



# DISARMING TIMES

*The Journal of Pax Christi Australia*

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December 2012

## **Athens Dialogue**

### **On Establishing in the Middle East**

## **A Zone Free of Weapons of Mass Destruction and their Means of Delivery**

The November 14-16 Athens Dialogue took place in Athens/Sounion, Greece and brought together Israeli, Palestinian, Arab, Iranian and other Middle Eastern civil society leaders, former diplomats, and some diplomatic representatives.

The dialogue meeting, attended by some 40 participants, was hosted and facilitated by the La Trobe University Centre for Dialogue (Melbourne) and the Athens-based European Public Law Organization. The two-day dialogue was moderated by the director of the Centre for Dialogue, Professor Joseph Camilleri, and its deputy director, Dr Michalis S. Michael. Its aim was to support the proposed Helsinki meeting on a Middle East free of weapons mass destruction, sponsored jointly the UN, United States, United Kingdom and Russian Federation and likely to take place later this year or early next year.

The gathering of Middle East representatives was marked by extraordinary respect and empathy between participants coming from the areas of conflict. Using the dialogue method developed and refined over many years by

the Centre for dialogue, the meeting generated a range of connections, new opportunities for networking and new ideas on ways forward for Middle Eastern governments and communities.

One of the main conclusions of The Athens Dialogue was: *Drop all preconditions and start parallel talks simultaneously on freeing the Middle East of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction and negotiating an end to the Palestine crisis.*

Other proposals emerging out of the Dialogue included new confidence-building measures to promote Middle East denuclearization, new regional structures to pursue such denuclearization, and new civil society initiatives to encourage Middle Eastern governments to pursue negotiations.

A particular proposal was the establishment of a UN Regional Centre for Peace and Security to match similar centres in other conflict-prone regions of the world.

The Athens Dialogue outcomes and possible next steps will be published and available online from mid-December.

Casting a shadow over the dialogue were the tragic events un-

folding in Gaza and Israel. Yet, though emotions were strong, and many were preoccupied by these events, all participants were nonetheless committed to the idea of establishing such a zone, and to the need for practical meaningful steps to be taken over the coming 12 to 18 months. The meeting was unanimous in its view that the anticipated Helsinki Conference should proceed as planned, and if humanly possible in April 2013.

*For PS. on Helsinki Conference see Notice Page 12*

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# DISARMING TIMES

A quarterly journal of Pax Christi Australia. It aims to provide members and interested peacemakers with peace news and views both local and international. We endeavour in each edition to reflect the three-fold emphasis of Pax Christi which engages members in study, Non-violent action and prayer for peace, justice, human rights, development and inter-faith and inter-civilisation dialogue.

## **PAX CHRISTI AUSTRALIA**

*Is an Australian-wide*

*Christian Peace Movement, affiliated with Pax Christi International.*

*Human rights, justice and integrity of creation are central to its work.*

*We take a stand against militarism, nuclear weapons and the arms race.*

*As an ecumenical Christian movement Pax Christi fosters the spiritual and scriptural dimensions of peace-making.*

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## **Military Applications of Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS)**

### **Statement of Pax Christi International on Drones**

*The increased use of Remotely Piloted Air Systems (RPAs) – also called unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) or drones – has inaugurated a new phase in modern warfare and is raising grave moral and legal questions that deserve immediate attention. Pax Christi International has given serious consideration to different perspectives on this issue and is persuaded that the use of these armed unmanned vehicles as weapons should be prohibited.*

1. Pax Christi's opinion refers specifically to the use of RPAs (or UAVs) as weapons and does not preclude their deployment for some non-military, non-human surveillance purposes such as the monitoring of power or gas lines, infrastructure inspections, air quality management, resource monitoring, communication or broadcast services or monitoring human rights abuses. Although not the focus of this statement, concerns about the invasion of privacy using drone technology for human surveillance, including civilian purposes such as law enforcement or border control, must be taken very seriously.

2. According to advocates, the use of robots and unmanned systems increases the safety of civilians during military operations. Despite U.S. government claims that drone operators can distinguish an al Qaeda terrorist from innocent civilians, recent studies present significant evidence that US drone strikes have killed hundreds of civilians and injured many more. Furthermore, the 24-hour-a-day hovering by drones over communities unable to protect themselves in any way has terrorized men, women, and children; caused tremendous anxiety and psychological trauma among civilian communities; and disrupted essential community activities such as school and tribal dispute-resolution efforts. Evidence in a recent Stanford Law School/NYU study suggests that U.S. drone strikes have undermined U.S. relationships in the region, especially with Pakistanis, facilitated recruitment to violent non-state armed groups and motivated further violent attacks. Furthermore, a serious lack of government transparency about drone strikes hampers ongoing monitoring and public accountability.

3. Some of the most serious questions about the use of lethal drone technology relate to the rule of law. The U.S. government has failed to make public the legal basis for its program of targeted assassinations and is setting dangerous precedents for other governments, including repeated likely violations of other nations' sovereignty. To execute people without due process or an opportunity to surrender should violate the moral and legal sensibilities of people who claim to believe in the value of every human life and the right to a fair trial. The legality and morality of killing weak targets (or every last potential "enemy") outside of a war zone is itself highly questionable.

4. Furthermore, the objectification of targeted human beings and their remoteness is likely to lower the threshold for using armed violence to resolve conflicts. In the near future, the option of fully autonomous drones or "killer robots," capable of making their own decisions about killing without a human operator "in the loop" are expected

*Continued from Page 2*

to be seen on the battlefield. Killing by remote control is deeply offensive to Pax Christi's belief in active nonviolence that is committed to taking on violence rather than inflicting it on others.

5. Pax Christi International continues to emphasize the need to deal with security threats in non-military ways. The use of drones in armed conflict, because they are relatively low in cost and exact few military casualties, will likely increase the move to war and military intervention. We believe that international cooperation in criminal investigations; the arrest and trial of suspected terrorists; investment in human development, jobs, and education; plus dialogue, diplomacy and compromise are more effective routes to sustainable peace and inclusive security and reflect more accurately the kind of people we hope to become.

6. Pax Christi, in opposing the use of RPAs or drones as weapons, believes that it lowers the threshold for resorting to violent force to resolve complex conflicts. In particular we oppose the use of lethal drones for targeted assassinations on what could become a battlefield without borders.

7. Pax Christi International calls on the United States and other governments using drone technology for counterterrorism purposes to cease immediately the use of lethal drones for targeted assassinations; to ensure transparency and accountability related to the use of lethal drones; and to demilitarize counterterrorism strategies.

8. We call on the United Nations to develop binding legal standards based on the principles of international law for the production, use and proliferation of RPAs or drones and to prohibit the use of fully autonomous "killer robot" drones.

Brussels, 28 November 2012

**Statement by Navi Pillay, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights on the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women.**

"Ensuring women's and girls' rights, eliminating discrimination and achieving gender equality lie at the heart of the international human rights system, starting with article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which states unequivocally: 'All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights...' On 9 October, 64 years after those famous words were written, 14-year-old Malala Yousufzai was shot in the head and the neck on her way back from school in the town of Mingora in Pakistan. The shocking attack by the group commonly referred to as the Pakistani Taliban was followed by a public statement in which they threatened to kill anyone else, including women and children, holding views they disagree with.

"Malala was targeted for her prominent role in promoting the fundamental right of education for girls and for criticizing the Taliban for actions such as destroying girls' schools and threatening to kill girls who attend them. The fact that they tried to do just that to her brought into sharp focus the extreme intolerance and physical danger facing many girls who try to exercise their basic human right to education in many other countries. "The sad truth is that Malala's case is not an exceptional one and, had she been less prominent, her attempted murder might have passed more or less unnoticed. Despite all the advances in women's rights around the world, violence against girls and women remains one of the most common human rights abuses – and the assault on their fundamental right to education continues in many countries. Often, as in Malala's case, the two phenomena are closely related. "In Pakistan's neighbour, Afghanistan, for example, the situation has been

chronic for much of the past three decades. During the country's various evolving and overlapping conflicts, girls' education ground to an almost complete halt. Since the Taliban were removed from power in 2001, they have reverted to guerrilla tactics which have included – as a matter of policy -- attacks on girls and women, especially in relation to their attempts to receive education.

"It is estimated that education – especially, although not exclusively, girls' education -- has been subjected to deliberate attacks in more than 30 countries because of religious, sectarian, political or other ideological reasons. "No continent is free from these practices.

"Malala's bravery in confronting such practices touched a chord internationally. The attack led to an unprecedented outpouring of popular anger and major protests in favour of girls' education in Pakistan itself and in a number of other countries in the region. Importantly Pakistani and international educational initiatives have been launched in her name. "But, to do real justice to Malala and the cause she serves, we should do more than this. We must sustain and increase the momentum she has created, and stand up for every girl's fundamental right to education.

"Malala was attacked because she was a girl, and she was attacked not just because she wanted an education herself, but because she was campaigning for all girls to be able to fulfil their right to receive an education, as laid down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. She, and all other girls deserve a life free of violence, and I wish her a full and speedy recovery." November 27

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# The Jewish community, Israel, Palestine and the world: A brief overview

By Harold Zwier 19<sup>th</sup> November 2012

This article covers a wide territory, including an overview of the Jewish community and its complex relationships with the wider community and with Israel, and a discussion about the Israeli Palestinian conflict. It also makes comment about the current situation unfolding in Gaza following the recent increase in the number of rockets being fired into Israel by Gaza militants and Israel's targeted assassination of Hamas military Chief Ahmed Jaabri.

These are big topics to tackle in a short article and my contribution will inevitably be biased and limited. This is very much a personal perspective. Others see the same situation and understand it very differently.

Let me start by telling you something about the Australian Jewish Democratic Society (AJDS) and the local Jewish community because I think it is difficult to understand the perspective I have to offer without having that context.

I've been a member of the Australian Jewish Democratic Society since about 1986 and have been on its executive for a long time. The organization was founded in 1984 by a group of Jews including Norman Rothfield, Henry Zimmerman, Moss Cass, a former Minister for Communications in the Whitlam government, and others. It evolved out of a Middle East focused group called *Paths To Peace*, into a more broadly based Jewish progressive organisation whose interests included nuclear disarmament, conflict resolution and a just resolution to the Israeli Palestinian conflict, social justice, Aboriginal land rights, the welfare of ethnic communities in

Australia, and the fight against racism and anti-Semitism. Its adopted slogan was "A progressive voice among Jews. A Jewish voice among progressives".

Its willingness to be publicly critical of Israeli government policies led to criticism of the AJDS from some parts of the Jewish community, nevertheless, in 1987 it was invited to make application to join the Jewish Community Council of Victoria – the roof body of the Jewish community in this state. The application attracted majority support from the other affiliates, but failed to secure the required 2/3 majority. But then, on the eve of the signing of the Oslo Accords in October 1993, it again made application and was accepted.

I mention this, because the Jewish Democratic Society has consciously placed itself within the Jewish community where it can represent its position on a whole range of issues – rather than outside the community where the best it could manage would be to snipe from the sidelines and engage in an unproductive war of words. And there are some Jewish groups who have oriented themselves in that way.

And this leads me to tell you a bit more about the Jewish community. In 1997 there was a debate raging in Australia about Native Title and the so called Wik legislation introduced into the Australian Parliament by John Howard. The AJDS organized a meeting in the Jewish community on both the Stolen Generations and the Wik legislation and we secured Noel Pearson to talk about the Wik legislation. The meeting was supported by a large number of

major Jewish communal organizations. I had the honour of picking up Noel Pearson from the airport and we had a chat on our way to the meeting. At the start of that chat Noel said he was looking forward to addressing the brethren. The word "brethren" has a particular religious overtone, and I was suddenly confronted with the question, "What is the Jewish community?". In writing for a Pax Christi audience, I understand that this article will address actively and religiously engaged Christians from an ecumenical group.

But coming to speak to a group of people in the Jewish community is not generally the same. Because the organized Jewish community is much more an ethnic community than a religious community and therefore speaking to a Jewish audience is likely to be speaking to a non religious group.

And when the issue being discussed is not a centrally Jewish issue – for instance, Aboriginal reconciliation, or the treatment of refugees and asylum seekers – there is a significant and broad level of compassion and interest in the Jewish community.

However, when the issue relates to one that is centrally Jewish – for instance, Israel – the reaction of the organized Jewish community is much more defensive and wary. Criticism of Israel often provokes suspicion about the motivation of the organization or individual airing the criticism, rather than an engagement with the content of that criticism.

In some cases, that suspicion is justified – the criticism being overblown, or propaganda, or simply wrong. But in many

cases spokespeople and leaders in the Jewish community would sound a lot more credible if they engaged with the substance of the concerns being expressed.

In August 2011, at a time when the Palestinian Authority was considering calling for the recognition of Palestine at the United Nations, the AJDS had an article published in the Age newspaper arguing in favour of the Australian government supporting such a move. Our article attracted support from some in our community, but more importantly, it attracted little criticism. Subsequently, the Australian Jewish News asked us for an article on that same theme, which they published together with an opposing view. The point I want make is that the Jewish community is not monolithic in its views and there are avenues for the expression of diversity.

Having given that introduction let me get to the substance of my discussion.

The beginning of the Old Testament says “In the beginning of God’s creating the heavens and the earth. . .” which is slightly different to the more familiar “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. . .” – but leaving aside the exact translation, the bible (the chumash) I was using had a commentary which questioned why the narrative began in this manner, and it concluded that the primary purpose was to establish God’s sovereignty. It said, “if the nations accuse Israel of seizing the land, Israel can respond, ‘The entire universe belongs to God. He created it and granted it to whomever He deemed fit. It was His desire to give it to them and then to take it from them and give it to us.’”

When I read this back in 1998, having become a bit more interested in Orthodox Judaism, I assumed I was reading a modern commentary that reflected the somewhat

right wing political views of many religious Jews regarding the modern state of Israel. I was therefore rather surprised to learn some time later, that I was reading the commentary of an 11<sup>th</sup> century rabbi who lived in France, known throughout the Jewish world as Rashi. Clearly, he was not commenting about the political strength of world Jewry at that time.

In fact the Zionist movement that developed in Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was really the product of Jewish secular ideas and the majority of the religious community did not support the nationalistic goals of the Zionist movement. Most, but not all, changed their mind after the establishment of Israel in 1948.

If the birth of the state was a time of celebration for Jews, it was a catastrophe for the Arabs living in the area. Yom Ha’atzma’ut, Independence day for Israel, is Al-Naqba, the catastrophe, for Arabs. The displacement of Palestinians from their homes – the birth of the Palestinian refugee problem was, from my reading, a combination of factors. From people fleeing war, from some deliberate expulsions, and from deliberate killings in places like Deir Yassin where over 100 Arab villagers died including many women and children. Deir Yassin was an act of terrorism which deliberately created fear in the indigenous population and caused many to flee. While the Palestinians see the refugee problem as caused by a deliberate policy of the Jewish Agency, it seems to me much less a directed policy and much more to do with the chaotic period before and after the declaration of the state. Without wishing to imply some accounting balance, there were killings and expulsions on both sides.

Of course, the Israelis were never going to have a refugee problem because the settlement of displaced Jews and immigration were primary functions of the newly created state. The surrounding countries, however,

saw the new state as temporary and it took a couple of decades to bring its reality home. That reality came as a consequence of sabre rattling by Egypt in 1967. The subsequent war – the June 1967, 6 day war – altered the perceived power balance of the Middle East and had a profound effect on the Jewish diaspora. As a 12 year old, my barmitzvah classes at Mount Scopus College were interrupted by my teacher, Mr Kaspi when we listened to the hourly news on the radio.

The victory of Israel, in particular the capture of the Old City of Jerusalem was a source of great pride in the Jewish world. Let me explain the significance of the unification of Jerusalem as it may give you a better understanding of the culture that informs how many Jews react to comments about Israel.

I don’t regard myself as a vocal patriot or nationalist in Australia but if we sat and talked about this country, then for all its faults and all the areas of society and policy of which I am critical, I think this is a wonderful place to live. But it’s not the fluttering of the flag or cricket, or football, or the national anthem or the ANZACs. It’s not the outward symbols and signatures. It goes a lot deeper.

In some respects, Israel is a bit like that for me, and in other respects it’s very different. I have reacted quite emotionally when reading some of the accounts and hearing stories about the 1967 capture of the Old City of Jerusalem. There is a rich 3000 year Jewish history in which Jerusalem is a foundational motif. The capture of the Old City was therefore not just an Israeli territorial gain. It was a Jewish historical event of epic proportions unfolding before our eyes – in our generation. As a 12 year old it was particularly significant, occurring as it did in those formative years.

But this emotional response, deeply rooted as it is in the Judaic tradition, is not the equivalent of my relationship to Aus-

tralia. I don't live in Israel, and I am not a citizen of that country. My reaction is a romanticized view that can, to some extent, live unsullied by the reality that Jerusalem is home to Muslims and Christians as well.

Here's a personal story that illustrates the core relationship of Jerusalem to Jews. At the end of 1967, following the 6 day war in June, and my barmitzvah in August that year, my grandparents took me and my brother on a holiday to Israel for several weeks. Both my grandparents were people involved in the Jewish community and my grandfather was an engaging and lively personality. Traditional rather than strictly orthodox, they came to Australia from Germany in 1939.

Both my grandparents had health problems affecting their movement and therefore avoided walking more than short distances, but when we arrived in Jerusalem, the four of us went for a walk in the afternoon and having found the Damascus gate into the Old City, our walk became my grandfather's quest to reach the Kotel - the Wailing wall (sometimes referred to as the Western Wall). An energy drove him to ignore his physical pain and as we approached the area of the Kotel and it came into view, he was overcome with the emotional depth of the moment; the collective memory that stretched back to biblical times; the relatively recent despair and blackness of the nazi holocaust; the Old City restored to Jews - and he cried both with grief and joy.

This romance with Historical Israel, renewed in the form of modern Israel after 2000 years, is in constant tension with the reality of a state in which 20% of the population is not Jewish, in which there is a significant economic disparity between the Jewish and Arab populations, in which the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip has had a brutalizing effect on Israeli society, and in which there is an

increasingly polarized political argument between a nationalist religious view and a secular centrist view about the very nature of the state.

Some people in the Jewish community are in love with the romance but seem to ignore the reality. They think that Israel's problems are exaggerated by a left leaning press displaying a latent anti-Semitism with intent to smear Israel's reputation. I know people who have this view, but my impression is that most Jews have a more realistic view of Israel and its problems. It's also true that most Jews don't like to publicly criticize Israel.

Let me paint what I see as a more realistic assessment of Israel's situation.

The 1967 capture by the Israelis of East Jerusalem and the West Bank has had consequences that few Jews would have foreseen at the time. One who did foresee negative consequences was Yeshayahu Leibowitz - an academic, religious Jew and independent thinker - Wikipedia says, he was among the first Israeli intellectuals who stated immediately after the War that if Israel held on to the occupied territories, it would lead to the decline of Israel's moral stature. From then on he was an outspoken critic of Israeli values and national policy. His remarks accusing Israeli soldiers of a "Judeo-Nazi" mentality provoked a public outcry amongst Israelis.

Following the 1967 war, successive Israeli governments of all political colours saw a strategic and security benefit in settling Israelis in the West Bank and Gaza. People were encouraged to move to settlements by offering cheap housing for families, and nationalist religious groups were keen to populate the West Bank and Gaza to establish a Jewish presence in biblical Israel - in Judea and Samaria.

In particular, the Israeli government was keen to establish a Jewish majority population in and around Jerusalem to cement its annexation of Jerusa-

lem. In the first instance it expanded the municipal boundaries of the city by almost 3 times from some 38 sq. km to 108sq. km. It then created what it calls neighbourhoods and what Palestinians call settlements. Those neighbourhoods box in Palestinian villages and disconnect them from the rest of the West Bank. The residents of those villages have Israeli residency but have largely chosen not to become citizens. The villages are under the jurisdiction of the Jerusalem municipal authority, but since the residents are not citizens, the municipal authority gives no priority to maintaining infrastructure and delivering services. In practical terms this means, for instance, that there are a lack of classrooms and a 50% dropout rate from children attending school. The net result of the neglect is that residents are effectively being encouraged to leave - as many have done - and this suits the long term aim for Jerusalem to have a Jewish majority.

The statistics tell their own story. In 1993, when the Oslo Accords between Israel and the PLO were signed, there were around 280,000 Israeli settlers in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Golan Heights and East Jerusalem. By 2010 there were more than 530,000 settlers.

The Oslo Accords were supposed to mark the beginning of the end of the Israeli Palestinian conflict. When they were signed in October 1993, the Palestine Liberation Organisation - the PLO - finally recognized Israel, and Israel finally recognized the PLO as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. Article 1 of the Accords states the aim of negotiations:

"The aim of the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations within the current Middle East peace process is, among other things, to establish a Palestinian Interim Self-government Authority, the elected Council (the

"Council"), for the Palestinian people in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, for a transitional period not exceeding five years, leading to a permanent settlement based on Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338.

"It is understood that the interim arrangements are an integral part of the whole peace process and that the negotiations on the permanent status will lead to the implementation of Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338."

At that time I thought the conflict was on the road to a resolution. But there were naysayers, such as Edward Said, Professor of English and Comparative Literature at New York's Columbia University; a Palestinian who articulated the Palestinian perspective and cause better than most others. He died in September 2003. Far from viewing Oslo as a watershed in relations between Israel and Palestine, Said saw Oslo as the imposition of a one-sided solution by the Israelis who held all the cards.

But while Israel's steady colonization of the West Bank was happening almost in the background, the Palestinian leadership supported a campaign of suicide bombings from the mid 1990s and that, combined with the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995 by an Israeli religious Jew, the start of the second intifada in late 2000 and then the failure of the negotiations between Israeli PM Ehud Barak and Yasser Arafat in January 2001, effectively killed the Israeli peace movement and has ushered in a period of conservative governments in Israel ever since.

Although Israeli PM Ariel Sharon recognized the demographic issues facing Israel, when he decided to close down the settlements in Gaza and unilaterally withdraw from there in 2005 and Ehud Olmert attempted serious negotiation

at Annapolis in 2007, there appears to be little interest in the current political leadership in Israel to seriously contemplate negotiating an end to the conflict.

And now might be a good time to say something about Gaza and the current violence.

This is one more page in the sorry history of that tiny strip of land. From the time that Egypt seemed almost pleased to relinquish it to Israel in the 1967 war, it has been a monumental defeat for Israel - out of all proportion to its size - and a tragic disaster for its residents.

In Australia we're about to have a Royal Commission into the abuse of children who were comprehensively failed by all the adults with whom they had contact. The Gaza residents have been failed by their leaders, failed by the militants determined to have their revolution, failed by Israel who is the occupying authority and bears a responsibility to protect them, and failed by the international community. No one is really interested in their plight. Even the peace activists who've tried to break the Israeli naval blockade and deliver what is after all a small amount of humanitarian aid, seem more interested in making grand political gestures than in making a real difference to the Palestinians. And Israel's actions in 2010 resulting in the death of nine of those activists in international waters was incompetent and negligent.

The colonization of Gaza by the establishment of Israeli settlements was a failure. It required huge resources from Israel to protect 8,000 settlers from 1.6 million Palestinians. The 2005 unilateral withdrawal by Israel from Gaza was a failed opportunity to enter into negotiations with the Palestinians for the mutual benefit of both sides. Ever since then, Israel has complained that in return for being nice to the Gaza residents by their unilateral withdrawal, there has been constant rocket fire from Gaza into southern Israel. Apparently, Palestinians were supposed to be grateful

for Israel's treatment of Gaza.

At every turn Israel has managed to add to its failure. From Operation Cast Lead in 2008/2009 in which over 1200 Palestinians died, many of whom were civilian, to the latest flare up triggered by an increase in rockets from Gaza and the assassination of Hamas military Chief Ahmed Jaabri, Israel has proved beyond reasonable doubt that whatever the provocation of Gaza militants in firing rockets into Israel, major military intervention is guaranteed to escalate the situation to the detriment of Israelis and Palestinians.

There is a fundamentally false assumption that Israel's undisputed obligation to protect its own citizens requires a military response. If a fraction of the resources Israel devotes to its military campaigns were diverted to pursuing real negotiations with its perceived enemies, all parties would benefit.

Which leads me to a fairly pessimistic conclusion about the conflict as a whole. The trauma in Israel to the removal of the 8,000 settlers from Gaza in 2005 was substantial. The end of the occupation of the West Bank is a much larger exercise and seems to me to be beyond the capacity of the current Israeli political leadership. While all parties give lip service to the 2 state solution - splitting the territory to create a viable Palestinian state (Israel, of course, already exists) - the lack of interest in restarting negotiations is the real marker of intent. And if the conflict remains unresolved for the next 10 years, then Israel may find that the only realistic option for maintaining a democratic state will be the end of the Jewish state.

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# 'Nuclear Savage': A powerful new documentary on U.S. hydrogen bombs

Fr John Dear Pax Christi USA (National Catholic Reporter)  
On the Road to Peace October 30, 2012

Recently, I saw a powerful, disturbing new documentary about the U.S. hydrogen bomb explosions in the islands in the South Pacific, the U.S. government's campaign to keep the indigenous people on those contaminated islands and the U.S. government's secret program to monitor the effects of radiation on them.

**'Nuclear Savage: The Island of Secret Project 4.1'** is a film by former Greenpeace activist Adam Horowitz, uses recently declassified government film footage of the hydrogen bombs we dropped in the South Pacific and recent interviews with survivors to tell this nightmarish nuclear tale.

In old black-and-white footage, we see excited white, U.S. military men speaking somberly into the camera about the glories of the hydrogen bomb and describing how well 'the savages,' his term for the people of the Marshall Islands, were responding to our nuclear bomb explosions. The combination of militarism, U.S. imperialism, nuclear weapons, environmental destruction, sheer racism and total disregard for these gentle, impoverished people is shocking, to say the least.

Of course, the real savages are the Americans who built and dropped these bombs and who maintain our nuclear weapons industry today.

Sixty-seven U.S. hydrogen bombs were exploded in the 1950s in the Marshall Islands -- the equivalent of more than 7,000 Hiroshima bombs. They vaporized several small islands, poisoned the land and sea, destroyed natural life and caused immeasurable suffering to thousands of people across genera-

tions, bringing thyroid cancer, genetic defects, miscarriages and various other illnesses.

'Nuclear Savage' demonstrates how the U.S. government used the Marshall Islanders as human guinea pigs for more than three decades to study the effects of radiation sickness. As I watched the film and heard the heartbreaking testimony of the

**The U.S. knowingly and willfully exposed a vulnerable population to toxic radioactive waste as a means to document the movement and degenerative health outcomes of radiation.**

islanders, I kept thinking how the U.S. military doctors resembled the Nazi criminal doctors who experimented on human beings. Then, at the end of the film, we're shown footage of the Nazi doctors, and are told clearly how the U.S. military violated U.S. law, international law, the Nuremberg Principles and Article 7 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which states that 'no one shall be subject without his free consent to medical or scientific experimentation.'

The largest U.S. hydrogen bomb explosion was the March 1, 1954, Bravo Test. Unlike previous explosions, the U.S. did not evacuate residents of the Rongelap and Rongerik atolls. Residents were told their islands were safe, then suffered direct exposure to nuclear fallout and serious health consequences that linger to this day. Later, they were relocated to another island.

At the nuclear labs in Los Alamos, N.M., U.S. government officials launched their top-secret

'Project 4.1' to monitor the effects on the Marshallese people. In 1957, the residents of Rongelap were returned to their beloved paradise island and told again that everything was safe. In fact, their atoll was severely contaminated. U.S. doctors were brought to the island and ordered not to treat the people medically, but to study them so the government could learn more about the effects of nuclear fallout on human beings. As the years went by, more and more people became seriously ill and never received serious treatment.

Over several decades, the U.S. organized 72 'research' trips to the Marshall Islands to 'study' 539 Marshallese men, women and children who suffered the effects of radiation. As the decades passed, the sick Marshallese complained to the doctors, the military and the government, arguing that their worsening illnesses were related to the U.S. hydrogen bomb explosions. They were told there was no such connection and no need to evacuate Rongelap.

After watching this documentary, author Barbara Rose Johnston, a leading research fellow at The Center for Political Ecology, wrote:

The U.S. knowingly and willfully exposed a vulnerable population to toxic radioactive waste as a means to document the movement and degenerative health outcomes of radiation as it moves through the food chain and human body. This human subject experiment extended over the decades with profound consequences for individual subjects and the Marshallese nation as a whole. The Marshallese have become a nation whose experience as nuclear

nomads, medical subjects, citizen advocates and innovators is shared by many citizens, communities and indigenous peoples around the world. Their experiences, consequential damages, and their struggles to restore cultural ways of life, quality of life, intergenerational health, and long term sustainability, are especially salient to a nation and to a world concerned with the lingering, persistent, and invasive dangers of nuclear [weapons and power]. ... There is a moral and legal obligation for the United Nations community to assist in the remediation, restoration and reparation due to the environment, health, and dignity of the Marshallese nation. International attention to this history and experience is long overdue, and sadly and sorely relevant to a post-Fukushima world.

In the mid-1980s, after decades of complaint, Greenpeace came to the rescue, boarded all the residents of Rongelap onto the Rainbow Warrior, and took them from their still-contaminated island to Ebeye, another island, where they remain today, living in crowded slums in total poverty. Recently, the U.S. bought off the Marshall Islands for \$150 million and sealed our military presence for the next 75 years. Here's how journalist Robert Koehler described the situation in his review for The Huffington Post:

*Nuclear Savage* is the story of what we did to the Marshall Islanders throughout the Cold War with our nuclear testing program. Not only did we expose many thousands of them to ghastly -- often lethal -- levels of radiation with 67 nuclear blasts, with glaring evidence that at least some of the exposure was intentional, done for the purpose of studying the effects of radiation on human guinea pigs; not only did we wreck the Marshall Islanders' way of life and pristine para-

dise, creating a nation of internal refugees confined to a Western-style slum on the island of Ebeye; not only did we cower, as a nation, from any real responsibility for what our fallout did to these people, settling our genocidal debt to them with \$150 million for all claims, past, present and future'; but also, throughout our dealing with them as nuclear conquistadors, we displayed a racism so profound, so cold-blooded, its exposure must forever shatter the myth of American exceptionalism.

And we're still doing it. The tiny, impoverished Republic of the Marshall Islands recently signed a 75-year lease agreement with the United States, guaranteeing that the Ronald Reagan Ballistic Missile Defense Test Site on Kwajalien Atoll, where Star Wars testing is still being conducted (for unfathomable billions of dollars), will be operational at least through 2086.

'Nuclear Savage' is one of the most powerful films I have ever seen. I urge everyone who cares about our world to see it. We may feel powerless to do anything, but we need to learn about the evil our nation has done and hear the testimony of the powerless victims of our nuclear savagery.

Of course, the U.S. should dismantle its nuclear weapons and bombs, close Los Alamos, get rid of nuclear power, make massive reparation to the Marshallese, end the insane Star Wars program and ongoing Vandenberg nuclear tests, and clean up the world from our radioactive waste. This film tells the truth about ourselves, about our nuclear savagery, and calls us to repent of our nuclear violence and do what we can for the Marshallese, the environment, disarmament, human rights and justice, that one day we might have a world without hydrogen bombs and war.

## Burma President to visit Australia December 10

*Opportunity to test Burma's transparency about its nuclear intentions following the seizure of a ship's cargo bound for Burma*

Burma's former military strongman Thein Sein will be given the red carpet treatment in Australia next month as the Gillard government seeks to build influence in the south east Asian nation. He will visit Canberra and Sydney for two days from December 10.

President Sein - a one time general in the still military dominated government - has been lauded for steering Burma towards democracy, having lifted the long persecution of Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi.

But human rights activist Zetty Brake said it was "premature" for Australia to host Mr Sein, with concerns still prominent over the abuse of minority groups.

Ms Brake also claims that talk of resuming military ties with Burma was worrisome.

Although Andrew Selth, from the Griffith Asia Institute and former diplomat said the visit should be welcomed.

"While an enormous number of problems in Burma remain unresolved, the best way of keeping the momentum of the reform process going is to encourage and support the reformers, he said.

*Source Daniel Flitton Senior Correspondent (SMH)*

The article on boat seizure:  
[http://ajw.asahi.com/article/asia/korean\\_peninsula/AJ201211240055](http://ajw.asahi.com/article/asia/korean_peninsula/AJ201211240055)

To read what's behind the report visit:  
[www.dictatorwatch.org](http://www.dictatorwatch.org)

# Ten Point Plan for Reconciliation and Peace in Syria

*From Mother Agnes who is general coordinator of the International Support Team for the Mussalaha (reconciliation) initiative in Syria.*

Mother Agnes Mariam of the Cross, is a Carmelite nun and mother superior of St James the Mutilated in Qara, Syria, a monastery which dates back to the sixth century. Mother Agnes was in Melbourne recently to inform Australians of the true situation in Syria, where 2 million Christians live, and Aramaic, the ancient language that Jesus used to preach to the apostles, is still spoken.

After getting word of an abduction attempt against her, Mother Agnes fled to Lebanon and from there has been travelling the world for the past three months to spread her version of what is really occurring in Syria. According to Mother Agnes, the mainstream media has got it wrong, there is no civil war in Syria. Rather, a peaceful protest for change against President Bashar al-Assad's regime has become a brutal Islamist irruption against a liberal secular society. Mother Agnes is both an endearing and engaging individual; a highly intelligent and spiritual person who speaks five languages: Arabic, French, English, Spanish and Italian. She has retained a great sense of humour despite having witnessed some of the most heinous acts of inhumanity.

Mother Agnes is general coordinator of the International Support Team for the Mussalaha (reconciliation) initiative in Syria—a community-based alternative to armed conflict, whose members of all ethnic and religious communities in Syria are tired of war—and is presenting the Mussalaha's 10-point plan for reconciliation to decision makers around the globe to prepare the way for a real process of pacification and reconciliation within the Syrian population.

## THE MUSSALAHA'S TEN POINTS TOWARDS RECONCILIATION AND PEACE IN SYRIA

1. Support conflict resolution through negotiation and implementation of a democratic process.
2. Stop the flow of weapons to Syria.
3. Stigmatise the war methods that are against the Geneva Convention.
4. restrain interference from abroad in the Syrian conflict.
5. furnish honest information about the Syrian conflict.
6. Support new political parties that are proliferating and giving new shape to the Syrian political landscape.
7. Stop the sanctions, which are harming only the civilian populations.
8. fairly distribute humanitarian aid.
9. Appeal for impartiality among the diverse NGOs working in the Syrian conflict.
10. Support a new state that will guarantee equality of citizenship and religious freedom to any religious or ethnic group

## WHAT IS GOING ON IN SYRIA TODAY?

**The forces in the field:** On the side of the Syrian state: the regular army, security forces, popular defence committees. On the side of the rebels: Battalions and Brigades, self-proclaimed leaders of the armed struggle against the regular army, after the founding of the Free Syrian Army by dissident officers and the election of their headquarters in Turkey. All international reports are agreed that the majority of the rebels operating on Syrian soil belong to extremist groups converging on Syria, coming for the

most part from countries harbouring Islamist fighters, such as Al Qaeda, the Muslim Brotherhood or Salafist movements. *The Economist* reports that there are over 2,000 groups operating on Syrian soil, adding: "From the viewpoint of foreign governments that hope to support the opposition, this is an impossible situation."

## A recent story:

Pastor Ibrahim Nseir of the Evangelical Church in Aleppo reported the state of terror of the Christians of Aleppo after the entry of *Jabhat El Nusra* fighters yesterday morning into the Syriac Christian majority neighbourhood. Members of the *Jabhat El Nusra* Battalion sporting Al Qaeda flags, erected barricades alongside churches and schools, searching citizens and killing some and drove others from their homes, spreading fear lest they come back. That is how districts have been occupied, churches desecrated, shrines destroyed, museums looted and specifically Christian regions bombarded.

The events of Damascus and Aleppo have fuelled Christian fears even more since their districts have been the direct target of abuse and attacks that have no justification other than sectarian discrimination. I must say that "Catholics" the world over have not been kind to Syria's Christians. Articles in Catholic newspapers or from Catholic "humanitarian" activists have constantly criticised them and accused of standing "against the revolution." This simplification could be a case of legitimate freedom of opinion if, in its formulation, it did not constitute a serious threat and discrediting of Christians who are "punished" for that by the rebels.

## For full text contact:

lonergan100@gmail.com  
Ireland-Palestine Solidarity Campaign

## BOOK REVIEW

### **The Shadow World. Inside the Global Arms Trade.**

**By Andrew Feinstein.**

**(Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 2011)**

**Reviewed By Peter D Jones**

While we are used to hearing about the Global Financial Crisis there is one industry that has continued to flourish while others languish; the merchants of death and global arms production. Andrew Feinstein's book documents their shadow world, protected from public scrutiny and now fuelled by expensive technological advances (for example, the price of a B2 bomber exceeds the annual military budget of 122 countries). In his introduction, the author reminds us that 'the arms industry and its powerful political friends have forged a parallel universe that largely insulates itself against the influence or judgement of others by invoking national security. ' It is a depressing book but important for those of us still pressing for an Arms Trade Treaty despite the continuing opposition of the major players and the ineffectiveness of the latest review conference in New York in July this year. We are also reminded that 231 million people in the 20<sup>th</sup> century died as a result of the trade in arms and the first decade of this century has been even more violent.

The major players remain the US, Russia, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, Israel and China, a list which one might note, includes the five permanent members of the UN Security Council and seven of the members of the G8. Global military expenditure is estimated to have totalled \$1.6 trillion in 2010 or \$235 for every person on the planet and an increase of 53 per cent since the year 2000. Ten nations account for 75 per cent of global military expenditure, still dominated by the United States with a military budget now over US\$700 billion.

The Shadow World starts with

a look at the origin of one of the European companies, traces the growing wealth of Saudi Arabia and its increasing influence on the global arms trade (for example, the Al Yamamah deal signed between Saudi Arabia and the UK in 1985 was worth over 40 billion pounds and has been rated one of the most corrupt transactions in trading history), tracks the rise of rogue arms dealers and surveys the devastation of so many countries in Africa like Liberia and Sierra Leone. While much of the book focuses on the U.S. and the leading arms manufacturers, in particular Lockheed Martin, Boeing and Northrop-Grumman, it does go on to examine the role of other wealthy nations facilitating this trade. Finally it takes a look at emerging trends as well as the prospects for improved regulation, enforcement and accountability.

Australia, while a major purchaser of expensive weapons, cannot compete very much in the international market and what started out as Australian Defence Industries (ADI) is now owned - since 2006 - by the French company, Thales, Europe's second biggest defence company. What is worth noting from the book is a reference to the F-35 fighter jet which Australia is proposing to buy from the United States but which has been described by a former Pentagon aerospace designer as 'a total piece of crap.' The chapter on Lockheed Martin provides useful information for any reader prepared to raise this issue with our politicians as the next Defence White Paper continues to be prepared in Canberra.

Part of the book traces the way in which small arms and light weapons are moved from one regional conflict to another and so fuel more wars. These weapons kill a lot of civilians, from the Balkans to the Democratic Republic of Congo and West Africa, where women

and children are particularly vulnerable victims, as Amnesty International, OXFAM and the International Network on Small Arms (IANSA) have emphasised.

Corruption and secrecy surround the international arms trade as the book so well documents, sometimes leaving you to wonder whether to laugh or cry, as in the chapter, 'Taking the Mickey, the Toilet Seat and the Hammer ...' There are also stories of some of the more infamous rogue merchants of death like the Ukrainian Viktor Bout, who was finally put on trial in New York in 2011 for conspiring to sell weapons to FARC in Colombia and sentenced earlier this year to 25 years in jail. There is a major focus on the corruption surrounding the arms trade with Saudi Arabia and in particular, the role of BAE Systems in the UK, which only this month (October) failed to secure a merger with the Franco-German company, EADS, because of opposition from the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel. Another focus is on the way in which military and intelligence figures use their connections to move into the world of defence companies after retirement, what President Eisenhower described over fifty years ago as the military-industrial complex.

Andrew Feinstein himself, resigned from the ANC in South Africa, when it refused to launch a corruption investigation into a major South African arms deal. While he finishes with a call to support those NGOs working for an international Arms Trade Treaty, he has no illusions how hard it will be to secure an effective agreement, especially one that must include the United States. For readers interested in more detail, he refers us to [www.theshadowworld.com](http://www.theshadowworld.com)

while also suggesting further research for publication on the arms trade in China, Latin America, and India and Pakistan.

# NOTICE BOARD

## **NEW SOUTH WALES Pax Christi Meetings**

We normally meet on the First Monday of each month at 6.00pm for shared meal that members bring and the meeting follows at 6.30 pm..

**Contact: Claude Mostowik  
(02)95503845 or 0411450953**

The venue: MSC Justice and Peace Centre, 21 Swanson Street, Erskineville. 2 minutes walk from Erskineville Station.

## **QUEENSLAND Pax Christi Meetings**

Pax Christi Queensland Branch meets monthly.  
Contact:

**Pancras Jordan OP  
0415 461 620  
panjordan@yahoo.com**

**Clare Cooke SSps  
mccl@holy.spirit.com.au**

## **VICTORIA Agapes 2012**

Agapes are on the third Sunday of alternative months  
Start time 12:30pm for 1:00 meal and 2:00pm discussion session

### **First Agape for 2013**

12:30pm Feb 17th at  
Kildara Centre  
39 Stanhope Street Malvern

Pax Christi Vic members will receive a timely notice of the agenda

*From Page 1  
PS*

*Regrettably a week after the Athens Dialogue, the US State Department announced on 22 November that the Helsinki Conference would not proceed as planned, citing as the reason "present conditions in the Middle East and the fact that states in the region have not reached agreement on acceptable conditions for a conference". Prof Camilleri has since stated that it is the earnest hope of the Centre for Dialogue that such a conference be held at the earliest possible date, if at all possible by April 2013.*

## **United Nations Brisbane Peace Prize**

In the inaugural UN Brisbane Peace Lecture Leneen Forde AC, pays tribute to the memory of Emma Miller and Jessie Street. Pioneers whose courage and commitment to peace created a lasting legacy which is still reaping rewards for Australian women today.

Listen to lecture on <http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/bigideas/peace-lecture/4301714>

## **The Power Of Malala**

By attacking *Malala Yousufzai*, the Taliban attempted to warn all the youngsters not to follow her ideology. But after the attack, Malala's followers have multiplied across the country. She has won.

Full statement: "<http://www.countercurrents.org/malala.jpg>"

**I/We wish to apply for or renew membership of the International Christian Peace Movement - Pax Christi Australia. Membership is from January to December)**

**(Please tick box if you wish to receive you copy of Disarming Times by E-mail)**

**Name:.....Address.....**

**.....P'Code..... Phone.....**

**Email..... Mobile.....**

**ENCLOSED \$..... {Single \$35; Concession \$10:00; Family \$45**

**NB. Please apply to your local Branch—see Page two for details**