

EDITORIAL

With great pleasure we introduce the Asia edition of IFOR in ACTION. This issue focuses on IFOR BGAs of Asia and the Middle East. In using this new approach we take a closer look at the work being done in different regions of the world, and the challenges faced due to environmental factors.

The Autumn issue of IFOR in ACTION will focus on Africa. We especially invite contributions from our members in Africa, we're sure they will be as plentiful. We now call on all our Branches, Groups and Affiliates to send their contributions by Friday, 29 August, 2008 for inclusion in IFOR in ACTION #48, Autumn Edition.

— Stan Morris, Editor

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**Papaya Plant
A Replica of Eco- aestheticism and Tranquility**

by Francis Halder

“Papaya is the Doctor of the family”

Peace or tranquility is an abstract condition with no physical entity. This peace could hardly be purchased or physically made available but could be created through different bio-environment creation. Definitely there is a relationship between eco- creation and establishing tranquility. The flowers and fruits generated create an additional creative attraction for all family members. Peace could be created through Eco-aesthetic methods by various plantation management techniques in our homesteads or surroundings. Papaya (*Carica papaya*) – a quick growing fruit plant – could be an ideal reproduction of that eco-aestheticism.

How to grow...

In Bangladesh most of the houses are facing in a southerly direction. The home fronts are clean, kept open for the movement of children and for women’s leisure. There are slight extensions of the house floor around its 4 sides, what we call house cleaves. In this space 16 – 20 papaya pits could be prepared by adding productive manure ingredients within a pit of 1.5’ x1.5’ and adapting production technology of papaya on 3-sides on the house-cleaves, except for the North, i.e. mostly backyard. Easy intensive care and technical management could be applied, since it is in the open premises of homesteads for full time supervision of all family members.

When the papaya plants are more than 8- feet, i.e. above roof level, it is even easier when its existence is also almost untraceable. However, the shrubs, like chili and semi-perennial trees such as pomegranate, etc., could be transplanted in between the papaya plants, depending



Papaya plants are getting bigger using the house cleaves.

upon spacing, etc. The chili and papaya could be replaced after 3 – 4 years and be transplanted again, using just little displacement from the initial pits.

Where to grow...

In a development context of the NGO, the selected beneficiaries are hand-to-mouth. In regard to land utilization for crop production, often people will say that they have no land or land with very insignificance. However, the reality is that most of these people belong only to the homestead. In the homestead, there may be several space components where house cleaves (the edges of the last attachments of the house floor, around the 4 sides of a house.) may be considered one of the most vital space components for growing papaya for creating nutrition, income and aesthet-

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Papaya Plant...

ic value.

It's impact on nutrition and income...

Papaya is a delicious fruit with high nutritious value. It contains a high amount of vitamin A, along with a sufficient amount of vitamin B, C & D. Mineral matter, like Calcium and Phosphorous, is also there. The green papaya fruit contains a huge amount of Pepsin, which helps in digestion, as well as improving liver health. There is a Chinese proverb, "Papaya is the Doctor of the family".

Cultivation cost of a single pit is Tk. 29.50, for 10 pits it is Tk. 295. Output from a single papaya plant for 2 years is Tk. 900 / plant. From 10 plants, coming from the house cleaves stands the return could be as much as Tk. 9000. The net return from a medium house cleave with 10 papaya plants stands is around Tk. 8700.

A source of Tranquility...

A Papaya plant grows dispersing its seeds, seed coat and finally plant materials, somewhere on hard rocky soil. The endeavor sometimes prohibits the total germination at the embryonic stage and before it expires. That means growing to the seeding stage is another difficult course in its advancement. The plant growth begins with 2 leaves only and can collapse at anytime immediately after emergence due to dampness. The fungus Fuzarium is responsible for stem and root damage at the seedling stage.

Bangladesh weather is very much susceptible to Fuzarium growth. If the Papaya plant ultimately survives, it grows and becoming bloomy with dark green leaves. Again root rot or collar rot may be a threat. This must be overcome, if the plant is to finally erect and establish tranquility with all its survival qualities intact – not an easy task. The plant needs to overcome all obstacles to be the model of survival genius. Within three months after doing all the due reproductive procedures, the plant starts bearing fruit finally. Fruits starting from 10 grams grow to 20 grams, then 50 grams and finally more than 3000 grams. They attract

insects, small birds and finally humans, i.e. women and men. These humans look at the plant's virtues – happiness, kindness, charity, welfare for all and finally the beauty of its joy. They come and see the plant with a view of worship as admirable, rare values are these. All are the donation of a heavenly Almighty.

Children are also the gift of God. They learn from the Papaya's dark green nature, they enjoy its shade; they speak with nature, as if it's a close bio-friend, a bio-friend. They come, experience and see the bearing of the plant of an unconditional donation upon its neighbors, i.e. other human

beings, birds and beasts of the kingdom. Further more, it produces shade for the metallic fences and roofs, as well as making those who gather beneath it cooler. The children can begin to understand the norms of a great-hearted donor, and the tranquility of tasting the fruits of an amicable relationship. They also become at the very least a great compliment to and in touch with a great donor. This creates an outlook and aesthetic value, a sense among the children for future artistry. It produces fruits and shade at the edges of the roof, occupying almost no land (since it's located on the house cleaves).

For most of the rural mothers, the majority of their time passes by quarrelling with relatives and neighbors. This mother can look at the dark green plant with

full inner stairs of fruit. She looks with new hope in a creation of a new future. A future based on doing something on her own, at least starting from the house cleaves. She is a disadvantaged woman, both in terms of money and power. The bio-resource in the house cleaves has taught her how to survive, gradually more power, with a capacity of more giving for family and others. The happiness, the kindness, the charity, finally the beauty of joy, also calls to her and her children, as in being mother she is the queen of her family.

After 5 months the green papaya starts to ripen with a deep yellow color. What a joy this mother will receive in return from the Papaya! It brings the gifts of creating a new look,



Peace peeps her door through this green intervention.

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Papaya Plant...

additional income, the possibility of getting good fruits and seeds as well.

The mother becomes overflowing, tolerant and generous. Her manner and behavior starts changing. She does not live for herself only, but for others as well. She becomes the lady of calmness, as she has now learnt peace from the nature. The nature is beyond of selfishness but charity; mothers sow the seeds of peace, which she had derived from the single papaya tree. Her husband, who is an angry man, looks at no one but upon the plant. He gets a surprise in sharing all the values that his wife has been taught, referring to the plant. He also stops on his way out of the house and on the way in and looks at the house cleaves with new wonderful creation. Silently he thinks about things of which he never imagined. What a big flower in such a small piece of land, what not she speaks everyday to all the household observers! He teaches himself, his wife and his children the model of being patience, altruistic and gifted. She, the wife, teaches about being the master of whole family

Changing of behavior is not a matter of the moment. It takes time, sometimes a whole lifetime. We may have a lot of living experiences, but seldom do we realize and identify this, ensuring its utilization. Papaya is a fast growing plant and it can be grown an-



The housewife enjoys not only the scenic beauty but also whole hearted peace of natural gift.

nywhere, even at the house cleaves, for everyone to have a lifetime of observation. This plant speaks with its whole body. What does it not give within its short tenure of life. This is not only about fruit production, but also about something like natural blessings upon the soul and body of every family member of that particular household. It is visible and practically recognizable. It may be the real model of eco-aestheticism and a masterpiece of tranquility.

Written by Francis Halder, a development practitioner, during his stay at the IFOR group Anando-Khagrachari office (Bangladesh) from June 10 – 16, 2007 while observing a training on Human Development.

All images were provided by Francis Halder ■



Plants build children's aesthetic make up for future growth.

ARTICLE 9 OF THE JAPANESE CONSTITUTION AND HIROSHIMA/NAGASAKI

by Mitsuo Okamoto, Ph.D.

If killing is permitted for achieving justice, the extreme end of such a reasoning would reach as far as nuclear war.

The well-known Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution which I quote below cannot be separated from the historic tragedy of the atomic bombing in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945.

Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes.

In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.

Theologically speaking, it was so to speak the incarnation of Jesus Christ's imperative "Thou shall not kill." Mundanely speaking, renunciation of belligerency of the state or absolute pacifism of nonviolence was applied to a sovereign state for the first time in history. The just war tradition, which had been handed down from the time of Cicero or Saint Augustine in the history of Western nations, has allowed war and the conduct in war under certain conditions.

However, the theory would have long been disinherited, if those Western nations which proclaim to be Christian had faithfully followed the imperative of Jesus with concrete diplomatic actions. I am eager to read a book by Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer entitled *Jesus Against Christianity* (Trinity Press International, 2001) which may enlighten me where Western Christianity deviated from the original teaching in the early church and developed the theory of just war.

If killing is permitted for achieving justice, the extreme end of such a reasoning would reach as far as nuclear war. The conclusion is "the world may perish, but justice must be done." It is quoted in Latin at the start of Immanuel Kant's famous monograph on For the Eternal Peace. The idea of "nuclear peace" promoted by the United States and other nuclear weapon states to maintain the world peace resembles the dictum quoted by Kant. According

Photo: Forum für Friedenserziehung



IFOR Council 2006 Tokyo: Mitsuo Okamoto – JFOR Japan

to the philosophy, the world can perish in order for some "just people" to carry through justice.

What happened in Hiroshima and Nagasaki was concrete examples of a wholesale extermination of human being and other living organisms. If God the Father, instead of Sir William F. Webb as presiding judge, an appointee by Supreme Commander General Douglas McArthur, had been the presiding judge in the International Tribunal in Tokyo after WW II, he would have condemned the atomic bombings as hideous war crimes---comparable only to the Nazi holocaust in Auschwitz---together with such Japanese war crimes as the Nanjin massacre, the military sex slave system, the human experimentation of the Army Unit 731 and so on. Then, US President Harry Truman, General McArthur, General Leslie Groves, Dr. Robert Oppenheimer and others would have been hanged to death, together with General Hideki Tojo, prime minister of Japan at the time of Pearl Harbor attack and during the early part of the Pacific War, who was sentenced to death with six other war time national leaders and actually hanged as war criminals.

Generally speaking, the radioactive casualties caused by atomic weapons in Hiroshima and Nagasaki had long been underestimated in the US and elsewhere. It is only recent and particularly after the nuclear power plant accidents at Three Mile Island in the US in 1972 and Chernobyl in Ukraine in 1979 that the world has started to pay more attention to the radioactive casualties caused by nuclear disasters. The unfathomably disastrous effects of nuclear weapons which were eloquently described in the seminal book *The Fate of the Earth* by Jonathan Schell should be studied more carefully and taken more seriously. Albert Einstein did not exaggerate enough when he said, "The unleashed power of the atom has changed

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Article 9...

everything save our modes of thinking, and we thus drift toward unparalleled catastrophes.”

After the 9/11 incident in the US, however, a new turn to avoid “unparalleled catastrophes” and a move toward abolishing nuclear weapons have emerged in a fear that nuclear weapons might fall in the hands of terrorists. The turn itself is heartily to welcome. We hear so frequently about the danger of nuclear weapons programs by Iraq, Iran, and North Korea, but as long as the US, the initiator and prime mover of nuclear weapons, stick to the possession, the proliferation of the bomb would be inevitable. For, the leaders of these suspected nations would say, “Exactly because we are small and weak nations, we want to possess nuclear weapons for the sake of deterrence”.

e-newsletter

In such an international atmosphere something remarkable as to the issue has taken place. It is a message for abolishing nuclear weapons printed in The Wall Street Journal on January 4 2007 entitled “A World Free of Nuclear Weapons”. The contributors were US Former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger (from 1973 to 1977) and Former Secretary of State George Shultz (from 1982 to 1989), Former Secretary of Defense William Perry (from 1994 to 1997), and Former Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee Sam Nun, the once most authoritative promoters of the US nuclear policy. What surprised us is that the same people repeated almost the same message again on January 15 this year on the same paper entitled “Toward a Nuclear-Free World.”

Serious movements to oppose “the idea of the wholesale extermination of non-combatant citizens in the name of justice” are taking place on the other side of the Pacific Ocean consorting well with the appeal for abolition of nuclear weapons by Kissinger and others.

The first one is the Atomic Bomb Exhibition by Hiroshima and Nagasaki cities which is scheduled to take place in 101 US cities during 2007 and 2008, in other words the Exhibition is planned for two cities in 50 states respectively plus one more city, namely Washington, D.C.

The second one is “Article 9 Global Congress” to be held in May this year in Tokyo, Osaka, Sendai, and Hiroshima which will be also significant peace events. As quoted above Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution is inseparably connected with the idea of nuclear-free world. Therefore the motto of the “Article 9 Global Congress” is also called “Global Article 9 Campaign to Abolish War”. These initiatives will awaken hopes for a more peaceful world where people will not easily believe “just war” as politicians would want to make us believe.

We, the Japanese people, have solemnly declared in our Constitution no possession of “land, sea, and air forces as well as other war potential”. Over sixty years elapsed since the Declaration and “Japan as a nation which does not fight” has become the matter-of-course for the Japanese, and the world has begun to believe it. If opinion polls conducted in more objective ways about the necessity of changing Article 9, “No change” against “Change” is 70% against 30%. The claim of the major media in Japan which tries to persuade readers that the ratio of “No Change” and “Change” is fifty-fifty is untenable.

Enlightening were the result of surveys called the “The National Referendum on Article 9, ‘For Change’ or ‘Not for Change’” that were conducted by grassroots citizens May 2006 over 72 cities, townships, and wards that came under 33 administrative divisions of Japan. According to the study, “Not for Change” received 21,652 votes (77%), while “For Change” obtained 3,270 votes (12%) and “Not Sure” got 3,247 votes (11%). The total vote count of 28,169 carries a different weight compared to the matrix group of 2000-3000 people that the media relies usually upon.

The fact that 77% voted “Not for Change” in Constitution Article 9 is staggering. The reason is that for the past few years, major media organizations have consistently reported that the forces to keep or to change Article 9 are equal in strength (for instance, an article by Asahi Newspaper on May 3rd 2006). We conducted the same national referendum voting in May 2007 again. Out of 28,461 votes, “Not for Change” had won 22,475 votes (79%), while “For Change” had received 3,262 votes (11%), and “Not Sure” obtained 2,724 votes (10%). Although the results were similar to that of the year before, the 2% increase in “Not For Change” and a 1% decrease in “For Change” seem to be a manifestation of the perceived fear towards the short-lived Abe Cabinet which was particularly eager for the change of the Constitution.

The ruling party is not saying that they will change the first paragraph, since it is similar to the contents of the Pact of Paris signed in 1929. The focus is on the second paragraph. However, those who proclaim the constitutional legitimacy of the SDF assert that “War of Self Defense” does not equate to an international dispute. Therefore, it is only natural to understand that those who replied in favor for “Change in the First Paragraph” are people who actually think that, “Since all wars are fought under the pretence of ‘Self Defense’, it should be clearly stated in the clause that ‘war of self defense itself should be revoked’.”

The result of the public survey reported by Asahi Newspaper on May 3rd 2006 is as follows:

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Article 9...

"Not for Change in Paragraph 1 or 2."	42%
"For change in only Paragraph 1."	9%
"For Change in only Paragraph 2."	16%
For Change in both Paragraph 1 and 2."	18%
Not sure; No reply."	15%

As a question, "For Change in only paragraph 1" is troublesome enough in itself, but what did the Public Survey department of Asahi have in mind as a response to begin with? The fourth choice means doubtlessly the fundamental change of Article 9. Yet, whether we can determine the second choice, "For Change in only paragraph 1" 9%, to be basically the same as the third and fourth pick is highly doubtful. If is excluded, "Not for change" remains at 42%, but "For Change" drops to 34%.

However, the Asahi Shimbun simply added up all the "For change" variables (43%) and reported on the front page that "The forces to keep or change Article 9 are equal in strength." The Asahi we love to read did this. The Sankei Newspaper may well do this, but the fact that the very Asahi did this is unbelievable!

The fact that the world has the Japanese Constitution after WW II is significant in that Japan has economically flourished with its low level of armament because of the Constitutional constraint and contributed to the economic development of the world. Therefore, Japan is expected to keep good international relations not only with the US but also with other nations and emphasize the supreme importance of the nonviolent principle of Article 9, thus making the world recognize Japan's international position as a "Conscientious Objector Nation" and consolidating its legal foundation.

As in Germany and other Western nations where Conscientious Objection is legally recognized as "human" rights, "national" rights of Conscientious Objection should be legally recognized by international law and Japan should make utmost efforts to make all nations to respect the law and guarantee peace and security of all nations by observing international law. Such a road would be the one Japan should take as a nation that went through the historic tragedy of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and was born again as a nonviolent peaceful nation.

The 19th century German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer said, "All truth passes through three stages. First, it is ridiculed. Second, it is violently opposed. Third, it is accepted as being self-evident." The truth that if we are to have a human future the US must lead the way in abolishing nuclear weapons has been frequently ridiculed and violently opposed. The commentary by Shultz, Perry, Kissinger and Nunn (on abolishing nuclear weapons)

suggests that this truth may now be entering the stage of being self-evident.

So it will be also with a status of "Conscientious Objector Nation" of Japan. It will be ridiculed and violently opposed for the time being. But I have no hesitation to assert that it will eventually be accepted as self-evident. For, the idea of "Japan which does not fight" would be beneficial not only for itself but for its neighbours and the idea will become more attractive for all nations in Asia and the world at large. The idea expressed in Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution will be understood, sooner or later, as most commonplace truth, accepted as the common sense, the road map for the world peace.

Mitsuo Okamoto, Ph.D.

Chair, International Committee of the JFOR
Peace Constitution Working Group

The working group would both campaign and also work on peaceful constitutions.

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FOR Japan: Some thoughts and reflection on the '06 Council

by Junji Sakurai

"Governments have trampled on the valuable Peace constitution..."

First of all, as one of the coordinators I would like to express my heartfelt thanks and satisfaction for the realization of the IFOR Council in Japan.

It is the first time in the history of JFOR that the branch has organized an IFOR Council meeting. Since I first attended IFOR Council at Assisi in Italy in 1988, inviting the Council to Japan had been one of my dreams.

Finally after 18 years it was fulfilled. I was very pleased to meet members from worldwide IFOR network here in Japan. As Japanese living in isolation on island, we don't often have a chance to meet people from the other countries. This occasion made us aware that we were part of an active international organization. Such an experience always makes a stronger impression than merely communicating by telephone or email.

The symposium that opened the Council focused on Article 9 of Peace Constitution. When we participated in the IFOR Council in Quito, Ecuador 1992, we brought copies

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of the Prologue and Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution in English translation. After distributing it to all participants, we asked them to join the post card sending campaign "Save almost dying Peace Constitution, Article 9."

Those who read the statement of total renunciation of war felt deep sympathy for it expressed in Article 9, as well as a strong motivation at the depiction of Japan

Successive amount of the budget

attacks in New York and Washington,

the U.S. line. We feel a strong sense of impending doom, and we are determined to stand firmly on the path of active nonviolence. Under the present circumstances, we should continue to stand firmly on the path of active nonviolence. However desperate the situation we may face, we should never let ourselves be dominated by the superficial power of violence. Prof. Okamoto emphasized that we should not be deceived by manipulated mass media information. This is a kind of violence.

This message shows that Article 9 is a kind of divine spirit. We should emphasize that we have been

to achieve the goal

among neighbors

Rev. Haishamot'

renounced individual claims for reparation, to ensure a peaceful world.

from Frank'

The declaration of total disarmament means that we have no enemies to kill any more. This is our sincere prayer from depth of our souls in order to unite all people in love and peace. Even though the government maintains a huge amount of military force, if the people lost the will to fight and abhorred killing any human being, then there would be no war.

We know that "up to the present, the world universe in all its parts groans as if in the pangs of childbirth." (Romans 8: 22) Unless we cut this chain of trauma through deep healing or inner change of heart, we cannot expect to have a peaceful world in the 21st century. We feel a sincere responsibility and a mission to hand over a world at peace to the next generations.

Under the present circumstances, we should continue to stand firmly on the path of active nonviolence. However desperate the situation we may face, we should never let ourselves be dominated by the superficial power of violence. Prof. Okamoto emphasized that we should not be deceived by manipulated mass media information. This is a kind of violence.

We would like to face up to the cold and hard facts of the present world, believing in the omnipotent power and love that dominates and embraces our reality. JFOR has chosen to follow the attitude of "Nonviolence," "Love our enemies," and "Reconciliation" forever. This is a way rooted in absolute respect for human dignity and in the belief that love in action has the power to transform.

Rev. Sakurai Junji - global & interfaith, without border. International Committee member of IFOR ('02-'06); an International Committee that was elected at the Council in New York in 2002 and continued in office until the next Council, in 2006.

Rev. Sakurai Junji is a Board member of JFOR and a trainer for Newlife Non-Violent Training & Peace Center in Fukushima & Azushima Japan, which opened on the 10th of April 2008. ■

The Unresolved Case of Enforced Disappearance of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, Eleventh Panchen Lama

Joint written statement

Submitted by Jonathan Sisson, IFOR representative to the United Nations in Geneva

In May 1995, Chinese authorities abducted, from his home, six year-old Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, XIth Panchen Lama officially recognized by the Dalai Lama in accordance with the Tibetan Buddhism reincarnation procedures and tradition. Almost thirteen years later, no independent entity has seen him which means his whereabouts and welfare remain unknown.

On 25 April 2008, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima will turn 19. The complete absence of verifiable information about both his physical and mental state will continue to be a cause of great concern. The Panchen Lama's case exemplifies the practice of enforced disappearance in the People's Republic of China (PRC). PRC infringes upon an entire range of human rights embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and set out in both international covenants on human rights as well as in other major international human rights instruments.

According to the UN Declaration on the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearance(1), the systematic practice of disappearance is of the nature of a crime against humanity and constitutes a violation of the right to recognition as a person before the law, the right to liberty and security of the person, and the right not to be subjected to torture; it also constitutes a grave threat to the right to life.

Since Gedhun Choekyi Nyima's enforced disappearance, numerous governments, parliaments, UN human rights mechanisms and independent organizations have pressed the Chinese authorities to disclose the whereabouts and well being of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima and his family.

For instance, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Louise Arbour, raised the case to the Chinese authorities during an official visit to China from 29 August-2 September 2005.

Likewise, the Special Rapporteur on Religious Freedom and Belief, Ms. Asma Jahangir, on 9 June 2005 raised her concern, "about the grave interference with the freedom of belief of the Tibetan Buddhists who have the right to determine their clergy in accordance with their own rites

Photo: anonymous



One of the few known photos of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, the 11th Panchen Lama according to the Gelug sect.

and who have been deprived of their religious leader."

During review of PRC's second periodic report at the fortieth session of the Committee on Rights of Child (CRC) on 24 November 2005, Beijing's ambassador to the UN in Geneva, H.E. Sha Zhukhang, told the committee that the child and his family "do not wish to be disturbed by foreign visitors because that could have negative effects(2). However, the Committee in its concluding observation urged China to "allow an independent expert to visit and confirm the well-being of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima while respecting his right to privacy, and that of his parents."(3)

China has ignored this call from the CRC by giving various excuses for denying access to the Panchen Lama and his family. In response to questions submitted by Reuters in 2006, the State Council Information Office said China had not arranged meetings between the boy and foreign organizations or media out of respect for the family's wishes not to be disturbed(4).

While recognising the case of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima as unresolved case, the Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearance stated that it "would appreciate being provided by the Government of China with documents supporting its statement that he and his parents had appealed to the Government for protection and at present are "leading normal lives and enjoying perfect health." China again ignored this call.

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Choekyi Nyima...

At the fourth session of the UN Human Rights Council (March 2007) in a joint statement, 15 NGOs described the enforced disappearance of the Panchen Lama as a "continuous crime".

In July 2007, information provided by the Chinese authorities concerning the fate of the Panchen Lama came from Mr. Nyima Tsering, Vice-Chairman of the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) who stated in the official Chinese news agency, Xinhua, "the boy chosen by the Dalai Lama as the reincarnation of the Panchen Lama, which is illegal and invalid, is living a normal life in Tibet. He is studying at a senior high school, his brothers and sisters are either studying or working."⁵ He further elaborated, referring to Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, by saying, "the boy is patriotic.

He does not want his life to be disturbed. We respect his wish."⁽⁶⁾

The Chinese government's continued detention of the 18-year-old boy and his family for more than a decade now is a crime against humanity. It is a clear violation of domestic and international human rights law. It is also a matter of great concern that such a prominent religious figure of Tibetan Buddhism is denied his right to pursue traditional religious studies and training according to Tibetan's religion and culture. The Chinese authorities should provide verifiable information on the Panchen Lama's whereabouts and well-being and release him and his family unconditionally.

We appreciate that the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearance's latest report to the Council⁷ includes new information from the source concerning the case of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima. We urge the Working Group and the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief of the Council to consider continuous interventions to the Chinese authorities to ascertain the truth about the fate of the Eleventh Panchen Lama.

In conclusion, we strongly urge the People's Republic of China to allow an independent body to meet Gendun Choekyi Nyima as recommended by the Committee on Rights of the Child and others. Such a concrete step will enable the international community to fully verify the current status of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima and his family.

1 - UN Declaration on the Protection of all Person from Enforced Disappearance adopted by General Assembly Resolution 47/133 on 18 December 1992

2 - "Gedhun Choekyi Nyima the XIth Panchen Lama turns 18: Still disappeared," Press Release, TCHRD, 25 April 2007, also available at <http://www.tchrd.org/press/2007/ps20070425.html>

3 - <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G05/451/39/PDF/G0545139.pdf?OpenElement> [para. 45(e)]

4 - Sophia Cao, "China says Tibetan boy not political prisoner" Reuters, as reported in the New York Times, 28 April 2006, http://chinadigitaltimes.net/2006/04/china_says_tibetan_boy_not_political_prisoner_reuters.php

5 - "Dalai Lama urged to abandon secessionist" Xinhua, 29 July 2007, available at http://en.tibet.cn/forum/tad/t20070729_274218.htm

6 - Ibid 7 <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/7session/A-HRC-7-2.doc> (under para 79 of document A/HRC/72) A/HRC/7/NGO/56 page 4 .

Submitted by Jonathan Sisson

Jonathan Sisson (Switzerland) serves as the IFOR's representative to the United Nations in Geneva, assisted by Michel Monod (Switzerland).

IFOR raised issues connected with religious freedom in Tibet at the 60th session of the UN Commission on Human Rights in April 2004. Together with War Resisters International, IFOR is always concerned with the rights of conscientious objectors.

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Joint written statement:

Submitted by Transnational Radical Party (TRP), a nongovernmental organization in general consultative status, Asian Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Network (AITPN), Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS), Society for Threatened Peoples, France Liberté: Fondation Danielle Mitterrand, International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR), Pax Romana (International Catholic Movement for Intellectual and Cultural Affairs and International Movement of Catholic Students), non-governmental organizations in special consultative status, and International Educational Development (IED), Inc., International Federation for the protection of the rights of ethnic, religious, linguistic and other minorities, Mouvement contre le racisme et pour l'amitié entre les peuples (MRAP), and Saami Council, non-governmental organizations on the Roster. ■

FOR Germany: Connecting Across Differences: Empowering Marginalized Groups in Myanmar

by Kurt Südmersen and Cornelia Timm

"Today no democratic parties are allowed in Myanmar, and many human needs remain tragically unaddressed..."

We I've been working on a reconciliation and peace project in Myanmar/Burma for the German branch of IFOR for six years now. Working with participants from different ethnic and religious backgrounds, relationships between which are characterized by fear, intolerance, and prejudice, we focus on providing situations for confronting these deep layers of conflict in order to build trust and improve communication.

e-newsletter

Since 1962, just 14 years after gaining independence from British colonialists and establishing a parliamentary government, the people of Myanmar have been suffering at the hands of a military regime that has led to authoritarian structures in many areas of life. Years of suppression culminated in 1988, when student revolts demanding democracy were countered by military action that resulted in the shootings of 6,000 young people. Two years later, free elections were held, and the National League for Democracy, led by Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi, won more than 80% of the parliamentary seats. However, the government annulled these elections and the situation got worse than before. Today no democratic parties are allowed in Myanmar, and many human needs remain tragically unaddressed – recently seen in the aftermath of the cyclone Nargis. Our goal with this project is to support people in building democratic structures and in dealing with conflicts without violence. We teach the participants of our trainings in mediation and Non Violent Communication by Marshall B. Rosenberg.

Because of the patterns of judgment and domination in their lives, participants in our trainings tend to be skeptical at first. But soon they start to enjoy the atmosphere of acceptance and appreciation, as they experience this completely new attitude and concept of communication. Many return to us with stories of how they've applied mediation in their lives, inspiring us to continue with this important work.

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Photos: Kurt Südmersen and Cornelia Timm



FOR Israel: “Don’t say we did not know...”

by Amos Gvirtz

“Villagers tried to resist the attacks and reject the attackers with stones...”

The following updates were received in the IFOR general inbox from Amos Gvirtz of FOR Israel. They were titled “Don’t say we did not know...” and numbered as shown below. We reprint them here as an insight into the difficulties and challenges that BGAs face each day in Palestine, the Middle-East and Asia:

e-newsletter #115 - 24/06/2008

Settlers from Yizhar continue to harass their Palestinian neighbours. On Thursday 19th June, 2008, they were reinforced by settlers from other places. On Tuesday, 17th June, 2008 settlers from Yizhar had attacked the Palestinian village Burin and killed two donkeys.

Two days later, on Thursday, 19th June, 2008, police forces demolished a caravan at an illegal outpost of Yizhar. Settlers went out on a rampage to take revenge on Palestinians. They attacked two villages, A-Sira Al Qibliyya and Burin. A reinforcement of over 200 settlers, arriving by bus, started to throw stones at passing Palestinian cars and then went to attack both villages. Some of the marauders attacked inside the villages, and others went to torch the agricultural fields. Soldiers who were stationed there did nothing to stop the attacks. Only after approaches by human rights organisations did a reinforcement of soldiers arrive. The villagers tried to resist the attacks and reject the attackers with stones. The soldiers threw teargas grenades at the Palestinians and into Palestinian homes. Even when the settlers had been dispersed from the villages, for a long time afterwards the soldiers prevented the Palestinians from going to put out the flames in their fields.

#114 - 19/06/2008

Muhammad Hamamra of the Palestinian village Husan worked in the settlement Beitar Ilit. He and Melissa (a young Jewish settler from Beitar Ilit) fell in love and decided to get married. With that in mind, Melissa converted to Islam. A month ago they got married in Husan and have been living there since.

Settlers from Beitar Ilit attacked the village and claimed Melissa was kidnapped. They threatened that the army would come to take her back to the settlement. On Thursday, 12/06/08, soldiers arrived in Husan, sur-

rounded Muhammad & Melissa’s home, and took both of them away from the village. They were released the next day.

#113 - 10/06/2008

For nearly thirty years the Israeli military establishment has been trying to evict the Palestinian population from the south Hebron hills. For that purpose, a large area was declared military zone, expulsions were carried out, cisterns filled with dirt and stones, homes demolished, settlements and outposts erected.

Now roadblocks are used.

On 05/06/08 the Israeli army created a barrier of rocks and soil on the road connecting Twane, a village in the south Hebron area, and Yatta, the regional central town, thus suddenly blocking the one road that enables the transport of water fodder other supplies to the cave dwellers’ villages in the area.

This year has been struck with drought, so a severe shortage of water and grazing vegetation has hit the area.

#111 - 27/05/2008

The villagers of ‘Asira ElQibliyya suffer from non-stop attacks on their village. The attackers are settlers from the settlement Yizhar and IDF soldiers.

On Friday, May 16, 2008, after 2.00 p.m., some 25 settlers from Yizhar came to the outskirts of the village and started stoning houses, and torching the villagers’ agricultural plots. IDF soldiers who came did nothing to stop the settlers. Villagers who tried to stop the settlers’ invasion were shot at by the soldiers with rubber bullets and tear gas grenades. One water tank, standing on a roof in the village, was damaged by bullets. The settlers stole a donkey from the village. The next day they renewed their attacks. The IDF stopped them that time.

The villagers report that these attacks have been going on for six years now, approximately once a month. Lately, the attacks have taken place weekly on Friday or Saturday. In addition to that, at times the IDF enters the village late at night, takes control of houses, puts all their inhabitants in one room, while the soldiers take over the rest of it.

Questions & queries: amosg@shefayim.org.il

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Bombay Sarvodaya Friendship Centre

by Daniel Mazgaonkar

"We support the right and the aspirations of both the Arab and Jewish people..."

1) We call for the establishment of an Independent and Sovereign state of Palestine.

2) We extend our solidarity to the courageous people of Palestine and endorse our support to the resistance against the Israeli occupation.

Daniel's suggestion: 2) We extend our support to and solidarity with the courageous people of Palestine and appeal them to employ all means of peaceful and non-violent resistance in spite of the immense provocations.

3) We support the Right of Return of the Refugees, who were the victims of a systematic and planned Zionist campaign of displacement, ethnic cleansing and genocide.

4) We call for the immediate dismantlement of all the Israeli Settlements in the West Bank and Jerusalem.

5) We call for the immediate destruction of the Apartheid Wall which has created Bantustans across Palestine, whilst creating the largest open air prison-cum-concentration camp for its 2.5 million inhabitants.

Daniel's : 5) We call upon the U N and the Israeli government to take immediate and concrete steps to demolish the wall that is being constructed to divide the two peoples.

6) We demand that the Israeli government immediately end the Siege of Gaza which is home to 1.5 million people. The inhuman siege is leading to a holocaust of the Gazans & is a grave crime against humanity.

7) The Check Points in excess of 500, strewn across the West Bank, are a daily source of humiliation and violence for the beleaguered Palestinian populace and we call for their immediate dismantlement.

Daniel: 7) The Check Points created by the Israeli government are over 500 and strewn across the West Bank and are a source of humiliation and violence for the suffering Palestinian people and we urge the government of Israel to dismantle them.

8) We reaffirm that Zionism is Rascism. We thus call for the reinstatement of UN resolution 3379 and call for its re-endorsement by the international community & the UN.

We recognize the fact that Zionism is not Judaism and that our principled opposition to Zionism in no way affects our friendship with the Jewish people.

Daniel: The Resolution no.3379 be stated. We must also take care not to put government of Israel and Zionism at par. As you have shown the distinction between Judaism and Zionism.

9) Until Israel continues with its Colonial Occupation and implementation of its apartheid policies, we demand that the Government of India immediately end all defence, military and intelligence ties, especially purchase of Israeli armaments. We call upon the International community to boycott Apartheid Israel on similar terms that we had meted out to Apartheid South Africa.

Daniel's question: "Until" expresses a meaning which is, if Israel changes its policies, then the armaments can be purchased. This is a big fallacy. We should never support purchase of arms.....

10) We call for the unity of all resistance forces in Palestine that are struggling against Zionism and US Imperialism.

Daniel: We urge upon the groups resisting the Israeli occupation by peaceful and non-violent methods to come together on one platform and appeal to such groups which believe in violent methods to eschew violence and join forces together with those who have faith in peaceful and non-violent methods.

11) We demand that Israel honour the democratic verdict of the Palestinian people and recognise the Hamas government, which is the legitimate representative chosen by the Palestinian people. We also demand that Israel immediately initiate a process of dialogue with the Hamas led government. This is also the opinion of 65% of the Israeli people.

12) The Israeli policy of targetted assassinations of the Palestinian leadership and the indiscriminate killing of civilians should be immediately be brought to a halt. Israel should immediately stop the destruction of Palestinian farmlands, house demolitions, brutalization, torture and its total control over water & other natural resources.

Daniel: 12-A) We wish to appeal to all people of Palestine to eschew violence in their efforts to resolve the conflict and use the methods of SATYAGRAHA (SOUL-FORCE BASED ON TRUTH) TO AVOID ANY FURTHER BLOOD-SHED OF INNOCENT CHILDREN, WOMEN AND MEN of both sides.

13) We demand that Israel immediately release the more than 10,000 Palestinians languishing in Israeli prisons that also include a significant number of women and children.

...cont. on next page

Bombay Sarvodaya...

Daniel: We urge the Israeli government to immediately release all the prisoners languishing in Israeli prisons including women and children.

14) We support the right and the aspirations of both the Arab and Jewish people to dwell in the same land in peace and harmony.

The Centre envisages the networking of peace and social change activists all over the world. It is involved in working against poverty, displacement of tribal people; alternatives to nuclear weapons and dangerous-polluting-non-sustainable nuclear-power plants. Works for self-reliance of villages; community ownership of resources, priority given to communal ownership of land in villages; planning made not from the top but from below; unity and integrity of civil society promoted and freedom of expression; special emphasis on women; priority given to the poorest; free education given to boys and girls up to school final; hosting facilities available, which contributes towards running costs.

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European FOR Branches Meet in Alkmaar, NL

by Stan Morris

“As evening approached, the group walked to the historic Alkmaar Doopgezinde Kerk”

On the sunny Friday of 4 April, 2008 forty members from European branches of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (E-FOR) and invited guests arrived at the Fellowship’s International Secretariat (IFOR) in Alkmaar, NL for the opening session of a three day event. The annual E-FOR conference was organized by convenor and Chairperson Eva Füssinger, RCC convenor Marion Schreiber and Abe Thijs and Bertram Flesch from IFOR branch Kerk en Vrede.

After coffee, tea and a “lekkere” lunch hosted by the IFOR staff, President Jan Schaake introduced IFOR’s new Executive Director John Schot. Arjan Dekker (Finance Administrator), Isabelle Geuskens (Program Manager WPP), Cristina Reyna (WPP Gender Officer) and Stan Morris (Communications Officer), then gave presentations on their recent activities at the International Secretariat and Women Peacemakers Program.

Reporting next on work-in-progress and other activities at their respective branches was Marion Schreiber (Versöhnungsbund, Austria), Benoît Thiran (Sortir de la Violence, Belgium), Chris Cole (FOR England), Maria Biedrawa (MIR France), Uli Sonn and Miriam Klemm (Versöhnungsbund, Germany), Paolo Candelari and Maria Antonietta Maleo (MIR Italia), Henk Blom (Doopgezind Wereldwerk, Netherlands), Abe Thijs (Kerk en Vrede, Netherlands), Heidi and Jorgen Andersen (FOR Norway), David Mumford (FOR Scotland), Axel Ruhe (FOR Sweden), Dave d’Albert and Eva Füssinger (Forum für Friedenserziehung, Switzerland), George Kobi and Françoise Pétremand (MIR Romand, Switzerland) and Arfon Rhys (FOR Wales). Later Ewa Roman and Elisabeth Zochowska (Fundacja Ekumeniczna “Tolerancja,” Poland) presented an overview of their organization, a prospective IFOR member under consideration, and talked about their hopes for the future in continuing to build on their new relationship with the IFOR family.

As evening approached, the group walked several blocks to the historic Alkmaar Doopgezinde Kerk (Mennonite Church) to attend a dinner hosted by church members and a presentation by Rev. Harcourt (Harky) Klinefelter in commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the death of Martin Luther King. Harky was Dr. King’s press officer



E-FOR Branches, IFOR staff and invited guests meeting in the library of the IFOR Secretariat in Alkmaar, NL.

(Assistant Director of Public Relations) in the sixties, and he was debuting a new DVD about the life and work of Dr. King, as it relates to the significance of the nonviolent movement in the Netherlands and Europe. Since the seventies, Harky has been working as a Doopgezinde (Mennonite) minister and nonviolent trainer in the Netherlands, and thereby involved in nonviolent approaches to many conflicts elsewhere in Europe.

Upon arriving at Doopgezinde Kerk we were greeted by event organizer Annelies Klinefelter (Harky’s wife) and served a wonderful buffet prepared by Doopgezinde Kerk members and members of the Klinefelter family. The month before Annelies had asked me, as Communications Officer at the IFOR office, to help her in getting the word out on the MLK event to all our Dutch contacts. Standing next to her in the back of the room during the documentary, whispering comments back and forth, I concluded that she and Harky are truly courageous peace advocates—just imagine being “white” in those early, tumultuous days’ of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement and marching along side Dr. King and company.

Harky, a young college student in the U.S and “looking for a summer project,” began working with Dr. King during the first of Dr. King’s freedom marches. Harky and Annelies have been associated with IFOR for many years; and I found their history quite amazing. Harky said Dr. King didn’t have any recording equipment at the time, but Harky did. So, Dr. King allowed Harky to tag along. By the end of the summer, Dr. King was so impressed with Harky that he hired him as a full-time staff member. The DVD documentary was produced by a student of Harky’s, filmed in Friesland near Harky and Annelies’ home, and jumps between original clips of Dr. King’s marches and Harky sitting

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Photos: IFOR stock

E-FOR Branches...

in his camper recounting his experiences of those riveting, revolutionary times.

Fundacja Ekumeniczna Tolerancja website at: http://www.fet.pl/glowna_en.htm

Martin Luther King was in the sixties a prominent member of the United States' branch of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation. At the invitation of IFOR's active branch Kerk en Vrede, representatives from the European FOR branches gathered that night to relate the significance of the message of Martin Luther King and other people who have inspired nonviolent movements in relation to the present situation in Europe.

See more photos of E-FOR meeting in Alkmaar at: [http://ifor.org/articles/Reports/E-FOR in Alkmaar 08.pdf](http://ifor.org/articles/Reports/E-FOR%20in%20Alkmaar%2008.pdf) ■

Commemorative CDs of the documentary were given to five special guests at the end of the evening; our own Jan Schaake being among them. After more coffee, tea, wine and some delicious desserts, our entourage said their goodbyes and thanked the Klinefelter family and the Doopgezinde Kerk for an inspiring and educational evening. Most of those attending the European FOR conference then left directly for the Doopsgezind Broederschapshuis location in Schoorl, where they stayed for the remainder of the conference.

Doopsgezind Broederschapshuis is a Mennonite guest house, "large and cozy buildings set against the dunes and woods of Schoorl," and also near Alkmaar. It is used for big groups, with two large meeting rooms, where the European FOR Conference met, and several other thick thatched-roof houses spread out on the grounds for overnight guests. The grounds are located right against the Holland dunes, just a few kilometers from the ocean. During a lunch break Benoît Thiran, George Kobi and I hiked to the top of the dunes. These sand dunes are ancient and run along the west coast of the Netherlands almost the entire length. They are also one of the reasons, in conjunction with incredible Dutch hydro-mechanics, that North and South Holland stay above the waterline.



Elisabeth Zochowska (Fundacja Ekumeniczna "Tolerancja," Poland) presented an overview of their organization.

Stan Morris, a full-time volunteer on assignment, is the Communications Officer for the International Fellowship of Reconciliation and Editor of IFOR in Action, as well as Youth Opportunities, IFOR.org and the IFOR Annual Report. He can be contacted from the IFOR website at www.ifor.org or by email at: s.morris@ifor.org.

De Doopgezinde Kerk in Alkmaar is located at Koningsweg 12 in the center of Alkmaar <http://www.alkmaar.nl/monument/monument/doopkerk.htm>, and more information on IFOR's branch Kerk en Vrede (Church and Peace) can be found at www.kerkenvrede.nl.

Staff Update:

IFOR was happy to welcome Channsitha Mark & Irene Kyazze to its team. Irene and Channsitha worked as WPP interns for the International Secretariat in Alkmaar for six weeks; they add this about themself...

For the last six weeks, we have been at the IFOR / WPP office, going through an International Orientation in peace work. It has been a busy time, but we have enjoyed every bit of it! Our interaction with the staff at the Secretariat, the conferences, the visits to various organizations etc have made such a lasting impression on us. Aside from the formal work, we also had the opportunity to do some sight seeing around the Netherlands and in the process we even visited a cheese

farm where we learnt how to make cheese! We would therefore like to share with you our experiences, views and reflections on our time in the Netherlands.

Irene Kyazze:

I began my journey as a peace maker five years ago and since then, I have participated in various peace building activities. However, all these were within the African context, which meant that my exposure to peace work remained imbalanced. To provide me with the much needed balance was IFOR / WPP that offered me the opportunity to participate in an International Orientation Program in the Netherlands for six weeks. I therefore consider my participation in the program, as an extension of my peace journey.

When I arrived at the IFOR office, the staff was very welcoming and I immediately knew that my stay was going to be a worthwhile experience. One of the things that I appreciated about IFOR / WPP, was that Sitha and I were always involved in all the office activities i.e. staff meetings,

celebrations, etc, which is not usually the case for interns in other organizations...

Channsitha Mark:

Six weeks in the Netherlands with IFOR/WPP flies. I remembered my first day at the office in Alkmaar; everyone welcoming me and Irene Kyazze warmly, which made us feel relaxed and comfortable.



Sharing rooms and working together with Irene for six weeks, I have learned so much about the conflict situation in Uganda and her experience of working for peace with the AM-ANI Forum. Aside from our work experiences, we also shared fun and our personal life journey, learning and encouraging one another. We really enjoyed our time together.

Before coming for the International Orientation, I saw the Netherlands as an open

society, thinking women and youth did not face any challenges, since the Dutch women's movement has been quite strong. However, I could notice from my meetings with different Dutch NGOs that although Dutch people are living in a more stable and open society than Cambodia, women and youth are continuing to struggle. They are facing many challenges in advocating for their rights, similar to Cambodia, although the issues addressed are contextualized of course...

Read more about Irene and Channsitha in "The Time is Now!" newsletter at: <http://ifor.org/WPP/index.html>. ■

CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS: IFOR in ACTION

IFOR in ACTION #48 will appear in September of 2008, a special edition on peace and nonviolence initiatives in *Africa*. We are looking for contributions in the form of articles, interviews, upcoming events, recent activities organized, resources, photos, important dates, and absolutely anything else you which to share with the rest of the IFOR movement. The International Secretariat warmly invites you to contribute to the next issue of IFOR in ACTION. We are especially hoping to hear from Branches, Groups and Affiliates located in Africa.

Contact Stan Morris, Editor (s.morris@ifor.org)

NEW BOOK

Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective

(Paperback)

by **Amina Wadud**

Fourteen centuries of Islamic thought have produced a legacy of interpretive readings of the Qu'ran written almost entirely by men. Now, with *Qur'an and Woman*, Amina Wadud provides a first interpretive reading by a woman, a reading which validates the female voice in the Qu'ran and brings it out of the shadows. Muslim progressives have long argued that it is not the religion but patriarchal interpretation and implementation of the Qu'ran that have kept women oppressed. For many, the way to reform is the reexamination and reinterpretation of religious texts.

e-newsletter

Qur'an and Woman contributes a gender inclusive reading to one of the most fundamental disciplines in Islamic thought, Qu'ranic exegesis. Wadud breaks down specific texts and key words which have been used to limit women's public and private role, even to justify violence toward Muslim women, revealing that their original meaning and context defy such interpretations. What her analysis clarifies is the lack of gender bias, precedence, or prejudice in the essential language of the Qur'an.

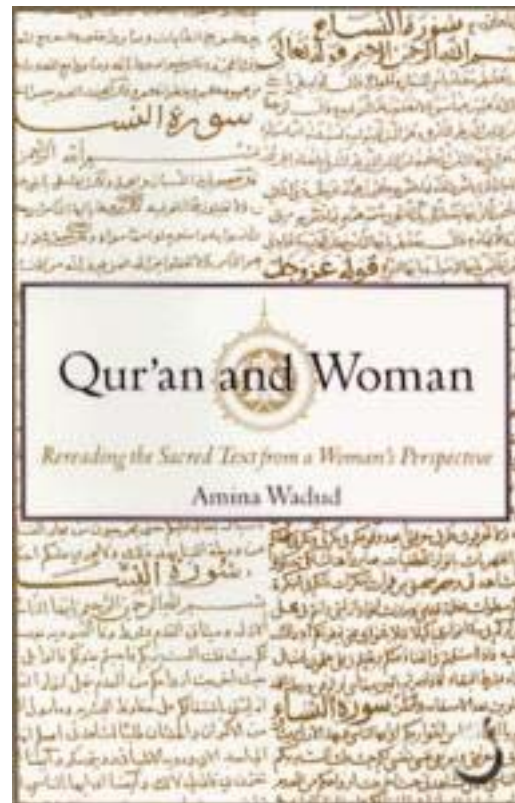
Despite much Qu'ranic evidence about the significance of women, gender reform in Muslim society has been stubbornly resisted. Wadud's reading of the Qu'ran confirms women's equality and constitutes legitimate grounds for contesting the unequal treatment that women have experienced historically and continue to experience legally in Muslim communities. The Qu'ran does not prescribe one timeless and unchanging social structure for men and women, Wadud argues lucidly, affirming that the Qu'ran holds greater possibilities for guiding human society to a more fulfilling and productive mutual collaboration between men and women than as yet attained by Muslims or non-Muslims.

About the Author

Amina Wadud is an Islamic Studies Professor in the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Paperback: 144 pages ; Dimensions (in inches): 0.43 x 8.25 x 5.49

Publisher: Oxford University Press; Reprint edition (March 1999)



More information at: http://www.kvisionbooks.com/product_info.php?Quran_and_Woman_Rereading_the_Sacred_Text_from_a_Womans_Perspective/ ■

EVENTS

DPI/NGO Conference: 3-5 September, Paris

The 61st Annual Conference for Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) associated with the United Nations Department of Public Information (DPI), will be held in Paris at UNESCO Headquarters from Wednesday, 3 September to Friday, 5 September 2008. This is the first time it will take place outside the UN Headquarters in New York. To mark the sixtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, this year's Conference is entitled "Reaffirming Human Rights for All: The Universal Declaration at 60" and is being organized in partnership with the NGO/DPI Executive Committee, UNESCO, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Government of France.

The Conference aims to highlight effective ways in which civil society, in partnership with other actors, can contribute to the advancement of human rights at the international, regional, national and local levels, generate greater awareness of human rights issues and strengthen commitments to address them among diverse stakeholders worldwide. In addition to representatives of NGOs, civil society organizations, grassroots constituencies, the UN System and Member States, representatives of the media, academia, the private sector and other institutions will also be present. The Conference will provide various opportunities to engage participants in sharing experiences and articulating perspectives on how to enhance their activities in the protection and promotion of human rights including roundtable panel discussions and break-out sessions, interactive dialogue, workshops, caucuses and other activities. Background documents and information on the programme will be available on the Conference website.

NGOs associated with DPI, in consultative status with ECOSOC, accredited to UNESCO and/or that work with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights are invited to register for the Conference. Please extend this invitation to members and staff of your organizations, including youth and grassroots representatives. Please note that we must limit the number of participants from any one organization to no more than three persons.

All participants, including those who already have UN or UNESCO grounds passes, are required to register for the Conference. The registration will be available online at www.un.org/dpi/ngosection beginning on Monday, 9 June 2008; the deadline for registration is 1 August 2008 to ensure timely receipt of your confirmation letter and a special invitation to all events.

The DPI/NGO Relations cannot assist NGO representatives in obtaining visas for France and cannot fax confirmation letters to French embassies. Arrangements for travel, visa, and accommodations, as well as all expenses related to participation in the Conference, must be provided for entirely by the participants or their sponsoring organization.

Please check the website at www.un.org/dpi/ngosection for updated information on the Conference. ■

INTL. HUMAN DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION

Global Initiative To Fight Poverty, Unemployment, Child Labor & Racism Global Perspectives.

28 - 31, July 2008

HYDE PARK HOTEL, LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM

The International Human Development Organization (IHDO) cordially invites you to attend the 8th International conference with the theme, Global Initiative To Fight Poverty, Unemployment, Child Labor & Racism to be held on July 28 -31, 2008 in London, UK.

This years conference will address the issue of Poverty, Unemployment, Child Labor, Racism, HIV/AIDS and Human Trafficking at all levels: from the individual to the global community. More than ever before, Individuals, Youth Associations, Religious Groups, Environmental NGOs, Community Associations and Nonprofit Organizations are being called to operate transparently, and adhere to the highest code of ethical conduct of living in service to others for human development.

Conference Registration.

Registration is free. For registration form, download the attached form in this e-mail. For more details contact the organizing committee secretariat via email: carolyne-henshaw@live.com

Important Dates.

Early Registration: Immediately
Regular Registration: June 1st 2008 to July 10th, 2008
Registration Closes: July 10th 2008

(Note: Space is limited. Registration is on a first-come, first-served basis. The Conference Committee reserves the right to close registration early.)

Download registration form in the attachment or contact the organizing committee Email: carolyne-henshaw@live.com ■

NEWS

Symposium Vrouwenrechten en Islam

2 April 2008

Attended by: WPP staffers José de Vries, Information Officer, and Cristina Reyna, Gender Officer.

The seminar was opened by Hulya Uslu, who had organized the seminar. She spoke on women's rights in Islam and expressed the need for women to investigate themselves their own values and believes in a critical manner, instead of taking over what others say and belief without reflecting on it.

e-newsletter

In the morning Prof Asma Barlas and Ceylan Pektas-Weber both gave a lecture.

Prof Asma Barlas, author of 'Believing women in Islam (2002) spoke on her relationship with the Qur'an and pleaded for a feminist interpretation of the islam. Taken the fact that Allah is justice and would not harm any human being ('zulm'), she does not believe that certain statements in Qur'an should be interpreted as they are currently by men. These include that men are the 'keepers/ guardians of women' or that men are superior to women. The Qur'an should be seen in the light of the context and meaning of words. She feels women (and men) should read the Qur'an in the original language and judge for themselves what it says. Existing interpretations of the Qur'an are done by men, in patriarchal societies. A women's perspective is mostly missing in interpretations. Barlas says that the Qur'an sees men and women as each others guides/ friends (mutual equality) and the Qur'an is not patriarchal. It does not glorify men and men do not have authority over women. Differences between people are based on moral behavior, not on biological differences or sexes.

She advised the book: Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective from Amina Wadud.

Pektas-Weber, author of Moslima's. Emancipatie achter de dijken (2006), explained how women's rights are violated all over the world, within different communities, both poor and rich, educated or uneducated. She is annoyed by the stereotypical manner muslim women are perceived in the western world. The position of women is too often used to judge and complain about the Islam. However, women in western societies are also treated unequally. She spoke on the position of muslim women both in and outside the household and emphasized that muslim women and men should work together to raise awareness on women unfriendly practices within the

Dutch Muslim communities and to put into real practice equality between women and men as taught in the Qur'an. She advised the book: the Sublime Quran by Laleh Bakhtiar.

After the lunch a debate followed between public and five panel members; Senay Özdemir, Ahmed Marcouch, Mohammed Cheppih, Walther Kok en Ceylan Pektas Weber.

Cheppih emphasized to read the Qur'an in the context in which the Islam originated. In that context, Islam is quite progressive towards the position of women. The difference between religion and culture and Islam and Muslim should be emphasized. Marcouch claims that, in addition to re-interpretation of the Qur'an, social economic changes are needed with regard to education and work for women. He feels that women should be 'architects of their own lives'. Men should support the emancipation process. Walter Kok was talking as well of the importance to see developments in time and place.

Senay emphasized that both men and women should take their own responsibility to stimulate equality between women and men. The discussion focused on importance of dialogue between women and men. However at a certain point the discussion got quite lost in how to raise children and the role of the school, in contrast to the responsibility of parents. ■

The Time is NOW 2008!

WPP interns Channsitha Mark & Irene Kyazze finished their six week orientation at the International Secretariat in Alkmaar with an exciting new edition of a newsletter called The Time is NOW 2008! Learn about Irene and Channsitha's many and varied peace-work experiences in the Netherlands. Hear from both of them, as they visulized and manuvered through each day in a country as far from their own in distance and as culture.

The Time is Now! was produced by Irene Kyazze (Uganda) and Channsitha Mark (Cambodia) in the framework of the Women Peacemaker Program (WPP) International Orientation as a forum for youth across the globe.

The Women Peacemakers Program is an initiative of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR). Since 1919, IFOR has pioneered spiritually based active non-violence. For more information about this newsletter, to apply for the International Orientation Program, or for more information about the WPP and IFOR branches in your country please visit: www.ifor.org.

The Time is Now! can be downloaded from the WPP website at: <http://www.ifor.org/WPP/> ■

OPPORTUNITIES

Nominations sought for the United Nations Prize in the Field of Human Rights

The prize will be awarded at an event at United Nations Headquarters in New York on 10 December 2008, as part of the annual commemoration of Human Rights Day.

The United Nations Prize in the Field of Human Rights was instituted by the General Assembly in 1966 (Res. 2217/XXI of 19 December 1966), and was awarded for the first time on 10 December 1968 on the occasion of the commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Thereafter, the prize has been awarded in 1973, 1978, 1988, 1993, 1998 and then in 2003. The prize is honorary in nature and is awarded approximately every five years to individuals and organizations in recognition of outstanding achievement in the field of human rights.

A special committee has been entrusted by the General Assembly with the selection of laureates from nominations sought from Member States, specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations in consultative status and from other appropriate sources, in accordance with the above-mentioned resolution.

The Prize is an opportunity not only to give public recognition to the achievements of the awardees themselves, but also to send a clear message to human rights defenders the world over that the international community is grateful for, and supports, their tireless efforts to promote all human rights for all.

Please find attached a list of previous recipients, a copy of the relevant portion of the annex to the above resolution and a nomination form for submitting a nomination for this year's Prize (also available on our website <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/HRPrizeStory.aspx>). I would be most grateful for your contribution and look forward to receiving your nomination by Tuesday, 15 July 2008.

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IFOR members are committed to active nonviolence and come from every major religious tradition. IFOR has consultative status with the United Nations and UNESCO.

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