creation.”

I wonder what you have just heard during the reading of those Hebrew scriptures. I wonder what you heard. What did you hear?

Did you hear Sunday school children singing, singing about animals going in two by two? Or did you hear children screaming panic-stricken, terrified, gasping for breath, people fleeing to higher ground, pleading, praying to be let into that ark – and if not me, then take my child. Knocking, banging, banging on the ark, let me in! Yet the doors of the ark remained sadistically closed.

What did you feel when those words were read? Did you feel the desperation, the despair, the drowning, the death?

And then after the 40 days, what did you see? The sunshine? Green lush, beautiful blossoming? Birds and bees? Or decomposing bodies, swelling, smelling – disease, decay gathered in every single nook and cranny?

The cruel results, the inevitable cruel results of dividing up a world with the simplistic notion that there are some who are wicked and others who are righteous, that there are two types of people in the world: good and bad. And if we can just get rid of the bad people, then we will have peace. There is an axis of evil in the world and if we can just destroy the axis of evil, then all will be safe and secure.

The persons who act on this notion of dividing the world into wicked people and righteous people should be brought before the International Court of Justice for crimes against humanity and all of creation – even if that person is God.

This deadly division between good people and bad people continues today especially in my faith tradition – especially in my faith tradition. The Christian faith, more than any other faith, has participated in this deadly division – dividing the world into good and bad, saved and unsaved, those who will be ushered into heaven and those who will be cast into hell. That thought process is nothing less than hate speech.

We go back to the text. These Hebrew narrators were incredibly courageous, risky in the extreme. You see, what these Hebrew narrators are trying to do is *not endorse* this primitive, partisan God or world view, but rather to cleverly, and with great risk, *subvert* it. They knew that the common world understanding of God was that God was some almighty superhero that would punish the wicked and bless the righteous. They knew that was the dominant religious world view and understanding of their time. So they risked casting God in that light in their narrative. They don’t believe it, they know that’s not so. But they cleverly start where the audience is.

There were righteous ones, just a few. God saved them and the wicked were punished and the audience applaud. Because that was their world view. Justice has been done, the wicked got what they deserved, and the righteous what was promised. And then the narrator moves to Act II. And we read that once the flood had subsided, wickedness remained.

Wickedness remained. In other words, God failed. God failed to eradicate evil through this weapon of mass destruction called the flood.

The narrator is bold to pen those words, “God failed.” God fails when God uses violence. Not even God can use violence successfully. Not even God. God’s war *on* terror became a war *of* terror. And God repents. Listen to these words: “I will never again destroy every living creature as I have done.”

And then God is converted and God takes God’s bow, not a rainbow, but a weapon, God’s bow, and hangs it up in the sky, just as a boxer hangs up his gloves – and says, “Never again will I fight.” It’s the great narrative of the disarmament of God.

God can do all things. God can do all things – except use violence successfully.

And you and I will not be converted to nonviolence until we first realize that God has long since been converted. It is impossible to be a peacemaker if we serve a violent God, an angry God, a God who needs blood to be satisfied. If the God we serve, if the God we worship, has blood on his hands (I use that male pronoun deliberately), then the likelihood will be that we will too.

Using violence, God fails. So how much more will we fail if we use it? And you and I witness the failure of violence all around us all the time.

Violence fails to deliver on what it promises – peace and security. Since 9/11, billions and billions and billions of your dollars have been invested in violence, military might. And this country is less safe than it ever was. It doesn’t matter how long you have to stand in line to wait to get onto an airplane – it is less safe, less secure. And if it is not more afraid, it is definitely more feared.

Ask the people of Pakistan who scan the skies for drones – where the people who fly them can have breakfast in the morning with their family, go to the office and sit in a comfortable chair and go to war in Afghanistan; and then can come home and have lunch with their family, and then in the afternoon they can go to war in Pakistan.

There is no victory in vengeance. Satan cannot cast out Satan; violence cannot cast out violence. War is a poor chisel to carve out a peaceable future says Martin Luther King, and yet it remains our biggest investment.

If you know history, you will know that empires do not explode. Empires implode. And the reason why empires implode is because they spend more than they have on trying to defend (read attack) who they are.

And if you just question safety and security, you will be labeled unpatriotic. You can commit the most grave of sins in the name of safety and security.

Listening to the presidential debates, if you could call them that, president Obama was asked, “What is the greatest threat to America?” Notice, please, the very narrow nationalistic question that is. His answer: “Terrorism, and China.”

I want to say to Barack Obama the greatest threat to America is not terrorism, it’s not China. The greatest threat to America is – America. You are your worst enemy. No one will *explode* you – you will *implode*. If God fails using violence, so will the USA.

God is a nonviolent God.

Now, a couple of years ago in my country, there was a murder that took place and it was discovered that it was a family murder. An 18-year-old girl killed her 13-year-old sister, stabbed her repeatedly. The mother, as you can imagine, grieved, like only a mother can grieve. And yet at the same time as she was grieving the loss of her daughter, she stood in solidarity with her other daughter, as only, you can imagine, a mother can do. She was reported to have said, “I want to hate her, but I can’t.”

She went to court every day when her daughter was on trial. She stood behind her and embraced her when she was convicted. She visited her daughter every available opportunity in prison and when her daughter was finally released, she welcomed her home.

Mrs. Du Toit, the mother, found herself in the painful, yet privileged position of God, being parent to both murdered and murderer. At one and the same time. “I want to hate her but I can’t. I’m her mother.”

God is not only a nonviolent God, but God is the heavenly parent of both murdered and murderer. And to take vengeance on the murderer is simply to multiply the grief of God. If someone had come up to that mother and said, “Let us kill this daughter,” she would say, “No – don’t double my grief.”

Not only is this a nonviolent God, not only does this God grieve on all sides of the border, but when we remember Saul traveling on the road to Damascus because he had written permission to extend his war on terror, he is stopped in his tracks with these words from the Divine: “Why, why, why are you persecuting *me*?”

Please notice what the Divine did not say. The Divine did not say, “Why are you persecuting *them*?” but, “Why are you persecuting *me*?” The Divine takes persecution personally.

It is not, “Why are you persecuting the Afghans, and the Iraqis, and the Pakistanis, and whoever else? it’s, “Why are you persecuting *me*?” We need to hear that question here today.

So not only is God a nonviolent God. Not only does God grieve on both sides. God takes persecution personally.

Our violence violates God. *All* violence – we see from that illustration – is family violence. Cain and Abel were brothers. Did you know that death enters the Hebrew

scriptures through murder? – reminding us that all violence is family violence? That there are seven billion chosen, chosen people in the world? That the apartheid between nations must come to an end?

There is something that distresses me more than anything else every time I listen to the president of this country speak – when he ends his speeches with the words, “God Bless America.”

Someone please remind him that there is a world larger than America. And not until he begins to have a vision for the world and not just a nation – (long pause)

The only flag I am prepared to salute, the only flag, the only flag that I am prepared to stand up for is the flag with a picture of the globe on it. Can you give your flag away? And claim a new flag? And certainly remove it from your sanctuaries.

Jesus said if you want to save your life, give it away. If you want to save your nation – give it away.

If you want to save your flag – give it away. If you want to save your religion – give it away.

We know that it is easier to identify with the victim than the perpetrator. It is easier to see the splinter in our neighbor’s eye than it is to see the log in our own eye. It is easier to watch a documentary called *Pray the Devil Back to Hell* than to face the devil in us and the hell that we create.

I watched that documentary for the first time here. I was deeply moved by it – the courage of woman.

I was inspired when one of them said, “With this tee shirt, I am powerful.” I was horrified at the children, the children carrying guns that were too big for them to carry. I wept at the senseless suffering.

But that was a distant devil to observe. Much more difficult to watch a documentary of the devil that *we* are, and the hell that we create. Some people here have asked me, “Gosh, listening to Bernard Lafayette the other night, – how is it possible to be able to draw that love from the wells that live within to be able to even love the person beating us?”

Now it is a fine question to ask, but I think there is an earlier question. You see, that question assumes that we are going to be the victim. That question assumes we are going to be the one who is going to be beaten and kicked. The balance of probability that any of us in this room are going to go through that is pretty slim.

You see, we identify with the victim. The question we should be asking is, “How do we stop beating and killing others who are praying for the love to be able to forgive us?” What *our* dollars do in this world –

You know the date. But do you know what happened during 9/11? 9/11. When country and the hopes of that country were shattered. The thousands of people dying, thousands of people dying, not just on 9/11, but the days after. 9/11. You know the day, you know what I am talking about. Yes, I am talking about 1973. 9/11. When Pinochet came into power in Chile with the help of our dollars, a reign of terror for 16 years until 1990 – we know the date.

The 20th of August 1998 – in Sudan, the Clinton administration bombs Al-Shifa pharmaceutical company that provided 50% of all medication in the Sudan. I went to the Sudan a number of years after that. I watched mothers carrying children, hopelessly dying of malaria, not able to get medication. Do you know the date: 20th of August 1998?

We will not have peace in this world, we will not become peacemakers, until we know the dates of terror that we have inflicted on others as well as we know the dates of terror that others have inflicted on us.



“There is something that distresses me more than anything else every time I listen to the president of this country speak – when he ends his speeches with the words, ‘God Bless America.’”

“Someone please remind him that there is a world larger than America.”

By the way, the 20th of August 1998 was covered in the *Boston Globe*, the *Washington Post*, *The Guardian*, the *New York Times*.

Last night we listened to Leymah Gbowee. She spoke powerfully about an analogy of violence and anger: pouring it into a violent cup or a nonviolent cup. I wonder if our problem is that we are not angry enough.

What makes you angry? When the price of gas goes up? Or when more of our children go and learn how to kill and we tell them that they are heroes when all they are are victims to the lie, the lie that says you can be a killer with honor. The lie that says you can actually be alive while you kill another.

We are addicted to violence. This nation knows that more than any other. It is never going to be easy to kick an addiction. We are always going to think, “One more drink.” And the one more drink becomes the first of many more. The alcoholic needs to admit that she is, that he is, powerless. And then join together with other people who feel powerless too. And admit their addiction, confess it.

“Hi, my name is Alan and I belong to the most violent nation in the world – that spends more money on the military than all other nations put together.”

Can we say those words? And only when we are able to admit that in the presence of others and then rely on a power – however you understand that power – that is higher than us, to begin to transform us. To make a stringent list of the things that we have done wrong. To admit them, and then to make amends. To go through, as a nation, a 12-step program. As the most violent nation in the world. Sign up. And then, in our powerlessness, we will discover what Michael Nagler invited us to see: nonviolence as that power that is unleashed when all desire to harm is overcome; and only then will we be feeling powerful again.

“When is the Methodist Church of this nation going to refuse to allow members of its church to enter the military? When? When will children’s church teachers teach the children that that’s the gravest sin, that there is nothing heroic in it, to kill family.

“Why don’t you do it? Let us call the troops back home from Afghanistan. Tell them to hand in their guns and their uniforms. Do it! You have nothing to lose. The game is nearly over. It’s the right thing to do. There are people on that side praying, praying that you will do that.”

People have been asking me, “Alan, what do we do, what do we do, where do I stand, what do I do?” Well, it is very difficult to transform a system that we are dependent on – for our livelihood. Very difficult. So what we need to do is in those little AA communities, confessing that we are a violent people, we need to somehow wean ourselves off the system that we are dependent on.

I mean, don’t you get it? Let me use Christian language for a moment. I am dependent – this is the contradiction I live with in my life – I am dependent on my sin for my survival. Sin, meaning “wages of death, way of death.” I am dependent on a way of life that is in actual fact a way of death, for my survival. And when I turn against my sin, it feels like I am dying, even though I am coming alive.

We have to admit that we are dependent on our sin for our survival. But it, like all addiction, is killing us and those after us and those around us—not to mention God’s creation.

Now let me close.

If you had interviewed political analysts in the Middle Eastern region in December, 2010, and if you had asked them the question, “What is the likelihood of there being

a regime change in this part of the world – places like Tunisia and Egypt – places supported by these dollars, our dollars, superpower dollars?” the political analysts would have said that it would be *impossible*. That would be December, 2010. Interview those same analysts in February, 2011, and they would say that it was *inevitable*. As intifada and the Arab Spring began to spread and take root – because a vegetable seller set himself alight which kindled the fire of freedom and justice in the hearts and minds of families in that region.

You see, political analysts are not to be counted upon in regard to *what is possible* in this world. Liberation, peace, will come like a thief in the night, and it is not for you and I to know dates or times.

The most amazing thing about the people who were involved in the struggle against Apartheid, for me, were that they joined the struggle with no expectation to see liberation themselves. And yet, they joined it, not for certain results, but because it was right.

We have to liberate ourselves from our addiction to certain results. Thomas Merton said that years ago, set yourself free from limiting results. Just do what you need to do. The results will come.

We heard that over these few days. Who knew that when a 14-year-old boy, when he is treated with dignity and respect and given a social security number and given a driver’s license, who knew that what that would do would refine a conscience that could lead a people that could set people free? Who knew?

It was an unmeasurable act of human relationship and we need to awaken ourselves to the unmeasurableness of our actions. That we cannot actually see the impact thereof – and so, do what you do not knowing what impact God will do with it through the world – Do you really think that Leymah Gbowee, last night, expected to be standing here, 15 years ago?

So what do we do? I want to ask you to do something specific. But the truth is that I am 44 years old. Right? If I have a good innings, I’m at half time. I’m at half time. And I am sorry to say that looking out at some of you, you are past half time. And looking at some of you more closely, it looks like some of you are in injury time. I’m serious. You don’t have too many years left. Okay? So why don’t you make them count? You have nothing to lose.

I want to speak specifically to the people of my faith – Christians, Methodists. When is the Methodist Church of this nation going to refuse to allow members of its church to enter the military? When? When will children’s church teachers teach the children that that’s the gravest sin, that there is nothing heroic in it, to kill family.

Why don’t you do it? Let us call the troops back home from Afghanistan. Tell them to hand in their guns and their uniforms. Do it! You have nothing to lose. The game is nearly over. It’s the right thing to do. There are people on that side praying, praying that you will do that.

Let’s lament, let’s lament. Let’s not build any more monuments.

I have stood here today for one person. His name is Bradley Manning. You asked me, “What gives me hope?” People have asked, “Alan, are you hopeful?”

I said, “I am hopeful because of one person, Bradley Manning.” Bradley Manning is 24 years old – 24 years old. He’s spent the last 902 days in a military prison, most of which has been in solitary confinement in chains. Bradley Manning. All because he revealed documents that exposed the truth of the killing of Iraqis from an American helicopter. And he sits in one of your prisons. Bradley Manning.

You want to know what you can do? You can give your life for his freedom, because he has given his life for the freedom of this world. Pray for his sanity, pray for his healing. Bradley Manning. Bradley Manning.

If there is anything that I have said here that is true, may it set us free.

Alan Storey is an ordained minister of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa and is presently ministering in Cape Town. As a young man, Alan faced conscription into the apartheid regime’s military. After spending a year of discernment working as a laborer in Australia, he returned to South Africa, declaring he would never fight in the apartheid army – or any army. He was arrested and faced trial with a six-year prison sentence as the likely outcome. Alan’s trial was abandoned midway, and he became the last conscientious objector to be tried in apartheid South Africa.

Alan specializes in facilitating Diversity Engagement Encounters, both within the Church and within other business and education institutions – healing the divisions that still divide us. He teaches widely throughout Southern Africa and abroad (including the Sudan and USA). Alan has an Honors Degree in Theology and a Masters in Philosophy (Applied Ethics in Economics).

The text only hints at the power of this presentation. The challenges presented – “Let us call the troops back home from Afghanistan. Tell them to hand in their guns and their uniforms. Do it!” – should be heard by every clergy person, every congregation, even every atheist. DVDs can be obtained at media.lakejunaluska.com.



If you had free reign over classified networks... and you saw incredible things, awful things... things that belonged in the public domain, and not on some server stored in a dark room in Washington DC... what would you do?

God knows what happens now. Hopefully worldwide discussion, debates, and reforms... I want people to see the truth... because without information, you cannot make informed decisions as a public.

–Quotes attributed to Bradley Manning

PFC Bradley Manning, a 24-year-old Army intelligence analyst, is accused of releasing the Collateral Murder video, that shows the killing of unarmed civilians and two Reuters journalists, by a U.S. Apache helicopter crew in Iraq. He is also accused of sharing the Afghan War Diary, the Iraq War Logs, and a series of embarrassing U.S. diplomatic cables. These documents were published by the anti-secrecy website WikiLeaks, and they have illuminated such issues as the true number and cause of civilian casualties in Iraq, along with a number of human rights abuses by U.S.-funded contractors and foreign militaries, and the role that spying and bribes play in international diplomacy. Given the war crimes exposed, if Bradley Manning was the source for these documents, he should be given a medal of honor.

Not a single person has been harmed by the release of this information. Former Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates has called the effect of WikiLeaks’ releases on U.S. foreign relations “fairly modest.” Yet the Obama administration has chosen to persecute the whistle-blower rather than prosecute the war criminals who were exposed. While the prosecution has declared it does not intend to seek the death penalty, they do seek to lock Bradley Manning away for life, with the most ridiculous charge of “aiding the enemy,” even though chat logs attributed to Bradley by the FBI clearly show intent only to inform the public and promote “discussion, debates, and reforms.”

Soldiers are promised fair treatment and a speedy trial under the Uniform Code of Military Justice. However, the soldiers responsible for PFC Manning’s care took it upon themselves to abuse him by keeping him locked up in solitary confinement for the first 10 months of his incarceration. During this time, Bradley was denied meaningful exercise, social interaction, sunlight, and on a number of occasions he was forced to stay completely naked. These conditions were unique to Bradley and are illegal even under U.S. military law, as they amount to extreme pre-trial punishment. In March 2011, chief U.S. State Department spokesperson P.J. Crowley called Manning’s treatment at the Quantico, VA, Marine Corps brig “ridiculous and counterproductive and stupid.” He was forced to resign shortly after admitting this. Since resigning, he has stated that the prosecution’s heavy-handed persecution of Manning has undermined the government’s credibility.

Learn more at bradlemanning.org

War is Horrible but...

(Continued from page 4)

would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone I would also do that.”[1] When Lincoln brought forth the Emancipation Proclamation – a document carefully drawn so that at the time of its promulgation it freed not a single slave – he issued it only because at that time it seemed to be a useful means for the attainment of his “paramount object,” preserving the union. The slaves, including those in states that had not seceded, were ultimately freed for good by ratification (at gunpoint in the former Confederate states) of the Thirteenth Amendment in 1865, which is to say as a ramification of the war, which itself had not been undertaken in 1861 in pursuit of this then-unforeseen outcome.

5. “You may think that the Iraq War is horrible, but there may be some times when you can justify [going to war].”

Perhaps war *can* be justified at “some times,” but this statement itself in no way shows that the Iraq War can be justified, and it seems all too obvious that it cannot be. If it could have been justified, the government that launched it would not have had to resort to a succession of weak excuses for waging it, each such excuse being manifestly inadequate or simply false. The obvious insufficiency of any of the reasons put forward explains why so many of us put so much time and effort into trying to divine exactly what *did* impel the Bush administration’s rush to war.

6. “War is horrible, but sometimes we need to fight.”

Need to fight for what? The objective dictates whether war is a necessary means for its attainment. If the objective was to preserve Americans’ freedoms and “way of life,” the U.S. government certainly did not need to fight most of the enemies against whom it waged war historically. Oddly enough, the only time the enemy actually posed such a threat, during the Cold War, the United States did *not* go to war against that enemy directly, although it did fight (unnecessarily) the enemy’s less-menacing allies – North Korea, China, and North

Vietnam. In the other wars the United States has fought, it might well have remained at peace had U.S. leaders been sincerely interested in peace rather than committed to warfare.

7. “Of course war is horrible, but it will always exist, and I’m sick of these pacifist [expletive deleted] ruining any shred of political decency that they can manage.”

Many people have observed that wars have recurred for thousands of years and therefore will probably continue to occur from time to time. The unstated insinuation seems to be that in view of war’s long-running recurrence, nothing can be done about it, so we should all grow up and admit that war is as natural and hence as unalterable as the sun’s rising in the east each morning. Warfare is an inescapable aspect of “how the world works.”

This outlook contains at least two difficulties. First, many other conditions also have had long-running histories: for example, reliance on astrologers as experts in foretelling the future; affliction with cancers; submission to rulers who claim to dominate their subjects by virtue of divine descent or appointment; and many others. People eventually overcame or continue to work to overcome each of these long-established conditions. Science revealed that astrology is nothing more than an elaborate body of superstition; scientists and doctors have discovered how to control or cure certain forms of cancer and are attempting to do the same for other forms; and citizens learned to laugh at the pretensions of rulers who claim divine descent or appointment (at least, they *had* learned to do so until George W. Bush successfully revived this doctrine among the benighted rubes who form the Republican base). Because wars spring in large part from people’s stupidity, ignorance, and gullibility, it is conceivable that alleviation of these conditions might have the effect of diminishing the frequency of warfare, if not of eliminating it altogether.

Second, even if nothing *can* be done to stop the periodic outbreak of war, it does not follow that we ought to shut up and accept every
(Continued on page 12)

The Yellow Birds

by Kevin Powers

Reviewed by Robert Yoder

The war tried to kill us in the spring. As grass greened the plains of Nenevah and the weather warmed, we patrolled the low-slung hills beyond the cities and towns. We moved over them and through the tall grass on faith, kneading paths into the windswept growth like pioneers. While we slept, the war rubbed its thousand ribs against the ground in prayer.

So begins Kevin Powers’ beautiful horrific novel of war. The language of this spare elegant book is the lan-

guage of the poet Powers is, the intensity and sharpness never falters from beginning to end. Although the story focuses on two protagonists, Bartle and Murph, the central character is war itself, how it dominates and shapes events, history, lives, an unrelenting and implacable force which, once unleashed, cannot be stopped until it has run its course. It is mindless, it is brutal, it is merciless, and it destroys people and places without regard.

Although a work of fiction, *The Yellow Birds* is clearly the story of Powers’ 13 months of war in Iraq—a machine gunner in Mosul and Tal Afar, 2003-2004. The random threat of death is no farther than the next sentence, the next phrase, the next word. It is like descending into Dante’s *Inferno*, each circle depicted, from green recruit to the terror of first combat to hardened warrior—“We were no longer aware of even our own savagery now; the beatings and kicked dogs, the searches and the sheer brutality of our presence”—and finally, numbing acceptance.

Physically unharmed but suffering profound moral injury, Bartle returns home from war to wrestle with his demons: “...there isn’t any making up for killing women or even watching women

get killed, or for that matter killing men and shooting them in the back and shooting them more times than necessary to actually kill them and it was like just trying to kill everything you saw sometimes because it felt like there was acid seeping down into your soul and then your soul is gone and knowing from being taught your whole life that

***The Yellow Birds* is the story of what war does to those caught in its grip, the difficulty of coming home, the impossibility of undoing moral injury.**

there is no making up for what you are doing... but then even your mother is so happy and proud because you lined up your sight posts and made people crumple and they were not getting up ever...”

The Yellow Birds takes you from innocent to injured, from life to death, from natural beauty to ravaged warscape. The futility and hypocrisy of war is summed up in one scene: a colonel arrives with reporter and photographer in tow, to give the men a Patton-like pep talk the night before the battle for an orchard, “This is the land where Jonah is buried, where he begged for God’s justice to come... We are that justice,” he proclaims. “You may never do anything this important again in your entire lives.”

But they learn that this orchard has been fought over many times since the war began; Sterling, Bartle’s sergeant tells him he was in the first fight for the orchard—“This shit’s gonna be bigger than Ohio State-Michigan,” he jokes. The battle for the orchard is as futile and meaningless as the war itself; the colonel returns to his command post out of harm’s way with another photo op and write-up to burnish his image.

In the end, *The Yellow Birds* is the story of what war does to



those caught in its grip, the difficulty of coming home, the impossibility of undoing moral injury: “...you have seen all things die in more manners than you’d like to recall and for a while the whole thing fucking ravaged your spirit like some deep-down shit that you didn’t even realize you had until only the animals made you sad, the husks of dogs filled with explosives and old [artillery] shells and the fucking guts and

everything stinking like metal and burning garbage and you walk around and the smell is deep down into you now and... even back home you’re getting whiffs of it and then that thing you started to notice slipping away is gone and now... a deeper hole is being dug because everybody is so fucking happy to see you, the murderer, the fucking accomplice, the at-bare-minimum bearer of some fucking responsibility, and everyone wants to slap you on the back and you start to want to burn the whole goddamn country down, you want to burn every goddamn yellow ribbon in sight, and you can’t explain it but it’s just, like, Fuck you, but then you signed up to go so it’s all your fault, really, because you went on purpose, so you are in the end doubly fucked... and really deep down you know you went because you wanted to be a man and that’s never gonna happen now and you’re too much of a coward to be a man and get it over with so why not find a clean, dry place and wait it out with it hurting as little as possible and just wait to go to sleep and not wake up and fuck ‘em all.”

The Yellow Birds is the most powerful anti-war novel since Tim O’Brien’s, *The Things They Carried*.

War in the end is always about betrayal, betrayal of the young by the old, of soldiers by politicians, and of idealists by cynics.

—Chris Hedges

All War IS Local

by S. Brian Willson

A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense [sic] than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death.

– Martin Luther King, Jr., “A Time To Break Silence,”
April 4, 1967, Riverside Church, New York City

Introduction

On a recent visit to my neighborhood library in Portland, Oregon, I was asked outside the entrance if I would sign a petition to place a public school bond measure on the fall ballot. Though I support full funding of public schools, I balked. Knowing that Portland libraries are also planning to place a taxing district on the same ballot, I felt fury building up inside of me at how obscene, lawless military spending is sucking our nation’s resources dry. I told the person asking for my signature that I would only sign such petition when and if the Portland School Board, Portland City Commissioners and Mayor, and all other City and County entities become part of an active anti-war movement to stop the looting of our Commons by the Military-Industrial-Banking-Congressional-Presidential Complex.

DIRECT costs are FELT only by a small percentage of the public

The U.S. wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia, etc., are, in reality, only viscerally experienced by a small percentage of American people. No direct taxes on the people have been assessed to fund the wars. They are funded instead by debt. And the absence of general conscription (a military draft) relieves the vast majority of the population from the emotional burden of worrying whether a family member will be forced into military service.

A de facto economic draft exists whereby those unable to find adequate employment in our economically depressed society are offered a subsidized job track in the military, and trained as combatants or placed in any number of supportive roles in imperial adventures around the globe.

But most members of U.S. society have gone about their lives business as usual, experiencing little anxiety or hardship, indeed, hardly “feeling” the wars.

INDIRECT costs severely affect the 99 percent

However, even though the direct, experiential costs of U.S. wars have been largely absent in popular discussion and politically unaccounted for, the resulting residual costs are enormous. The national resource base has been so

severely drained by war costs that we are in domestic “austerity” budgeting. An audit of the Federal Reserve has revealed \$16 trillion in secret loans to bail out U.S. American and foreign banks and businesses during the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. That is

equivalent to our National Debt. That amounts to more than \$50,000 for every man, woman, and child, enough to revive a healthy main street. Meanwhile four million homeowners lost their homes to foreclosures due to massive collusion between Wall Street and banks in granting fraudulent mortgages. Every foreclosed homeowner could have been publicly refinanced instead.

As of September 11, 2012, the National Priorities Project (NPP) estimated the actual cost of U.S. wars since

Our extravagant military budget is rarely questioned, but cuts for domestic programs are constantly discussed.

September 2001 in Iraq and Afghanistan at nearly \$1,372 million dollars [also see: Cost of War.com].

Other studies estimate total war costs will reach \$4.4 trillion [“Cost of war at least \$3.7 trillion and counting,” by Daniel Trotta, Reuters, Jun 29, 2012] or even \$6 trillion [“American Freefall” by Paul Craig Roberts, CounterPunch, July 09, 2012].

These are non-human costs. The human costs in Iraqi and Afghan lives, not to mention public and private military forces and mercenaries from the U.S., is immense. The website Unknown News estimates total Iraqis killed (murdered) since the U.S. invasion in 2003 at about 895,000, with another 1,646,000 injured (maimed). The comparable figures for Afghanistan are 17,400 killed (murdered) and 41,625 injured (maimed). U.S. public and private military and mercenaries, plus “Coalition” troops and journalists killed in Iraq is slightly over 5,800, with nearly 45,000 injured. The comparable figures for Afghanistan are 2,230 killed, and 8,164 injured. Thus, total war casualties are nearly 2,670,000 – over 920,000 killed; nearly 1,750,000 injured.

In the last ten years nearly 2.5 million U.S. soldiers have been deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan. They come from every town, city, and rural area in the country, but reports suggest a disproportionate number of the dead and wounded come from Small Town, USA. Up to 50 percent of those deployed to Afghanistan and Iraq have been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD),

traumatic brain injury (TBI), or have been victims of military sexual trauma (MST). Treatment costs for returning veterans are immense. Over one million have applied for compensation for injuries.

Suicide among soldiers and veterans is staggering. In 2012 alone, as of early June, 154 active duty soldiers committed suicide, more than were killed in combat during that same period. [“Suicides Outpacing War Deaths for Troops,” *New York Times*, June 8, 2012]. The suicide rate is 38 per 100,000 Iraq and Afghanistan veterans, compared to 11.5 for the general public. Eighteen veterans of all wars commit suicide on average every day [“18 veterans commit suicide each day,” Rick Maze, *Army Times*, April 22, 2010].

War IS a local issue

War drains domestic financial and mental capacity to address critical needs for health care, education, social security, etc., in every community. The outrageous amount of money being siphoned into the military-industrial complex, with wars feeding obscene profits to its architects, seriously threatens assurance of resources for a healthy society. U.S. citizens should be assured of a social safety net for all. Instead, Americans are guaranteed a debt in perpetuity. Meanwhile, the rich get richer; the poor get poorer.

Despite the lack of national discourse on military spending, war is always on our minds. It is promoted in holiday festivities such as Memorial Day, Armistice Day (now called Veterans Day), Independence Day, and Patriots Day. There are fund drives for soldiers, homecomings, recruitment ads, military band concerts, war video games in every town and city, army-sponsored race cars, war movies and television shows, and war toys. Numerous colleges and universities receive millions in funding from the Department of War (euphemistically called “Defense”) for academic research.

And money for the military and wars totally dominates the entire national budget, which in turn deleteriously impacts every political jurisdiction and local economy in the country. Ironically, our extravagant military budget is rarely questioned, but cuts for domestic programs are constantly discussed.

The argument that military spending creates jobs is a red herring. A report conducted by the Political Economy Research Institute reveals that every billion dollars of government spending on the military creates 12,000 jobs. But a choice to create tax cuts for (Continued on page 12)



An AGM-114 Hellfire missile hung on the rail of an U.S. Air Force MQ-1L Predator Unmanned Aerial Vehicle is inscribed with, “IN MEMORY OF HONORABLE RONALD REAGAN.” (USAF photo)

\$60,000, the cost of 1 Hellfire missile in the U.S. Military-Industrial Complex could, instead, pay for:

In the U.S. Economy: One teacher’s salary – the average salary for full-time public school teachers in 2010–11 was \$56,069 [Source: National Center for Educational Statistics] – with \$3,931 in change.

In Afghanistan: Quite a bit of education. Mohammed Iqbal, who lives in Darpa Khel, a town of 40,000 in Waziristan which has only two schools, says: “I’d build a school. . . . For my new school the whole building – with eight classrooms – would cost no more than \$10,000 to build. Ideally, each classroom would need 20 computers for the children, and we could do all that (160 in total) for about \$16,000. Then we’d need eight teachers, and they would cost about \$1,200 each a year, so that would be another \$9,600.

That would be all that we’d need, really, and it would be no more than about \$36,000. We’d keep a couple more years’ salary for the teachers, and we’d still have \$4,000 over, and for that we could get the best playground in Waziristan, good enough for all the kids in Darpa Khel.

The Americans think we’re all backwards and won’t let our girls go to school. That’s not true at all. In fact, in 2011 it was a Hellfire missile that destroyed the girls’ school in Miranshah. I actually witnessed the missile striking that time. Fortunately none of the students were there at the time, though the custodian was killed. The Americans hit it again just recently, on April 30, 2012, saying that it was being used by militants, but that wasn’t true. It a little ironic that the Americans think the Taliban destroy schools for girls, but actually it was the U.S. Hellfire missile that did it.” [Source: Clive Stafford Smith at repeive.org.uk]



In Search of Lost Causes: Images of the Iranian Revolution: Paradox, Propaganda, and Persuasion

of re-examination of the assumptions we hold from that period that influence our beliefs about Iranian culture in the present day.

The exhibition is intended to provoke questions: “What are the meanings of these images and the events that followed in Iran?” “Have we been presented

a distorted picture of reality by our media, corporations, and government?” “What is the truth about Iran and their struggles for freedom?” The exhibition also intends to stimulate reflection on our own society, how we live our lives, and the importance of truthfulness, wisdom, and vision in creating and maintaining a true democracy. This is especially important in a culture such as ours in which the corporate-controlled, mainstream media intentionally keep the public misinformed.

Serving as a scholar to the project is Hamid Dabashi. The following are excerpts from his book, *Iran: A People Interrupted*.

Between 1951 and 1953, Mossadeq outmaneuvered both the shah and his political backers via a masterful succession of parliamentary moves. He nationalized Iranian oil, sustained a course of parliamentary democracy unprecedented in Iranian history, and forced the shah to accept constitutional limitations on his wanton disregard for that precious document. When things finally became too hot for the king, he took his newly wedded queen, Sorayya, and ran away to Rome, frolicking on the Via Veneto, waiting for the Americans and the British to do something about his predicament.

As Iranians never get tired of repeating (for this is the defining trauma of their modern history), the CIA, aided by British intelligence, mounted, paid for, and executed a military coup, overthrew the democratically elected government of Mossadeq, and brought the corrupt Muhammad Reza Shah back to power. The CIA-sponsored coup of 1953 (a forerunner of what the United States did later throughout Latin America) became the most traumatic event in modern Iranian history, a trauma from which the people have yet to recover.

The nationalization of Iranian oil in 1953 by Muhammad Mossadeq occurred in an era in which a major anticolonial movement was under

way, not only in Iran but in the entire region – with Jawaharlal Nehru in India, Gamal Adb al-Nasser in Egypt, and the anti-colonial movements spreading in North Africa and Latin America giving a new force to and widening the world revolutionary project. The Cuban Revolution of 1959, and the subsequent African mission of Che Guevara, opened a radical new chapter in a global revolution against capitalism and the Anglo-American custodial role, which required the commission of criminal atrocities to safe guard and propagate it.

The increased involvement of the United States in Vietnam in this period, and Che Guevara’s famous promise that he was going to ignite “a thousand Vietnams” when he returned from Africa to Latin America, unfolded against a background of the uprising of the poor and disenfranchised against the already globalized imperialism of the United States and its Western European allies.

Geopolitically, the world was now divided into two opposing camps, one led by the Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact, the other by the United States and its NATO allies. In the Arab and Muslim world, Muhammad Reza Shah joined Israel, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and other retrograde Persian Gulf States as part of a major anti-Communist network in the region and, in alliance with the United States, crushed all secular, radical opposition to the status quo. This inevitably paved the way for Islamist movements, which gathered even more support after the June 1967 Arab-Israeli war, in which the Jewish state occupied even more Palestinian territory. The ideas and practices of a Jewish state, an Islamic republic, a Christian empire, and a Hindu fundamentalist movement were now emerging as the absolute and absolutist terms of political engagement. (pp. 127-8)

There was a cosmopolitan worldliness in the air when I was growing up in the Pahlavi period, a deeply cultivated sense of our global whereabouts – a catholicity of learning that knew not where “the West” and

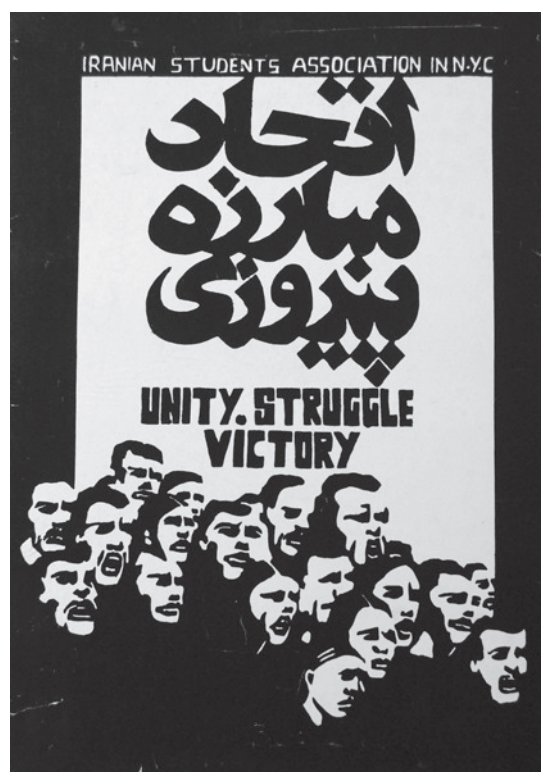
“the East” began on the bipolar axis of a power that divided the world to rule it better, thus diminishing cultures and neutralizing dissent. We recognized no such borders. We did not know or acknowledge where the “Third World” was. For us the world was squarely divided into two opposing parts: those who ruled it and those who resisted this tyranny and rose up against it, either in arms or else with a pen, a pencil, a brush, or a camera.

We listened to an ongoing conversation made up of the voices of Muhammad Mossadeq, Gamal Adb al-Nasser, Jawaharlal Nehru, Marshal Tito, Fidel Castro,



The less we know about another culture and its people, the more likely we are to demonize them. Since demonization of “the other” is a prerequisite for war, education about other cultures is peace work. A good way to learn about other cultures is to study their artistic expressions within the context of their history. To this end, Carlos Steward and Jolene Mechanic are promoting peace with Iran by means of a poster art show and film screenings at the Flood Fine Art Center and Courtyard Gallery and Firestorm Cafe and Bookstore in Asheville, NC.

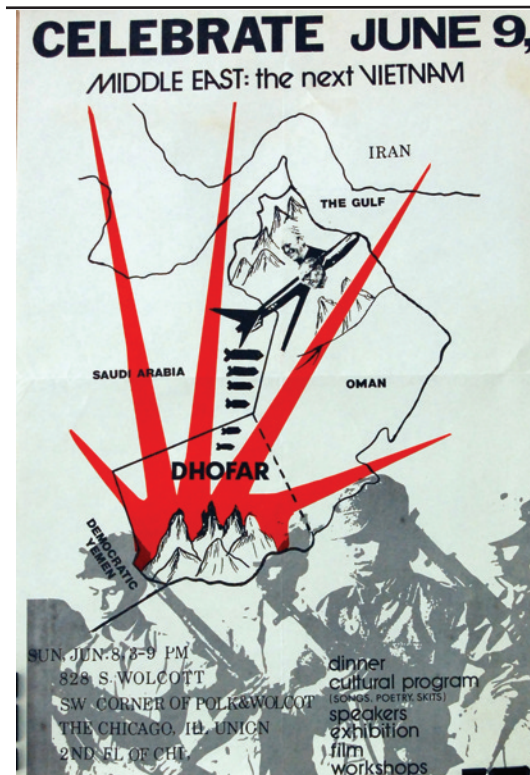
In Search of Lost Causes: Images of the Iranian Revolution: Paradox, Propaganda, and Persuasion will be an exhibition of 140 Iranian revolution-era posters (a few are shown on these pages) as well as photography of the era and programs of lectures and films. “In Search” will challenge audiences to question what they know about Iran and its cultural background, to reflect upon the historical event of the Iranian Revolution of 1979, and to begin a process



Salvador Allende, Patrice Lamumba, Aime Césaire, and Ahmad Ben Bella, among many others. We were neither Islamist nor anti-Islamist. Our mothers may have prayed five times a day, but our fathers enjoyed Russian vodka, and never knew which way the Qibla [the direction of Mecca] was. Our uncles may have been Tudeh [Iranian communist party] members, but our cousins were staunch Mossadeq followers. Yes, we may wholeheartedly have attended Shi’i rituals in the month of Muharram, but we also dropped everything and ran for the nearest theater when there was a new Charlie Chaplin movie, an Indian musical, or an Egyptian melodrama.

You would not be able to corner us or call us names – one thing or another. Nixon and Kissinger were evil people not because they were Americans, since Malcolm X, Martin Luther King Jr., Angela Davis, Muhammad Ali, W.E.B. DuBois, Louis Armstrong, Langston Hughes, and Maya Angelou were also Americans, as were Herman Melville, Mark Twain, William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway, John Steinbeck, and Jack Kerouac – and we loved them all.

There was a momentous certainty about the location of our deeply committed culture of defiant knowledge – and that is



beholden to the moral authority of the clerical establishment. The Shi'i disposition of other Iranians is more tenuous and evident mostly in their cultural character, emotive universe, normative behavior, ethical principles, or cultural vocabulary – all minus the ritual practices and doctrinal beliefs definitive to their faith....

Therefore, Shi'i signs, symbols, and sentiments were present throughout the Iranian culture, not just in the specific religious practices of believing Muslims. The almost universal acknowledgement of Ayatollah Khomeini as the leader of the 1979 revolution was (1) in part orchestrated by a highly organized revolutionary cadre among the clergy; (2) followed by a majority of the Shi'i believers out of the genuine belief in the sanctity of his leadership; (3) strategically adopted by secular Marxist and nationalistic forces to form a unified front against the Pahlavi monarchy; and

where we had a strong sense of affinity with our friends, comrades, and heroes around the world, from Ho Chi Minh to Che Guevara, from Gandhi to Malcolm X, from Frantz Fanon to Jean-Paul Sartre. The terms of this emotive affinity extended from politics to poetry, from arms to arts.... (pp. 133-4)

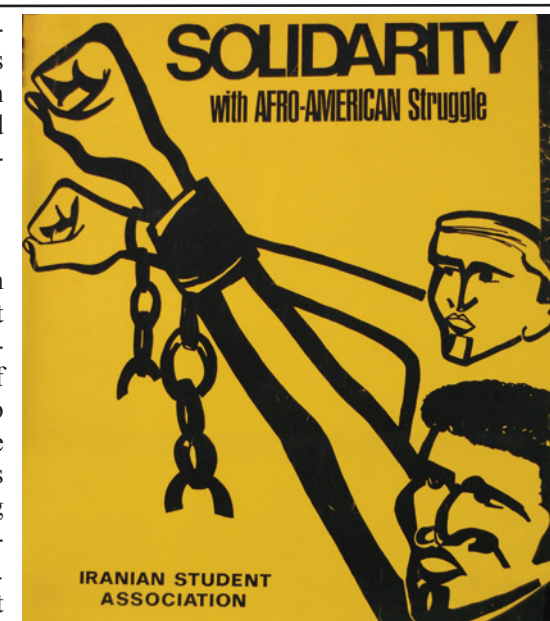
The multifaceted condition of ideological preparedness at the time of the Iranian Revolution of 1979 roughly corresponds to the (political) culture of the time, which can very roughly be divided into two major, and diametrically opposed, components: (1) a rampant Eurocentric secularism almost exclusive to the ruling elite, the nouveaux riches, and the compradorial bourgeoisie, and (2) a grassroots Shi'ism that claimed the loyalty of the clerical clique, the bazaar merchant class, the working class and the urban underclass, and the peasantry. To this basic distinction must be added the social formation of a significant body of inorganic public intellectuals – poets, novelists, dramatists, filmmakers, social essayists. All of them (with rare exception) were left-radical in their political disposition but quite limited in their grassroots appeal (their influence was largely confined to Tehran) when compared to the clerical class, which could instantaneously stir and mobilize the populace for effective revolutionary purposes.

The Iranian political culture at the time of the 1979 revolution will have to be considered in a significant (though not exclusive) way in terms of its religious character. The overwhelming majority of Iranians, almost 90 percent, are Shi'is, some 9 percent are Sunnis, and the remaining 1 percent are Zoroastrians, Jews, Christians, and Baha'is. The definition of being a "Shi'i," however, radically differs from one class to another. By and large the most devout Shi'is are to be found among the rural and urban poor and the merchant (bazaar) middle class, exclusively

(4) the result of a charismatic instigation of latent Shi'i sentiments throughout the Iranian population (even the most staunchly secular and antireligious, almost despite themselves). (pp. 149-50)

The revolution did not begin in Tehran or any other Iranian city but in Washington, DC, and the commencement of the presidency of Jimmy Carter (1977-81), who assigned human rights a place at the top of his policy agenda. That put his administration in the embarrassing position of accounting for the atrocious record of key U.S. allies. Among them in the Middle East were Iran, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan. In November 1977, the shah traveled to Washington to discuss an array of issues with President Carter, including the thorny matter of human rights violations in Iran. A massive anti-shah demonstration on November 16, 1977, forced the Washington police to use tear gas to disperse the demonstrators....

By the time President Carter...went to Iran to return His Majesty's visit, the revolution in Iran was already taking on an ominous momentum....No matter what the shah or President Carter did, Ayatollah Khomeini turned the events to his advantage. A tripartite chess game ensued among the shah, the ayatollah, and President Carter. Khomeini was now leading the course of events because he was responsive to and shaping the sentiments of the demonstrators [in Iran]. If the shah ordered his military to confront and disperse the demonstrators, more casualties would follow, angering the crowd even more, and even more massive demonstrations would ensue. If the shah did not order a crackdown on the uprising, the erosion of his authority and control would be dangerously apparent and his



subjects would make more radical demands....Ayatollah Khomeini had both the shah and President Carter outmaneuvered and checkmated; it was now only a matter of time; a few more moves and the shah would be out. (pp. 156-7)

Carlos Steward is a metal sculptor, an art gallery owner, the host of the Twin Rivers Film festival, and a certified war tax resister. See also ashevillecourtyard.com.

Hamid Dabashi is the Hagop Kevorkian Professor of Iranian Studies and Comparative Literature at Columbia University in New York City. The author of 25 books, he has written on subjects ranging from Iranian Studies, medieval and modern Islam, comparative literature, world cinema, and the philosophy of art. Dr. Dabashi is also a staunch anti-war activist. See also hamiddabashi.com.

The exhibition In Search of Lost Causes opens May 24 & October 5, 2013 in Asheville, NC.

Learn more at: ashevillecourtyard.com/events.html floodgallery.org/upcoming_exhibitions.html twinriversmediafestival.com/special.html



Veterans For Peace Iran Working Group

From their mission statement:

Ever since the Iranian revolution of 1979, the United States and its allies in Europe and the Middle East have used every opportunity to stop and reverse the revolutionary process in Iran and bring that country back under Western control. The current threats of war and expansion of economic sanction are nothing but a continuation of the same decades-old policy of undoing the revolution by means of forcing a regime change in Iran.

At the same time, the Iranian government's policy of repressing any form of internal opposition, tampering with the elections, banning independent labor unions, political parties, and mass organizations, and mass arrests of political activists has made the Iranian situation very complicated. On the one hand, the peace and justice movement in the United States and around the world sees its principled responsibility to oppose any form of aggression — be it military, economic, or otherwise — against Iran; and, on the other hand, it must be mindful of not allowing its opposition to aggression be construed as a support for, or acquiescence toward, the Iranian government's repressive policies.

This requires a well-informed and well-thought-out approach to the Iranian situation. It requires a great deal of informed discussion, extensive educational work, and a clearly defined approach that takes into account both sides of this complex situation; an approach that is based on both opposition to aggression and interference in the internal affairs of other countries, and international solidarity with the peoples of other countries, not their governments.

(Learn more at www.vfp-irwg.org/)



War is Horrible but...

(Continued from page 8)

war without complaint. No serious person expects that evil can be eliminated from the human condition, yet we condemn it and struggle against its realization in human affairs. We strive to divert potential evildoers from their malevolent course of action. Scientists and doctors continue to seek cures for cancers that have afflicted humanity for millennia. Even conditions that cannot be wholly eliminated can sometimes be mitigated, but only if someone tries to mitigate them. War should belong to this class of events.

Finally, whatever else might be said about the pacifists, one may surely assert that if everyone were a pacifist, no wars would occur. Pacifism may be criticized on various grounds, as it always has been and still is, but to say that pacifists “lack any shred of political decency” seems itself to be an indecent description. Remember: war is horrible, as everybody now concedes but many immediately put out of mind.

8. “Every war is horrible, but freedom and justice cannot be allowed to be defeated by tyranny and injustice. As hideous as war is, it is not as hideous as the things it can stop and prevent.”

This statement assumes that war amounts to a contest between freedom and justice on one side and tyranny and injustice on the other. One scarcely commits the dreaded sin of moral equivalence, however, by observing that few wars present such a stark contrast, in which only the children of God fight on one side and only the children of Satan fight on the other. One reason why war is so horrible is that it invariably drags into its charnel house many – again, the children are the most undeniable examples—who must be held blameless for any actions or threats that might have incited the war.

Even if we set aside such clear-cut innocents and consider only persons in the upper echelons of the conflicting sides, it is rare to find only angels on one side and only demons on the other. In World War II, for example, the Allied states were led by such angels as Winston Churchill, who relished the horrific terror bombing of German cities; Josef Stalin, one of the greatest mass murderers of all time; Franklin D. Roosevelt, of whose moral uprightness the less said the better; and Harry S. Truman, who took pleasure in annihilating hundreds of thousands of defenseless Japanese noncombatants first with incendiary bombs and last with nuclear weapons. Yes, the other side had Adolf Hitler, whose fiendishness I have no desire to deny or minimize, but the point is that the overall character

of the leadership on both sides sufficiently attests that there was enough evil to go around. As for the ordinary soldiers, of course, everyone who knows anything about actual combat appreciates that the men on both sides quickly become brutalized and routinely commit atrocities of every imaginable size and shape.

So it is far from clear that war is always or even typically “not as hideous as the things it can stop and prevent.” On many occasions, refusal to resort to war, even in the face of undeniable evils, may still be the better course. When World War II ended, leaving more than 62 million dead, most of them civilians, and hundreds of millions displaced, homeless, wounded, sick, or impoverished, the survivors might well have doubted whether conditions would have been even more terrible if the war had not taken place. (The dead were unavailable for comment.) To make matters worse, owing to the war, the monster Stalin gained control of an enormous area stretching from Czechoslovakia to Korea; and because of the defeat of the Japanese Empire, the monster Mao

(Continued on page 14)

All War IS Local

(Continued from page 9)

the poor would stimulate personal consumption and create 15,000 jobs. The same billion dollars would create 18,000 jobs in assuring health care, 25,000 jobs in education, 27,700 in mass transit.

In effect, grotesque war spending means less money for:

- elementary & secondary education;
- grants in aid to states and localities;
- home energy assistance for low income households;
- HIV/AIDS;
- community block grants;
- special education and assistance for the disadvantaged;
- school improvement;
- loss of funds for vocational and adult education;
- supplemental nutrition WIC program;
- children and family Services;
- Head Start;
- rental assistance vouchers;
- children served by childcare assistance;
- etc.

The National Priorities Project estimates of actual cost of recent U.S. wars at over \$1,372 million dollars can be broken down for each community.

For Portland, Oregon the cost as of September 12, 2012 (costofwar.com/state/OR/city/portland/) was nearly \$1,794,000,000. The 2012 U.S. Census estimates Portland’s population at 600,000. Thus the cost of the wars for each man, woman, and child in Portland is about \$3,000, with costs continuing to escalate. If the estimated, projected higher national costs reach \$4.4 trillion, costs to Portland could reach \$5,700,000,000 (\$9,500 for each Portlander); or if the costs reach \$6 trillion, nearly \$7,800,000,000 (\$13,000 for each Portlander).

Fifty million U.S. Americans now live in poverty, with one on every seven requiring food stamps to survive each month. Over 125,000 of Portlanders, or over 20% of the city’s population, are on food stamps. Over 15,000 people in Portland experience homelessness during the year.

The National Debt now stands at nearly \$16 trillion, or \$50,000 for every man, woman, and child. Each of us is in perpetual debt.

And the disparity between Haves and Have-Nots is felt globally as the Occupy Movement has protested

austerity measures being felt by much of the world. A study by the Green Party of England disclosed that the same global capitalist economic policies that are polluting the planet while depleting its finite resources, have allowed a mere 400 billionaires to acquire assets equal to the combined wealth of 45% of the world’s population.

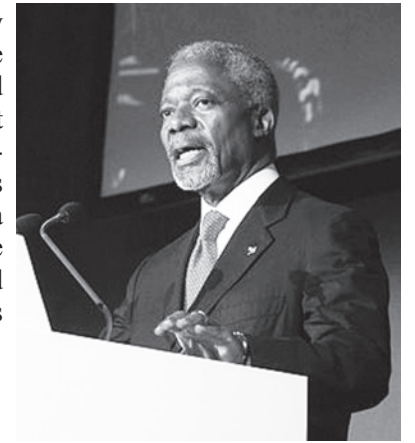
Immoral and illegal wars created by a corrupt political economy

In addition to direct and indirect costs, these U.S.-led wars are illegal on their face. They make a mockery of our moral and legal authority as a nation, and reveal that in fact we are a nation of (lawless) men, not of law. Over 2,670,000 human beings have been killed or maimed as the consequences of these recent criminal wars in violation of international law, staining further our national character.

The illegality and immorality of these wars, conducted with no accountability or plausible justification, breed a corruption at the top political levels of society that permeates into every aspect of society. Our corrupt economic institutions are profiting obscenely from policies of mass murder.

No war was declared, as required by the U.S. Constitution. The United Nations (UN) Charter to which the U.S. is a signatory, allows military action in only two instances: (1) if authorized by the UN Security Council, or (2) if undertaken in self-defense against an existing or imminent armed attack. Neither of these conditions were met or sought. Under Article VI, Clause 2, of the U.S. Constitution, the provisions of the UN Charter are incorporated into the Supreme Law of the Land of the United States, and therefore the U.S. violated both the UN Charter, and its own Constitution.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan in 2004 publicly declared that the U.S. invasion of Iraq was and remains an illegal act, contravening the UN Charter. [“Iraq war illegal, says Annan,” BBC, September 16, 2004]. Richard Perle in 2003, then a senior advisor to the Department of Defense Policy Board, admitted that the Iraq war was illegal because the U.S. had broken international law, behavior not consistent with the rules of the UN [“War critics astonished as U.S. hawk admits invasion was illegal,” Oliver Burkeman and Julian Borger, *The Guardian*, November 20, 2003].



UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan in 2004 publicly declared that the U.S. invasion of Iraq was and remains an illegal act, contravening the UN Charter.

In fact they are Nuremberg-type crimes, meaning they are the worst of the worst in terms of national and political criminality.

I know a bit about this criminal pattern. In 1969 I was commander of a U.S. Air Force combat security unit in Vietnam where I witnessed a series of atrocities wiping out entire inhabited and undefended fishing villages. These were international crimes committed by both U.S. and South Vietnamese forces under U.S. command. That war cost U.S. taxpayers nearly \$740 billion in today’s dollars [www.fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/RS22926.pdf] as it diabolically claimed more than 5 million lives, 99 percent of whom were innocent Southeast Asian peasants.

Additionally, torture and inhumane treatments have been well documented in U.S.-run prisons in Iraq (Abu Ghraib), Afghanistan (Bagram), and Guantanamo (located in Cuba against the wishes of that country). This behavior constitutes grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions; the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ); the Nuremberg Principles; and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

The seven leaked confidential British Downing Street Memos, dated from March to July 2002, disclose a U.S. and British drive to war a full year before the March 2003 invasion. “War was now seen as inevitable,” while “intelligence and facts were being fixed around the policy” seeking “regime change” without any “basis under international law.” The memos also declared: “There is no recent evidence of Iraq complicity with international terrorism... There is no credible evidence to link Iraq with Usama Bin Laden.” Regarding Iraq’s possession of WMD, the “intelligence is poor.” [“The

Downing Street Reader: A cheat sheet on the memos behind the scandal,” The Rolling Stone Blog, June 22, 2005].

The U.S. has been in a virtual permanent war economy since World War II. Increasingly, the political economy requires permanent enemies, and functions to assure their creation. Thus, the entire U.S. American system has a vested interest in a permanent state of tension.

The citizens of the U.S., in their participation through their Congress, President, and their huge

The U.S. has been in a virtual permanent war economy since World War II.... Local communities desperately seek new funds through bond issues and new taxes as programs are being cut. The local people are being asked to pay for the war boondoggles of the rich.

military-industrial complex, spend more money on their military than any other nation – 45% of the entire world’s expenditures, more than the next 14 nations combined.

The impact of inequality on individuals and society is well established. Social epidemiologist Richard Wilkinson concludes that, “the quality of social relations in societies is related to the scale of income inequality – how big the gap is between rich and poor. More unequal societies tend to have higher rates of violent crime and homicide, and that people living in them feel more hostility, are less likely to be involved in community life, and are much less likely to trust each other; in short they have lower levels of social capital... Inequality is deeply corrosive... Greater inequality is perhaps the most significant obstacle to the development of an environmentally sustainable level of economic activity.” [Richard Wilkinson (a social epidemiologist), *The Impact of Inequality*, The New Press, 2005, pp. 24-30].

The Nation is Now Paying the Price; Localities Need to Become Part of the Anti-War Movement

The U.S. has doubled its national debt during these wars, making every American alive today indebted in perpetuity. The domestic budget is being severely

cut, requiring draconian cutbacks in education, libraries, medical care such as it is, all social safety net programs, fire and police departments, all city services, etc. Portland’s Fiscal Year 2012-13 budget is nearly \$2.85 billion, 3.8% less than the previous year. “Austerity” budgets are being imposed all over the U.S. (and the world) largely due to siphoning of national wealth into wars and the military-industrial complex.

This is why all political leaders and all citizens in every jurisdiction – towns, cities, counties, and states – and every functional entity within cities, counties, and states, such as schools and libraries, need to become ardent and loud opponents of the national war and military policy that is enriching the military-industrial complex at everyone’s expense. Local communities desperately seek new funds through bond issues and new taxes as programs are being cut. The local people are being asked to pay for the war boondoggles of the rich – private profit, public decay.

Unless everyone gets behind a national popular movement to end the wars and to severely restrict the Pentagon budget, we as a nation will simply keep eroding into what we call a “Third World” country where a very tiny minority controls the lives of the vast majority. A neofeudalism, if you will. Fewer and fewer local residents will be able to afford increased property taxes imposed by bond issues or other local tax increases to keep local jurisdictions afloat as the war economy sucks the nation dry.

War is a local issue! If and when people understand this, we the people possess a political opportunity to reclaim our people’s republic. Short of that, we collapse while on our knees with hardly a whisper.

S. Brian Willson (brianwillson.com) is a U.S. Air Force veteran, whose experience in Vietnam led him into peace activism. In 1987, while peacefully blocking a military train at a U.S. Navy munitions base, he received severe injuries and was almost murdered when the train chose not to stop. Brian is the author of Blood on the Tracks and his latest book is My Country is the World: Photo Journey of a Stumbling Satyagrahi. See brianwillson.com and <http://bloodonthetracks.info>.

Israeli Violence Finally on Trial

by Ann Wright

In late January 2009, Israel attacked Gaza, leaving 1,440 dead, 5,000 wounded, and 50,000 homeless.

Now four years later, the Israelis have mounted another major military attack on Gaza. According to the Palestinian Center for Human Rights, 156 Palestinians were killed, including 103 civilians, and 1,000 others were wounded, including 971 civilians. Thirty-three children were killed and 274 children were wounded; 13 women were killed and 162 wounded; and three journalists were killed.

I had traveled to Gaza in 2009 and witnessed the terrible destruction, and during these past four years, I have joined international citizen activists in many projects to educate our fellow citizens about the frequent Israeli military attacks on Gaza; the imprisonment of thousands of Palestinians; the illegal settlements built by the Israeli government in the West Bank; the apartheid walls that separate children from schools, farmers from their land, and workers from their employment; and the land and sea blockade of Gaza.

One of those projects is to break the sea blockade. After the 2009 Israeli attack, ships attempting to enter Gaza were rammed by the Israeli navy. So in May, 2010, a flotilla of six ships, the Gaza Freedom Flotilla, was formed to attempt to break the naval blockade.

Having wreaked violence – with impunity – in Gaza in 2009, Israel had no qualms about using violence against the Gaza Freedom Flotilla’s international passengers.

Israeli commandos brutally attacked all six flotilla ships, killing nine, wounding 50, and assaulting many more. After the attack, passengers were seized, put in prison in Israel for several days, and then deported for “entering Israel illegally.”

Most the Flotilla’s passengers had not seen each other since the events of May 2009. But in early November 2012, hundreds of us from more than a dozen countries reunited in Istanbul to be witnesses in a court hearing. Numerous investigations had been

conducted, including two by the Israeli government and one each by the Turkish government and the United Nations Human Rights Council. But this was the first judicial proceeding concerning the Israeli attack on the Freedom Flotilla – and one of the few judicial probes into state-sponsored Israeli violence.

The hearing was held in Seventh Criminal Court in Istanbul. Four former Israeli military officers had been indicted on May 12, 2012 on charges including premeditated murder, attempted premeditated murder, aggravated assault, assault, aggravated looting, hijacking or illegal seizure of train or sea craft, aggravated criminal damage to prop-

This is the first judicial proceeding concerning the Israeli attack on the Freedom Flotilla and one of the few judicial probes into state-sponsored Israeli violence.

erty, torture, unlawful detention and imprisonment. All four – General Gabi Ashkenazi, Israeli military chief of staff; Vice Admiral Eliezer Marom, military intelligence chief; Major General Amos Yadlin, Naval Forces commander; and Brigadier General Avishai Levy, head of Air Force intelligence – have retired from the Israeli military and none appeared at the court hearing.

The 144-page indictment includes the autopsy reports of the nine persons killed by Israeli commandos; it reveals that five were shot at close-range, execution style.



Above: USS *Liberty* in July 1967, upon her return from the Mediterranean Sea. She had been attacked and seriously damaged by Israeli forces while operating off the Sinai Peninsula on June 8, 1967 and was subsequently repaired at Malta. Thirty-four U.S. Sailors were killed and 171 wounded (U.S. Navy photo). Below: *Mavi Marmara*, May 22, 2009. On May 31, Israeli forces boarded the vessel and killed nine people including one American (Free Gaza Movement photo). To date, Israel has not been held to account for these attacks.



Joe Meadors and I were the only two (of 17) American passengers in attendance. Joe is a survivor of two Israeli naval attacks. Forty-five years ago, in June, 1967, he was a sailor on the

USS *Liberty*, which was attacked off the coast of Gaza by Israeli forces. During the nine-hour attack, 34 Americans were killed and 171 were wounded. Then, in 2010, Joe was one of 30 passengers aboard the Freedom Flotilla’s *Sfendoni*. Onboard the vessel, he was hit by a paint bullet and witnessed others being assaulted and beaten by Israeli soldiers.

But just as the United States government did not hold Israel accountable for its attack on the USS *Liberty* 45 years ago, the U.S. government today has not held the Israeli government accountable for the death of an American citizen Furkan Dogan, one of the nine who was assassinated/executed by Israeli commandos on the *Mavi Marmara*.

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War is Horrible but...

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Zedong would soon take complete control of China and impose a murderous reign of terror on the world's most populous country that cost the lives of perhaps another 60 million persons (as many as 73 million, according to one plausible estimate).[2]

It is difficult to believe that the situation in China would have been so awful even if the Japanese had succeeded in incorporating China into the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere.

9. "I grant you the war is horrible, but it is a war, after all. You have to compare apples to apples, and when I do that, I see this war is going well."

This statement about the U.S. war in Iraq exemplifies what some call the "not as bad as Hamburg-Dresden-Tokyo-Hiroshima-Nagasaki" defense of brutal warfare. If we make such pinnacles of savagery our standard, then, sure enough, everything else pales by comparison. But why should anyone adopt such a grotesque standard? To do so is to concede that anything less horrible than the very worst cases is "not so bad." In truth, warfare's effects are sufficiently hideous at every level. What the Israelis did in Lebanon a few years ago bears no comparison with the February 1945 Allied attack on Dresden, of course, but the sight of even one little Lebanese child dead, her bloody body gruesomely mangled by an explosion, ought to be enough to give pause to any proponent of war. Try putting yourself in the place of that child's mother.

10. "[Certain writers] all agreed that war is horrible but said the Bible gives government the authority to wage war to save innocent lives."

For almost two thousand years, biblical scholars have been disputing what Christians may and may not do in regard to war. The dispute continues today, so the matter is certainly not resolved among devout Christians. Even if Christians may go to war to save innocent lives, however, a big question remains: Is the government going to war for this purpose or for one of the countless other purposes that lead governments to make war? Saving the innocent makes an appealing excuse, but it is often, if not always, only a pretext. "Just war" writers from Augustine to Thomas Aquinas to Grotius to the latest contributors have agonized over the ready availability of such pretexts and warned against the wickedness of advancing them when the real motives are less justifiable or even plainly immoral.[3]

For centuries, European combatants on all sides invoked God's blessing for their wars against one another. As recently as World War II, the Germans claimed to have "Gott mit Uns," a declaration that adorned the belt buckles of Wehrmacht soldiers in both world wars. Strange to say, in 1917 and 1918 Christian ministers of the gospel in pulpits across the United States were



Prussian belt buckle inscribed: "Gott Mit Uns" (God with us)

assuring their congregations that *their* nation-state was engaged in a "war for righteousness" (the title of Richard M. Gamble's [2003] splendid book about this repellent episode). So the invocation of biblical authority really doesn't get us very far: the enemy may be invoking the same authority.

Nowadays, of course, one side invokes the Jewish and Christian God, whereas the other calls on the blessing of Allah. Whether this bifurcated manner of gaining divine sanction for the commission of mass murder and mayhem among the sons of Abraham represents progress or not, I leave to the learned theologians.

11. "War is horrible, but thank God we have men and women who are willing and able to protect our people and our freedom."

These men and women may be willing and able to supply such protection, but do they? Our leaders constantly proclaim that their wars are aimed at protecting us and our freedoms – "We go forward," declared George W. Bush, "to defend freedom and all that is good and just in our world" (Bush 2001) – but one has to wonder about the truth of that proclamation, considering that in the entire history of warfare, each major U.S. war (with the possible exception of the War for Independence) left the general run of the American people with fewer freedoms after the war than they had enjoyed before the war.

In my book *Crisis and Leviathan* (1987, 123–58, 196–236), I document this ratchet effect in detail for the two world wars. After World War I, the government not only kept taxes far above their prewar levels but also retained newly court-sanctioned powers to conscript men for foreign wars, to interfere with virtually any private transaction in international trade and finance (Trading with the Enemy Act of 1917), and to suppress free speech in a draconian manner (Sedition Act of 1918). After World War II, the government again kept taxes much higher they had been before the war, retained for the first time a large peacetime military apparatus, created the CIA as a sort of personal presidential intelligence and quasi-military group, con-

tinued to draft men for military service even during peacetime, and engaged much more pervasively in central management and manipulation of the private economy. The people, for their part, gained the privilege of living with the very real threat of nuclear holocaust hovering over them for four decades while the U.S. government kept the Cold War pot boiling.

The so-called war on terror has struck deeply into Americans' rights to privacy by vastly enhancing the government's surveillance activities and virtually gutting the Fourth Amendment's protection against warrantless searches and seizures. It has also led the government to create an agency now empowered to commit acts in U.S. airports that if committed by others would be prosecuted as sexual assault and battery and as criminal molestation of children. This "war" has also served to justify one of the greatest military-spending run-ups in U.S. history, leaving U.S. military-related spending – if correctly measured – greater than the comparable spending of all other nations combined. Nevertheless, Americans are no safer because of these sweeping infringements of their liberties, many of which have been de facto pork barrel projects and others of which have been nothing more than security theater.

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War, whether real or make-believe, serves to justify huge increases in government spending, taxing, borrowing, and exertion of power over private affairs, and such government surges attract opportunists galore while doing little or nothing to improve people's real security or to protect their freedom. Indeed, in the war on terror, the government has added fuel to the fire of Muslim rage against Americans in the Middle East but achieved nothing positive to compensate for this heightened threat.[4]

Every time the rulers set out to protect the village, they decide that the best way to do so is to destroy it in the process. Call me a cynic, but I can't help wondering whether protection of the people and their freedoms was really the state's objective, and after fifty years of thinking about the matter, I have come up with some pretty attractive alternative hypotheses. One of them is that, as Marine General Smedley Butler famously expressed it, "war is a racket," but I have other alternative hypotheses, too.

12. "War is horrible but some economic good came out of World War II. It brought the United States out of one of the greatest slumps in history, the Great Depression."

This venerable broken-window fallacy refuses to die, no matter how many times a stake is driven through its heart. Most Americans believe it. Worse, because less excusable, nearly all historians and even a large majority of economists do so as well. I have been whacking at this nonsense for several decades, but, so far as I can tell, I have scarcely made a dent in it. Should anyone care to see a complete counter-argument, I recommend the first five chapters of my 2006 book, *Depression, War, and Cold War*.

In brief, the government did not – indeed, could not – create wealth simply by spending vast amounts of money (much of it newly created as a result of cooperative Federal Reserve policies) on soldiers and weapons. The government did wipe out unemployment during the war, but only by putting millions of men in the armed forces. During World War II, these forces absorbed, primarily by conscription, 16 million persons at one time or another (about three times the number of persons officially counted as unemployed in 1941), while causing a similar number of people to be employed in military-supply industries. The economy looked prosperous because everybody was working and (except those in the armed forces) earning seemingly good wages and salaries. Yet the supply of civilian goods and services actually shrank, and many ordinary goods were not available at all (for example, new cars) or were available only in limited, rationed amounts (for example, meats, sugar, canned foods, gasoline, and tires). Private investment also dropped sharply as the government took over the allocation of capital, directing it into arms-related projects. So the apparent "wartime prosperity" was spurious. Only when the war ended and the military machine was largely dismantled did genuine prosperity return, for the first time since 1929.

13. "War is horrible, but whining about it is worse. Either put up or shut up."

Some people always reject the denunciation of any familiar social institution or conduct unless the denouncer offers a "constructive criticism" – that is, unless he puts forward a promising plan to eliminate the evil he denounces. I admit at once that I have not discovered a cure for the human tendency to resort to war when much more intelligent and humane alternatives are available. I am trying to convince people that on nearly all such occasions they are allowing their rulers to bamboozle them and turn them into cannon fodder for purposes that serve the rulers' interests, not the people's. I am getting nowhere in this effort, but I am going to keep trying.

14. "Of course, war is horrible, but at present it's still the only guarantee to maintain peace."

This statement as it stands is self-contradictory because it affirms that the only

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The Tragic Truth about the State of Israel

by Luke Hiken

Humans, unfortunately, by and large, grow up to perpetrate the same atrocities that were perpetrated upon them against those they are close to.

In the 1940s and 1950s, I was raised on the North Shore of Chicago, in a suburb named Glencoe. The town was at least 95% Jewish, and everyone knew who the 3 black families were, knew the handful of Christians and “others” who resided near us. We understood that we comprised one of the wealthiest, fanciest Jewish ghettos in the United States, and perhaps the world. The great majority of us went to temple at the North Shore Congregation Israel, and donated \$5.00 a shot for stickers to purchase “trees” to plant in the new State of Israel. We were going to transform the desert into a promised land and help the oppressed Jews of Europe to create a homeland where pogroms, ghettos and the Holocaust were a thing of the past. For literally decades, Zionists had perpetuated the myth that the territory that would become the State of Israel was “a land without a people, for a people without a land.” How noble and just it all seemed.

If anyone would have asked us why we were planting trees in Israel, when the Holy Land was already covered with Olive trees planted by Arab families for more than 5 centuries, we would have accused them of rank anti-semitism. If someone had suggested that we were purchasing guns and missiles, instead of agricultural tools, we would have fought them on the spot. Yet history judges us harshly and we now have a reckoning to deal with.

I represented men and women on death row in California for over 25 years. All of the defendants on death row, without exception, were brutalized as young children, either by their parents, or their

community. The great majority of prisoners were victims of brutality, and they responded to the society that brutalized them by killing in return.

One would have expected that those who were brutalized as children would have recognized how horrible the experience was and rejected such behavior when it was their turn to have authority over others. But that is simply not so. Humans, unfortunately, by and large, grow up to perpetrate the same atrocities that were perpetrated upon them against those they are close to. While this phenomenon is not universal, it is so common as to be the expectation for law enforcement and the society at large. Children of convicts are expected to become criminals when they grow up, and the society does everything in its power to ensure that that expectation is met. Young black children in this country have to be saints to stay out of reformatories and prisons. One out of three black people in the United States are in prison or on parole.

So, too, do we watch this phenomenon being tragically repeated in the State of Israel. One would expect that a people who had been subjected to the atrocities of World War II, to the Holocaust, to the discrimination and slaughter perpetrated against the Jews, would be the first nation on earth to oppose a similar oppression against others. Yet, the sad reality is that the racism and violence perpetrated against Palestinians in the State of Israel is outlandish and inexcusable.

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On the Ground in the Troubled Land

A report from a member of the Veterans For Peace Palestine-Middle East Working Group

by Vince Stravino

General David Petraeus told the Armed Services Committee in 2010 that “The enduring hostilities between Israel and some of its neighbors present distinct challenges to our ability to advance our interests in the region. The conflict foments anti-American sentiment, due to a perception of U.S. favoritism for Israel. Arab anger over the Palestinian question limits the strength and depth of U.S. partnerships with governments in the region.”

This past summer I returned from my third trip in two years to this troubled area where Jews, Christians, and Muslims once lived for 2000 years in relative peace. Our diverse group, Interfaith Peace Builders, met brave Israeli and Palestinian peace activists on both sides of the separation or apartheid wall. My trip was informative but disturbing.

Everyone suffers here, but Palestinians hurt the most, seeing their homeland shrink daily as Jewish immigrants from all over the world are illegally relocated with financial assistance and private security paid for by the Israeli government. British Journalist and Israeli citizen Jonathan Cook told us, cynically, that the region is like Swiss cheese with powerful Israel holding all the cheese and the weaker Palestinians left with the holes.

Israeli demolition of Palestinian homes, orchards, wells, and schools goes on unabated despite international con-



Vince Stravino with angry college student in East Jerusalem who tells of the recent demolition of her family home rendering all her family homeless and struggling to survive. Her family now shares cramped rented quarters with two other displaced families.

(photo by Interfaith Peace Builders ifpb.org)

demnation. We met a grandmother of one family rendered homeless. She denounced the Israeli authorities plus our American government since she – like most persons we met – believes Washington allows this injustice while condemning human rights abuses in other countries.

A German environmental engineer in the Hebron Hills complained to us that his efficient solar energy station supplying electricity to 10 remote Palestinian villages was condemned for demolition despite the German government’s protests. He pointed out that all 27 foreign ministers of the European Union have recently criticized the Israeli government for the 60 demolitions of EU funded humanitarian projects in 2011.

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Israeli Violence Finally on Trial

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Furkan’s father testified at the Turkish court hearing that the United States government has not held an independent investigation of the murder of his son. Instead, U.S. State Department officials told him that the United States government would rely on the investigation done by the Israeli government. He testified that his son’s autopsy revealed he was shot five times, and three of the shots were considered lethal including two in the head at very close range. His death was the result of fractures of his skull, ribs, and limb bones that caused internal bleeding, cerebral hemorrhage, and brain tissue destruction from the bullets.

I was on the *Challenger 1* vessel with 17 other passengers. Our boat was off the port stern of the *Mavi Marmara* and we witnessed percussion grenades hitting the

ship and heard pings – the sounds of live rounds fired by Israeli commandos into the ship.

On the *Challenger 1*, the Israeli commandos fired percussion grenades which broke the windows and sent glass flying onto the deck. They Tasered a woman journalist; fired paint balls directly into the face of another woman passenger – just missing an eye but causing profuse bleeding; and threw two women passengers onto the deck, smashed their faces into the glass, then put hoods over their glass-pocked heads.

Later, in custody at the airport, we were imprisoned for five hours on a bus with no water, food, or toilet facilities. Then we had to run a gantlet of uniformed military and police officers; one of the police leaned out from their crowd and slapped one of our women passengers, causing a near riot.

The *Mavi Marmara* passengers testified about the murders of nine and wounding of 50. Journalist Hassan Ghani told of victim Cevdet Kiliçlar, who oversaw the press room of the ship. He had been shot

point-blank through the forehead; a fellow passenger knelt beside Cevdet’s body, trying to put his brains back into his skull.

Canadian Kevin Neish told of finding a “hit list” that had fallen from the backpack of an Israeli soldier, and of helping carry the injured and wounded down the stairways to the tiny medical office.

Laura Aura of Spain testified that passengers had to kneel on the outside deck for hours in the intense sun as helicopters hovered overhead sending salt water spray over them; commandos refused to let passengers use the bathroom and many had to soil themselves.

If the Turkish court convicts the accused, international arrest warrants can be issued. Then INTERPOL would be required to arrest them if they leave Israel for virtually any country other than the United States. The Turkish judgment could also be used as a basis for further judicial proceedings in the International Criminal Court, although Israel, like the United States, is not a signatory to the ICC.

The next court hearing in Istanbul is February 21, 2013. However, the fact that a court has looked at the evidence of the events on the *Mavi Marmara* is a major step in attempting to hold accountable those who planned the attack.

Today, as Israel continues to attack the people of Gaza, we plead on behalf of the civilian population for governments to use their influence on the Israeli government to end their attacks; and we plead with the militants in Gaza to stop firing rockets into Israel.

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War is Horrible but...

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way to make sure that we will have peace is by going to war. Perhaps, if we are feeling generous, we may interpret the statement as the time-honored exhortation that to maintain the peace, we should *prepare* for war, hoping that by dissuading aggressors from moving against us, our preparation will preserve the peace. Although this reworded policy is not self-contradictory, it is dangerous because the preparation we make for war may itself move us toward actually going to war. For example, preparation for war may entail increasing the number of military officers and allowing the top brass to exert greater influence in making foreign policy. Those officers may believe that without war their careers will go nowhere, and so they may tilt their advice to civilian authorities toward risking or actually making war even when peace might easily be preserved. Likewise, military suppliers may use their political influence to foster international suspicions and fears that otherwise might be allayed. Wars are not good for business in general, but they are good for the munitions contractors. Certain legislators may develop an interest in militarism; perhaps it helps them to attract campaign contributions from arms contractors, veterans' groups, and members of the National Guard and military reserve organizations. Pretty soon we may find ourselves dealing, as President Dwight D. Eisenhower did, with a military-industrial-congressional complex, and we may find that it packs a great deal of political punch and acts in a way that, all things considered, diminishes the chance of keeping the country at peace.[5]

From the foregoing commentary, a recurrent theme may be extracted: those who argue that "war is horrible, but . . ." nearly always use this rhetorical construction not to frame a genuinely serious and honest balancing of reasons for and against war, but only to acknowledge what cannot be hidden – that war is horrible – and then to pass on immediately to an affirmation that notwithstanding the horrors, whose actual forms and dimensions they neither specify nor examine in detail, a certain war ought to be fought.

The reasons given to justify a war's being fought, however, generally amount to claims that cannot support a strong case. They often are not even bona fide reasons, but mere propaganda, especially when they emanate from official sources. They sometimes rest on historical errors, such as the claim that the armed forces in past wars have somehow kept foreigners from depriving us of our liberties. And the case for war usually rests on ill-founded speculation about what will happen if we do not go to war.

People need to recognize, however, that government officials and their running dogs in the media, among others, are not soothsayers. None of us knows the future,

but these interested parties lack a disinterested motive for making a careful, well-informed forecast. They have, as the saying goes, an agenda of their own. "The best and the brightest" of our leaders and their kept experts generally amount to little more than what C. Wright Mills called "crackpot realists," and on occasion, specifically since September 11, 2001, they do not meet even that standard (see Leebaert 2011). Hence, these geniuses, equipped with all of that secret information they constantly emphasize their critics do not possess, have recently put forward forecasts of a "cake walk" through Iraq, a "slam dunk" on finding lots of weapons of mass destruction there, and liberal-democratic dominoes falling across the Middle East—forecasts that fit more comfortably in a lunatic asylum than in a discussion among rational, well-informed people.

The government generally relies on marshalling patriotic emotion and reflexive loyalty rather than on making a sensible case for going to war. Much of the discussion that does take place is a sham because the government officials who pretend to listen to other opinions, as U.S. leaders did most recently during 2002 and early 2003, have already decided what they are going to do, no matter what other people may say. The rulers know that once the war starts, nearly everybody will fall into line and "support the troops."

If someone demands that the skeptic about war offer constructive criticism, here is my proposal: always insist that the *burden of proof* rests heavily on the warmonger. This protocol, which is now anything but standard operating procedure, is eminently judicious precisely because, as we all recognize, war is horrible. Given its horrors, which in reality are much greater than most people appreciate, it only makes sense that those who propose to enter into those horrors make a very, very strong case for doing so. If they cannot – and I submit that they almost never can – then people will serve their interests best by declining an invitation to war. As a rule, the most rational, humane, and auspicious course of action is indeed to give peace a chance.

Footnotes

1. Abraham Lincoln to Horace Greeley, August 22, 1862. (civilwarhome.com/lincolngreeley.htm)
2. The new estimates of the casualties of Mao's reign compiled by R. J. Rummel (democraticpeace.wordpress.com/2008/11/24/reevaluating-chinas-democide-to-73000000/)
3. For an excellent assessment of the most recent scholarship in the "just war" tradition, see Calhoun 2011.
4. On the war on terror, see my books published in 2005 and 2007 and, for more recent years, my continuing posts at the Independent Institute's group blog The Beacon (blog.independent.org/).
5. On the military-industrial complex, see Higgs 1990 and Ledbetter 2011.

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The Tragic Truth

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Gaza is nothing short of a concentration camp. Children are starving there and Israel will kill any individual or group that attempts to bring food or water into that land. Israel is the last country on the face of the earth that has dared to impose a formal state of apartheid against an indigenous population. Israeli checkpoints are the precise duplicates of what the Nazi checkpoints at the borders of the ghettos looked like in 1938 Germany. The excuses and rationalizations used by Israel to perpetuate this oppression against the Palestinian



German sentries with heavy machine gun at the gate to the Ghetto at the intersection of Nowolipie and Smocza Streets in Warsaw, Poland, May 1943. (photo by Jürgen Stroop)

people are precisely those used by the Nazis: Palestinians pose a threat to the security of the nation; they will steal jobs and security from the rightful people of the nation; they are untrustworthy, and owe no allegiance to the nation. The parallels are terrifying.

That this should be the situation in 2012 is so pathetic as to be comical in an historical context. The anti-semitism of the prevailing nations of World War II, the United States and Great Britain, was so profound as to obviate the possibility that Jews would be permitted to immigrate or seek sanctuary in either of those victorious countries. The Christian majorities of those countries so hated the Jews that allowing them to seek sanctuary in either country was out of the question.

Instead, anti-semitic nations decided to give the Jews who survived the Holocaust land that belonged to the Palestinians. Kill two birds with one stone. Keep Jews out of the U.S. and Great Britain, and give them the land of a bunch of Muslims that, according to the U.S. and Great Britain, were little more than savages. Certainly, the Western powers could control any opposition the local population might put up to prevent the Jews from entering the new state of Israel. It would be a walk in the park for these

countries to disenfranchise the Palestinian people, who had lived on the land for centuries. The fact that Jews had lived in Palestine for centuries without undergoing the sort of atrocities perpetrated by European Christians upon them was quickly overlooked. Give us our land, said the Zionists, and we will take care of the rest.

So now, we are confronted with the situation where there is not a Muslim on the face of the earth that does not see Israel's occupation of the Holy Land as an unjustified invasion of their land. The only difference between this and the initial colonization of the United States of America, is that, unlike what happened to the American Indians, Caucasians, whether Christian or Jewish, have not been able to eradicate sufficient numbers of indigenous people to take over the land without opposition. The Muslims have not acceded to the colonial expansion of the "settlers" in Israel, to the U.S. demand for expansion of the militarist Israeli state, or to the eradication of those who inhabited the land before the Jews arrived.



Inside Hawara checkpoint, in the occupied West Bank, Palestine, June 12, 2006. (photo by Magne Hagesæter)

In virtually every temple and Jewish Community Center in the United States, Israel is seen as "the good guy" in the Middle East, and the Arabs are seen as devils. The impact this has had on Jews in the United States is to divide the community into two totally distinct communities: those who are Zionists and those who identify with being Jewish, but reject the racism and violence perpetrated by Israel against the entire Muslim world. It is impossible for Jews who take pride in their heritage, to participate in their own communities without endorsing the atrocities perpetrated by Israel against Arabs throughout the world. Jews who reject Zionism are outcasts in the established Jewish communities. They have no base and no community. We are either anti-Muslim or invisible. We are left with no alternatives within the broader community.

The U.S. is perfectly content to let Israel serve as the buffer between hostile Arab nations and U.S. imperialism. After all, it is the Jews who are fighting Muslims on a daily basis, not Americans. But once the State of Israel is defeated because of its bellicose intransigence and intolerance to those with whom they should be sharing the land, Jews everywhere will suffer the consequences and be at risk. One could not write a more ironical conclusion. Non-Zionist Jews are like the non-existent Left in the United States – we are simply not included in the debates of our nation or among our people; and, because Zionists permit no rational debates or discussions, they are without a clue as to the international implications of their cruelty toward the Palestinian peoples. The world will not put up with this indefinitely. It is just a matter of time.

Luke Hiken is an attorney who has engaged in the practice of criminal, military, immigration, and appellate law. See more of his articles at progressiveavenues.org.

On the Ground

(Continued from page 15)

Many activists we spoke to urged us to boycott Israeli products, including Christian tourism, and divest from investments there to bring an end to this injustice since these economic measures helped to stop apartheid in South Africa. In 2012, both the Presbyterian (USA) and United Methodist Churches, with a combined membership of ten million members adopted policies of boycotting all goods made in the illegal Israeli settlements.

In Ramallah, our group learned that Israeli citizenship laws vary widely depending if the holder is Jewish, non-Jewish, or worse yet, Palestinian. Even an attorney traveling with us was confused at the maze of laws in Israel with the end result being troubles for all non-Jewish persons. Israeli journalist Rina Rosenberg wrote in the major Jerusalem newspaper *Haaretz* (June 1, 2012) that "Racism is being normalized among the Israeli public, and legitimized in Israeli politics."

The director of New Profile, an Israeli peace group aiding conscientious objectors and opposing militarism, complained that nationalist fervor and fear stoked by the right-wing Netanyahu government had polarized the country. Israel drafts all eighteen-year-olds but it is not difficult to get a deferment. Once conscripted however, harsh penalties including jail time is administered to those who decline to serve for moral or religious reasons. A young man in Tel Aviv with pending military charges told us that he believed that the suicide rate was high in the IDF (Israel Defense Forces) but accurate statistics are not published. Testimonies of IDF veterans who regretted their roles in abusing Palestinians echo some of the sentiments of earlier Vietnam vets and later Iraq war veterans during the Winter Soldier Investigations.

Some agencies we visited referred to the forced displacement of Palestinians as "ethnic cleansing," described recently by United Nations special investigator Richard Falk. Israel remains a powerful economy but some believe that it is delegitimizing itself with actions inconsistent with a true democracy. The May 2012 BBC Ratings Poll of worldwide sentiment of over 24,000 persons in 22 countries ranked Israel as the third most negatively viewed nation after Iran and Pakistan. The United States was the only developed nation where favorable opinion of Israel had actually increased to 50% (*Jerusalem Post*, May 17, 2012). Military and defense costs per capita in Israel are the highest in the world; America is second. Both governments, in response to powerful economic and political lobbies, prefer to spend for weapons and war rather than funding the needs of ordinary citizens.

The Activestills collective was established in 2005 by a group of Israeli and international documentary photographers, out of a strong conviction that photography is a vehicle for social change. We believe in the power of images to shape public attitudes and to raise awareness on issues that are generally absent from public discourse. We view ourselves as part of the struggle against all forms of oppression, racism, and violations of the basic right to freedom. We do work on various topics, including the grassroots movement and the popular struggle against the Israeli occupation, women's rights, immigration, asylum-seekers, social justice, the siege on Gaza, and housing rights inside Israel.

The work as a collective is based upon the belief that mutual work serves each photographer's personal statement, and that joint projects will create shared statements that are more powerful than individual ones. The collective, now consisting of ten photographers, operates in Israel/Palestine and focuses on social



Israeli Riot Police guard a bulldozer during a house demolition. In Lod, Israeli authorities demolished the homes of seven Arab families in one day. (Photo credit: Oren Ziv/Activestills – see box below)

Americans, on average, pay over \$21.50 in taxes to finance these injustices in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories. Our country's military-industrial complex provides weapons, arguably, to the world's fourth strongest army with the only nuclear weapons in the Middle East. Over the previous 10 year funding cycle, that amounts to more than 30 billion dollars which could better be used here to re-train unemployed workers, create jobs, improve schools, or fund veterans' benefits. How does this wasteful and unnecessary foreign aid happen while our government cuts important social programs and saddles our grandkids with mountains of debt?

The answer: political contributions to elected officials in both parties by pro-Israel lobbies. The May 2012 *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs* discloses that between 2009 and 2011, Rep. Howard Berman (D-CA) received \$130,050; \$243,240 went to Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL); and special friend Harry Reid (D-NV) garnered a whopping \$490,141! In addition, the *Washington Post* (Aug. 9, 2011) reported "educational" trips paid by an affiliate of the Israel lobby AIPAC in 2011 for 81 U.S. members of congress to visit Israel and be wined and dined at a cost of over \$18,000 each. Is this why our elected leaders are so pro-Israel and generous with our tax monies? Israel, like America, is full of bright, creative, well-meaning but often uninformed citizens. Let us speak out against the mean and dishonest policies of leaders in both governments who put their personal interests before the needs of their constituents.

Vince Stravino served in the U.S. Army medical corps. He is a member of the Veterans For Peace Palestine-Middle East working group and the Jewish Voice for Peace. Learn more about Interfaith Peace Builders at ifpb.org.

and political documentation, project production, publication, and exhibition.

Israeli public opinion is shaped first and foremost by the mainstream media, which is shifting to become more racist and violent. The impact of this shift is evident in increased public support for violent military operations, racist legislation, and discriminatory policies. We wish to challenge these changes with our work. Each time our photos are published, either in the mainstream media or in alternative channels, they convey messages that challenge oppression and bring the voices of the unheard into public discourse.

Activestills often uses public space for exhibitions in order to more directly influence public opinion and bring about social change.

Learn more, see the photos, and contribute at www.activestills.org and www.flickr.com/activestills

Drones, My Lai, and Prosecuting the Powerful

(Continued from page 1)

view people on the ground through a grainy video feed and identify “suspicious behavior.” And on that basis, the people are bombed.

But a new academic paper describes signature strikes as “legally suspect.” Kevin Jon Heller, professor at Melbourne Law School, writes in a forthcoming piece for the *Journal of International Criminal Justice* that the Obama administration appears to be engaging in the unlawful use of force in many of its signature strikes.

The drone war has been receiving renewed focus among academics skeptical of its legality and adherence to human rights. A study last month from the Stanford and NYU schools of law found that the drone program is “terrorizing” the civilian population of Pakistan and that it is having a “counterproductive” impact, effectively creating more enemies than it eliminates. Another study this month from Columbia Law School’s Human Rights Institute found the number of Pakistani

shows that the criteria for bombing people in these drone strikes violates the law.

Citing a recent *New York Times* report, among others, that described the administration’s method of counting “all military-age males in a strike zone as combatants... unless there is explicit intelligence posthumously proving them innocent,” Heller writes:

That status, however, cannot simply be inferred from the fact that an individual is of military age and is present in an area that the CIA chooses to attack. As the ICRC has pointed out, membership in an organized armed group requires actual and continuous participation in hostilities; it “cannot depend on abstract affiliation, family ties, or other criteria prone to error, arbitrariness or abuse.”

The “military-age male” signature, it is worth noting, is an unfortunate remnant of the Vietnam war, during which the U.S. government routinely presumed that any military-age male in a combat zone was a Viet Cong fighter. Colin Powell openly acknowledged that practice in his autobiography:

“I recall a phrase we used in the field, MAM, for military-age male. If a helo [helicopter] spotted a peasant in black pajamas who looked remotely suspicious, a

possible MAM, the pilot would circle and fire in front of him. If he moved, his movement was judged evidence of hostile intent, and the next burst was not in front but at him. Brutal? Maybe so.”

Powell’s description is echoed – more colorfully – by Lt. William Calley, the architect of the infamous 1968 massacre at My Lai:

“[I]f those people weren’t all VC then prove it to me. Show me that someone helped us and fought the VC. Show me that someone wanted us: one example only! I didn’t see any... Our task force commander... his star said it’s a VC area and everyone there was a VC or a VC sympathizer. And that’s because he just isn’t young enough or old enough to do anything but sympathize.”

The “military-age male” signature is not simply brutal, as Powell acknowledges. It is also unlawful.

Comparing the Obama administration’s criteria for signature drone strikes to one of the most notorious

war crimes in modern memory is an extraordinary statement that the media and the political class are simply ignoring.

Another criteria Heller focuses on is “consorting with known militants.” The U.S. has been targeting and killing people they determine through their drone cameras are “consorting” with “militants,” and going on to stand by these killings as morally and legally legitimate. Heller says this doesn’t meet the requirements for participating in hostilities and therefore targeting on this basis is criminal:

At most, then, consorting with known militants can be considered sympathizing or collaborating with an organized armed group. Neither activity however makes an individual a lawful target. With regard to sympathizing, the UN Sub-Commission on Human Rights adopted a resolution in 1985 that specifically condemned the U.S.-backed El Salvadoran government’s practice of killing peasants it believed were sympathetic to the FMLN. According to the Sub-Commission, “as long as the so-called ‘masses’ do not participate directly in combat, although they may sympathize, accompany, supply food, and live in zones under the control of the insurgents, they preserve their civilian character, and therefore they must not be subjected to military attacks.” With regard to collaboration, the Special Court for Sierra Leone specifically held in *Fofana and Kondewa* that “persons accused of ‘collaborating’ with the government or armed forces would only become legitimate military targets if they



Airmen assemble an MQ-1 Predator at Creech Air Force Base, Nevada after returning from Afghanistan. The six images on the side symbolize the number of Hellfire missiles shot while in combat. (USAF photo)

were taking direct part in the hostilities. Indirectly supporting or failing to resist an attacking force is insufficient to constitute such participation.”

At the very least, the Obama administration deserves to be investigated for their conduct in the drone war. Heller doesn’t say all drone strikes are illegal, and he concludes that even the unlawful strikes “would be difficult to prosecute as war crimes,” because it’s difficult to prove intent to kill civilians on the part of the Obama administration. Several high-level officials at the United Nations, however, have speculated that war crimes have been committed in instances where the Obama administration targeted rescuers in follow-up strikes or funeral attendees – both of which have been alleged.

But even putting war crimes prosecution aside, crimes have clearly been committed. The Obama administration, however, is the most powerful cabinet in the world. And the powerful don’t typically submit to the law. Aggressive prosecutions and harsh jail sentences need to be reserved for pot-smokers and convenient store thieves. The powerful can’t be bothered with thousands of dead civilians and international laws governing the use of force.

John Glaser is Assistant Editor at AntiWar.com where this article, reprinted with their permission, first appeared.

THE TRANSFORMATIVE IMPACT OF DRONE STRIKES



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President Obama’s method for counting civilian casualties “in effect counts all military-age males in a strike zone as combatants, according to several administration officials, unless there is explicit intelligence posthumously proving them innocent.”

–*New York Times*, May 29, 2012

civilians killed in drone strikes are “significantly and consistently underestimated” by tracking organizations which are trying to take the place of government estimates on casualties, which the Obama administration won’t comment on because the drone war is technically secret.

Heller deals primarily with the question of legality under international law. Broadly speaking, signature strikes are suspect because international humanitarian law obligates “[t]hose who plan or decide upon an attack” to “do everything feasible to verify that the objectives to be attacked are neither civilians nor civilian objects.” Article 50(1) of the Additional Protocols demands that “if there is still ‘doubt’ that an individual is a legitimate target after taking all feasible precautions, ‘that person shall be considered to be a civilian.’”

The many anecdotal instances of massive civilian casualties in any number of drone strikes throughout the Obama presidency suggest that these legally mandated precautions were not adhered to; if no “doubt” remained, we would not see so many incidents like this. But Heller tackles specific categories of signature strikes and

UN says new investigation unit will inquire into drone attacks

by Hilary Stauffer

On October 25, 2012, Ben Emmerson QC, the United Nations' Special Rapporteur on Counter-Terrorism and Human Rights, announced that a UN investigation unit would be established early next year "to inquire into individual drone attacks... and other forms of targeted killing conducted in counter-terrorism operations." Emmerson and Christof Heynes, the UN Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions, are establishing this body in order to investigate individual drone attacks that are alleged to have resulted in civilian deaths.

Emmerson noted that since 9/11, the U.S. and its allies have used the "global war on terror" to justify military actions of seemingly limitless reach. Following in the footsteps of the Bush Administration, the Obama Administration has used the "war on terror" – a war without geographical boundaries – to justify targeted killings in Pakistan, Somalia, and Yemen.

While states have an obligation to protect their own citizens and, therefore, employ effective counter-terrorism strategies, the Special Rapporteur emphasized that this obligation does not give states the option to disregard the human rights of "those accused or suspected of involvement in acts of terrorism" or the communities in which these individuals reside. A recent report released by Stanford and NYU law schools demonstrated that U.S. drone strike policies in Pakistan terrorize the entire civilian population in North Waziristan. These strikes violate a wide range of human rights: they deprive individuals of their rights to life, to work, to education, to a cultural life, to self-determination, and to physical and mental health.

Emmerson also expressed his opinion that it was "extremely naïve" for the international community to believe that "that international terrorism in all of its modern

U.S. drone strike policies in Pakistan terrorize the entire civilian population in North Waziristan. These strikes violate a wide range of human rights:

forms and manifestations is capable of that addresses the factors that compel individuals to resort to terrorist activities. Such an approach requires that human

militaristic means to defeat the global spread of terrorism, the Special Rapporteur stated that it was essential for a holistic approach to be adopted

rights and the rule of law be both respected and protected. (Find a link at Reprive.org.uk to a copy of Emmerson's October 25 speech at Harvard Law School.)

Hilary Stauffer is Deputy Director of Reprive, and oversees the Guantánamo and Drones projects.

Drone victim's statement "very moving," says judge in UK drones policy case

Reprive.org.uk, October 23, 2012. – The statement of a man who lost his father to a CIA drone strike in Pakistan was today described as "very moving" by the judge hearing a legal challenge to the UK Government's reported policy of support for the secret drone program.

Lord Justice Moses was referring to written evidence from Noor Khan, a resident of Northwest Pakistan who is bringing the challenge with the support of legal action charity Reprive.

UK intelligence services reportedly provide intelligence to support the CIA's secretive program of drone strikes, which claims to target "militants" but has resulted in the deaths of hundreds of civilians and had a severe psychological impact on communities across the region.

Mr Khan's statement in full is as follows (translated from Pashto):

The community is now plagued with fear. Drones hover over our skies day and night. All over NWA [North Waziristan Agency, Pakistan], but especially in Datta Khel, drone strikes continue to take place.

The Tribal elders are now afraid to gather together in jirgas as has been the custom for more than one century. We are scared that if we get

together we might be targeted again.

The mothers and wives plead with the men to not congregate together for fear that they will be targeted. They do not want to lose any more of their husbands, sons, brothers, and nephews.

"The community is now plagued with fear."

We come from large families, some joined families, and people in the same family now sleep apart because they do not want their togetherness to be viewed suspiciously through the eye of the drone. They do not want to become the next target.

Most of the people in NWA live in poverty. They have no option but to stay in this area, though many want to leave because of the drones. Plus, we are connected to this land. This is ancestral living place. Why should we have to leave when we have done nothing wrong?

The younger generation has been especially affected. The children almost all suffer from mental



illness and live in constant fear of the drone. The children no longer attend school and because of the constant humming of the drones they've become mental patients. My generation fears that because the younger generation is not getting an education they will become a burden on us and stifle the growth that we could have achieved as a people.

Reprive legal director Kat Craig said: "Mr Khan's evidence highlights the terrible toll the CIA's illegal program of drone strikes is taking on ordinary people across Northwest Pakistan. The British people have a right to know whether their own government is providing support to this devastating and counterproductive campaign. Continued obfuscation is no longer acceptable – ministers must come clean."



THE CEMETERY

In the Margraten Cemetery for Fallen Americans, Netherlands
Honking swans, noon chimes –
upright in emerald grass
white white white crosses

–Ed Tick

Want to help the WCT?

Here are a few ways:

- Order and distribute a bundle or two.
- Volunteer to promote the paper into new places such as book stores, libraries, coffeehouses, recruiting offices...
- Volunteer your time – just a few hours each quarter. Whatever skills you have, we can probably use.
- Send a small donation (or large if you insist).
- Surprise us with your creativity.

2 Million Friends

(Continued from page 1)

“We are strangers to one another,” the youth of Kabul write, “because we don’t know each other yet. We haven’t been able to share with you how, in Afghanistan, the loneliness of mutual killing is dividing Afghans over and above the loneliness of life. War is constantly closing in on us and our open mountains.” They continue:

There is a global awakening though, and as everyday Afghans, we’re likewise awakening to the reality that all wars are socio-economic, geo-political wars against the people.

We have unwisely assented to a global system which gives unjust authority and money to a few fellow human beings in governments or big businesses. This system tells us that we are ordinary folk, and that we don’t understand.

But we’re awakening. We understand that the world has a child dying from hunger every ten seconds. Our land gets taken away from us or purchased. We study hard but today’s education makes our minds numb and we end up unemployed. Our mothers and infants die easily. We get threatened, imprisoned, or killed. The system makes us its subjects, and then frightens us into killing one another. Would others understand how dehumanizing or isolating that feels? How we perpetually look around the corner in hope for real friends?

We, the Afghan Peace Volunteers, are a grassroots group of ordinary, multi-ethnic Afghans seeking a life of non-violence, equality, self-reliance and the unity of all people. As young people who make up 68% of the Afghan population, we want a better world!

We want the whole world to be borderless friends. We believe that every hand of friendship will be an act for freedom.

Solidarity with one another, person by person, can change our unfair world. We wish for 2 Million friends, friends that would ask for the war to end.

Last Spring, when we had gathered in Kabul to remember Afghan war victims over the past four decades, a middle aged Afghan man was close to tears as he said, ‘I won’t be satisfied with remembering only the 9 children killed in Kunar province. I want us to remember all 2 million victims of war.’

War, politics, money and power can jail, destroy and kill people, but it can’t jail, destroy or kill love. We ask to be friends, we ask that every human being’s basic needs be met, and we ask for no more killing!

How we wish to live without war! How we wish for ‘2 Million Friends’!

Here’s the petition/letter they want to send to U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon:

We are ‘2 Million Friends’ from Afghanistan



The Blue Scarf Movement

The Blue Scarf represents the expansive blue sky we all share. It helps remind us – and those we meet and engage in conversation – that we are all in this together and that our only sensible choice in life is to care for one another and to protect and share our world and her resources.

The Movement began with a very brave group of women in Afghanistan. It has become a way for people around the world to express their solidarity as global citizens for a better world.

The Blue Scarf has been carried forward by different people and groups – each with their own unique perspectives. As a universal symbol, the Blue Scarf transcends any particular group or interpretation.

Make your own; distribute them; learn more at thebluescarf.org.



and around the world who want peace in Afghanistan.

We strongly urge the United Nations to broker a ceasefire in Afghanistan. We ask the United Nations to call on all the parties in conflict, including competing warlords and the Taliban, the Karzai government, regional players and NATO, to lay down their weapons.

Each day the violence continues means a continuing humanitarian disaster for the people of Afghanistan. It is time for the parties in conflict to seek non-military alternatives and work cooperatively to allocate the funds and resources necessary for a full reconstruction campaign in Afghanistan. The people of Afghanistan, especially Afghan mothers, cry out for the wars to cease and for their children to be fed and educated. We ask for their cries to be heard.

The Afghan Peace Volunteers are a grassroots group of ordinary, multi-ethnic Afghans who seek a life of nonviolence, equality, self-reliance and the unity of all people. They have met with Dr. Sima Samar, Chairperson of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission. Together with international friends, they are calling on people around the world to become friends for peace in Afghanistan on December 10th,

2012, the International Day of Human Rights. Nobel Laureate Mairead Maguire will join them for events in Afghanistan.

[It’s not too late to sign on. - Ed.]

We believe that a negotiated ceasefire initiated by the United Nations will greatly assist Afghans in their wish to end the war. A ceasefire will pave the way for negotiations, reconciliation and the important responsibility to meet the humanitarian and socioeconomic needs of 30 million Afghans. We await your response with hope.

*Sincerely, for the ordinary people of Afghanistan,
The Afghan Peace Volunteers and 2 Million Friends*

I urge you to visit www.2millionfriends.org, sign the petition, send it out to your friends, publicize their website, and try to get as many people as possible to sign their peace petition.

Together, let’s reach out and shake the hand of friendship that the young peacemakers of Afghanistan have offered, and do what we can to help end the evil U.S. war on Afghanistan and promote a new world of peace, love and nonviolence.

John Dear is the author of 30 books on peace and nonviolence, including most recently, Lazarus, Come Forth!; Daniel Berrigan: Essential Writings; Put Down Your Sword; and A Persistent Peace.

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