



Jeff Siddiqui is a Muslim civil rights activist who has written and spoken extensively on Islam, the Middle East, US foreign policy and terrorism. He is associated with American Muslims of Puget Sound.

Overview of Issues in the Middle East

Jeff Siddiqui

Editorial Note: The author gratefully acknowledges the input of Rabbi Anson Laytner and Ed Mast for the section on Israel/Pal-

estine. This article is the author's attempt to provide a brief synopsis of the complexity of contemporary issues and perspectives on the Middle East.

Israel/Palestine



The people of the three Abrahamic faiths have coexisted and prospered together for thousands of years on the same land. Today, they are locked in a conflict that is now approaching its tragic centennial.

For **Palestinians**, the creation of the State of Israel in 1949 is the *nakba*, catastrophe. For **Jews**, its creation symbolizes the joyful rebirth of the Jewish people after the Holocaust. For **Jews**, Zionism is a political movement that re-

turned them to the land of their ancestors to achieve self-determination, freedom and security; but for **Palestinians**, **Zionism** has meant the loss of the possibility of self-determination, freedom and security.

the major problems of reparations for the dispossessed **Palestinians**, the division of assets and holy sites between Israel and the new state of Palestine, or the crucial issue of water division between the two nations. Unsolved, each of these issues ensures a future filled with more violence.

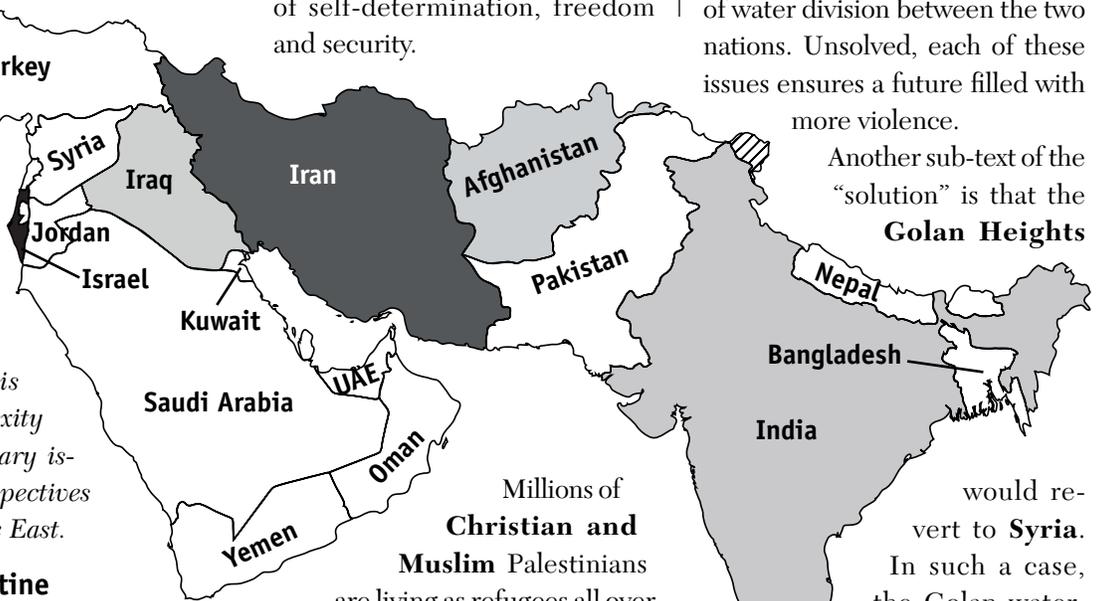
Another sub-text of the "solution" is that the **Golan Heights**

would revert to **Syria**.

In such a case, the Golan watershed will be lost, as will the only two viable aquifers, which currently lie in the Occupied Territories. In such a future, Israel would be left with no water sources of its own except for a sliver of the **Jordan River** to be shared between **Jordan**, Israel and Palestine.

Iraq

Forged out of three Ottoman provinces (1921-1926) after the fall of the Ottoman Empire, Iraq was ruled by the British as a mandated territory. In 1932, the British



The so-called "**Two-State Solution**" does not take into account



established Faisal I (by way of Arabia and Syria) as the king of independent Iraq, while still maintaining control of Iraq. Iraq's history is a succession of revolts until about 1979, when Saddam Hussein took over the presidency. He ruled with an iron hand, not hesitating to kill anyone suspected of not supporting him. He reportedly had hundreds of thousands of minorities killed if they dared oppose him. However, he did modernize Iraq to a point where Iraq was one of the most advanced states in the Middle East, with health care, job opportunities and education for all. His

*In every community, there is work to be done.
In every nation, there are wounds to heal.
In every heart, there is the power to do it.*
—Marianne Williamson

brutal rule lasted until 2003, when he was defeated by the United States. The infrastructure of Iraq was destroyed in the process.

US troops are firing approximately a billion bullets a year in Iraq. Hundreds of thousands of tons of **depleted uranium**, in the form of US artillery and bombs, have been exploded all over the country, raising the much-debated specter of birth defects and cancer. Over two million Iraqis have lost their lives as a direct result of US-led sanctions since 1991, the US invasion of 2003 and the ongoing occupation. Today, Iraq remains under US occupation. The country is in total anarchy, with no noteworthy healthcare, education or job opportunities.

Iraq has sunk into violence that

is seemingly along sectarian lines (**Shia-Sunni-Kurd**), but is largely a result of gasoline-dealing mobs with connections to almost every neighboring country, including nations as far away as the Ukraine and Israel. Gang rivalries and tribal grabs for local control have created violent divisions along sectarian lines that appear to the on-looking world as religious warfare.

Neighboring countries, such as **Syria, Turkey and Iran**, have very serious concerns as to who should be allowed to control the emerging Iraq, largely because of their worries over the rising Kurdish nationalism which threatens to take land away from all four nations—land that holds promise of future energy reserves. Syria and Iraq have old but growing concerns about Turkey drawing more than its share of the **Euphrates River**, an issue that almost brought Iraq and Turkey to a political split in the past.

Kuwait would very much like to have some influence as well, because of outstanding border disputes with Iraq. Kuwait also worries about the effect a Shia-controlled Iraq may have on its own, repressed Shia, minority and thus threaten the autocratic rule of the Emir's family.

Saudi Arabia is loathe to allow Shia rule in Iraq, even though the Shia are the clear majority there. This is in part because it does not want Iran and Iraq to get involved in seeking guarantees for Shia minorities in Arabia, and partly because it sees an inevitable alliance between Iraq and Iran which would threaten power balances in the Middle East, all of

which would threaten the rule of the House of Saud.

Israel would be happiest with an Iraq that is split into three nations (Shia, Sunni and Kurd) so there is no possibility of any threat from a reincarnated Iraq. To that end, Israel reportedly has advisors training various aspects of a nascent Kurdish nation—from security to government—in Northern Iraq.

Iran

Iran has been trying to recover its stability ever since the overthrow of the Shah in 1979. At first, Iran was under pressure from the US, which supported the Shah. Then it was involved in an eight-year war forced by Iraq in which Israel and the US provided weapons to both sides, including material for gas warfare to Iraq. The Iran-Iraq war ended in late 1988, leaving both countries exhausted and vulnerable to exploitation from outside.

The **United States**, fearing a Shia superpower in Iran, has been supporting breakaway groups with money and arms, under the guise of promoting democracy in Iran. These groups include **Kurds** in the West, **Azeris** in the Northwest and **Baluchis** in the Southwest.



Iran was also concerned about the rise of anti-Shia Taliban in **Afghanistan** and is now concerned about the possibility of an anti-Iran neighbor influenced by the United States. To that extent, Iran would very much like to have a say in the way Afghanistan is ruled and by which groups.

The potential for, and control of, a gas pipeline issuing from **Turkmenistan** through Iran instead of Afghanistan or **Russia** (via **Kazakhstan**), is an additional source of rivalry among the United States, Russia and Iran. Iran can benefit by playing the two super powers against each other, or get more pressure from the United States in the form of tighter sanctions and more military supplies for opposing groups within Iran.

India-Pakistan

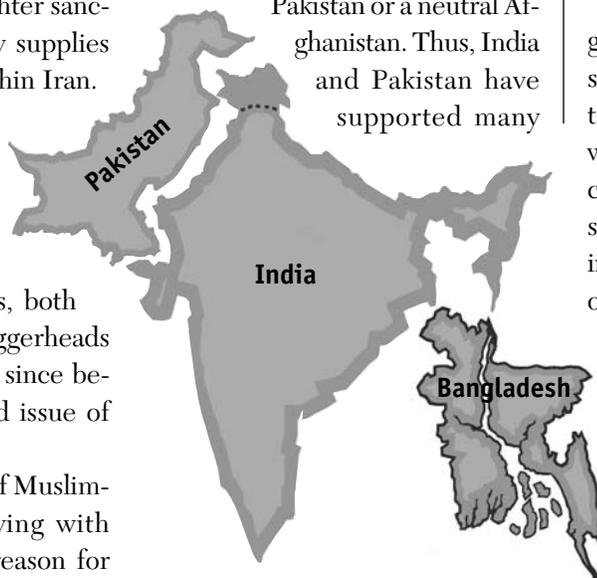
Born on August 15, 1947 under a chaotic rush to leave by the erstwhile **British** rulers, both nations have been at loggerheads against each other ever since because of the unresolved issue of **Kashmir**.

While the principle of Muslim-majority Kashmir staying with Pakistan is the stated reason for the many wars between India and Pakistan, the real reason is that the only remaining major rivers—sources of water—for Pakistan

flow from Kashmir and North-western India; they are currently being siphoned off by India.

The struggle for control of Kashmir has launched many wars and battles in the past 60 years and has swept **Afghanistan** in, as well. India supports an anti-Pakistan rule in Afghanistan, while Pakistan would like to have either a pro-

Pakistan or a neutral Afghanistan. Thus, India and Pakistan have supported many



different regimes and revolutions in Afghanistan.

For its part, Afghanistan has long resented the imposition of

the 1880 Durand Line, which gave away a large chunk of Afghanistan to British India and thus later to Pakistan. Afghanistan has maintained the call, supported by India, for a “**Pashtunistan**” or, a greater land of the Pashtuns...Afghanistan, by inference.

Bangladesh

Bangladesh was born after a genocidal civil war by West Pakistan. They were seeking to maintain control against East Pakistan, which wanted out after years of colonial treatment by West Pakistan. The revolution, which began in March and ended in December of 1971, could not have succeeded without India entering the war on the side of the rebels towards the end of the civil war.

Currently, India’s water needs are diverting more and more water from the Ganges, which flows from India through Bangladesh. India built a dam across this river, creating a growing hostile climate between the two nations. ~

Resources

Books

Armstrong, Karen. *Islam: A Short History*. New York: Modern Library, 2002.

Armstrong, Karen. *Mohammed: A Prophet for Our Time*. New York: HarperOne, 2007.

Chittister, Joan et al. *The Tent of Abraham: Stories of Hope and Peace for Jews, Christians, and Muslims*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2007.

Firestone, Reuven. *Children of Abraham: An Introduction to Judaism for Muslims*. Jersey City, NJ: Ktav Pub. 2001.

Idliby, Ranya et al. *The Faith Club: A Muslim, A Christian, A Jew—Three Women Search for Understanding*. Free Press: New York, 2006.

Mortenson, Greg and David Oliver Relin. *Three Cups of Tea*. Penguin Books: New York, 2006.

Murphy, Claire Rudolf et al. *Daughters Of The Desert: Stories of Remarkable Women from Christian, Jewish, and Muslim Traditions*. Woodstock, VT: SkyLight Paths Pub., 2003.

DVD

Another Side of Peace
www.anothersideofpeace.org

Websites

US Conference of Bishops—www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/interreligious.shtml

Prayers from Different Religious Traditions—www.seasonofprayer.org

University of Washington Middle East Center, Audio-visual lending Library
www.jsis.washington.edu/mideast

The Christian Science Monitor
www.csmonitor.com

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What new insights do you have about the complexity of the conflicts in the Middle East? What would you like to study or explore further?

Ron Young’s article (pages 4-5) provides an opportunity for you to consider your own perspective on our foreign policy. What message would you like to give your Congressional Representatives?

What ways could the faith community or groups to which you belong take leadership in providing education or an interfaith gathering that would contribute to intercultural and inter-religious dialogue and relationships?

What is one step or action that you or your community group would like to take for the sake of peace in the Middle East?



Ron Young organized the U.S. Interreligious Committee for Peace in the Middle East in 1987. He is consultant to the National Interreligious Leadership Initiative for Peace in the Middle East. Ron is available for speaking engagements: usipcme@aol.com

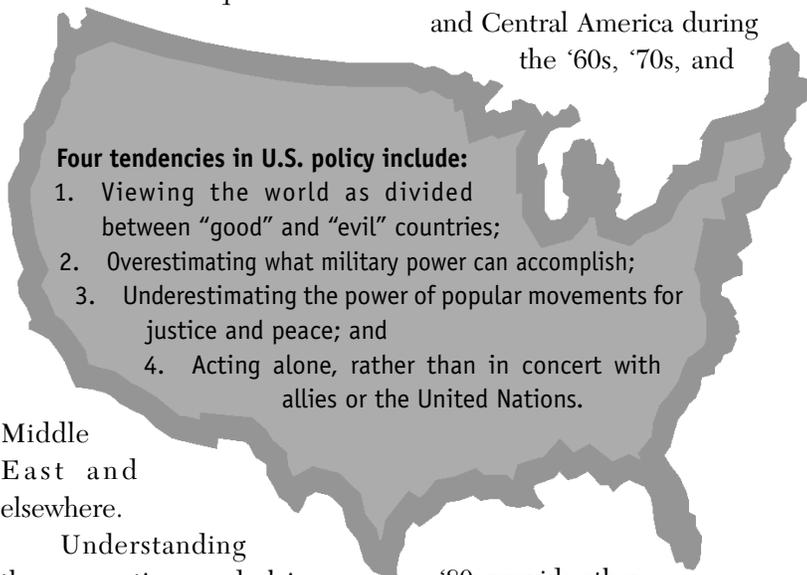
In Search of Constructive U.S. Policy in the Middle East

Ronald J. Young

in this article I identify four tendencies underlying U.S. foreign policy and show how the resulting policies can sometimes be as dangerous for our allies as for countries considered our “enemies.” After briefly listing the issues, I discuss the unintended consequences in the

specific conditions, aspirations, and interests of people in different countries were underestimated, as were the potential common interests between the United States and the Soviet Union. The Korean War and the war in Vietnam were horrendously costly examples of where this view of the world led. U.S. involvement in wars in Africa and Central America during the ‘60s, ‘70s, and

to resolve, conflicts. In relation to conflicts between Sunnis and Shiites in Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Iran, Hezbollah and other Lebanese factions, Fateh and Hamas, Israel and the Palestinians or Israel and Syria, U.S. policy has often tended to undermine chances for peace and contribute to instability and violence in the region.



Power: Military/Popular Movements

Looking at the results so far of the war and occupation in Iraq, the conclusion that U.S. policymakers overestimated what military power could accomplish is hardly a controversial view. The idea that more military power is the answer only compounds the delusion and the tragedy. In the Arab-Israeli conflict also, the U.S. has tended to overestimate what military power could accomplish. The U.S. twice urged Israel on in wars in Lebanon—in 1982 with the idea of realigning Lebanon with the West and in 2006 with the goal of destroying Hezbollah. Neither war accomplished its goal and both resulted in serious unintended, negative consequences for Israel, as well as terrible suffering and destruction for the Lebanese.

Middle East and elsewhere.

Understanding the assumptions underlying policy decisions is crucial to conceiving and advocating for more constructive policies. The tendencies inherent in U.S. policy in the Middle East are the same in U.S. policy worldwide. Understanding that these tendencies can have dangerous consequences for Israel and other countries friendly to the U.S. could be the basis for a new vision for foreign policy capable of attracting broad public support.

‘80s provide other examples. In the Middle East, the Arab-Israeli conflict was viewed as a stage on which the larger, “more important” Cold War conflict was being fought. Rather than focusing on resolving the conflict, the United States acted in ways it believed would enhance U.S. power in the region and diminish the power and influence of the Soviet Union. The aspirations and interests of Palestinians and other Arab peoples—and of Israelis—were seen as less important than winning the war against communism.

The corollary of the U.S. tendency to overestimate what military power can accomplish is underestimating the power of popular movements for justice and peace. The U.S. grossly underestimated popular support for Ho Chi Minh and the National Liberation Front, as well as for non-Communist “third force” movements of Vietnamese students and religious who also opposed U.S. occupation of Vietnam. In Iran, the U.S.

Good and Evil

For forty years, the “Cold War,” in which the world was viewed as divided between “good” anticommunist and “evil” communist countries, was the dominant framework guiding U.S. foreign policy and, indeed, much of domestic policy as well. The

Since 9/11, the overarching framework for U.S. policy is “the war against terrorism.” This simplistic “good verses evil” framework distorts U.S. views of realities and reinforces, rather than helps

was overly confident about the Shah's military power and underestimated the popular movement to overthrow the Shah. In Iraq, U.S. policymakers underestimate popular support for the insurgency by continuing to suggest that it is foreign inspired or led. In the Arab-Israeli conflict, the United States refused to recognize the PLO for years, despite almost every U.S. Ambassador in the region advising Washington of the PLO's broad, popular support and its essential role in any progress toward peace. The United States also underestimated Israeli popular movements for peace and often followed policies contradictory to what prominent, peace-oriented Israelis advocated.¹

Unilateral Action

The fourth feature of U.S. policy with unintended consequences is the tendency to "go it alone," rather than to act in concert with allies or the United Nations. Comparing the first Gulf war fought by a U.N. supported coalition with the current U.S. led war in Iraq, both the results achieved and the effects on U.S. credibility are dramatically different. Continuing to go it alone, the Bush Administration initially rejected, and then ineffectively accepted, the Iraq Study Group recommendation that the U.S. work with all of Iraq's neighbors to devise formulas for Iraqi stability and reconciliation.

In other areas as well, the U.S. has chosen to act unilaterally. Despite what is close to a global

consensus on two very important issues, the United States basically stands alone in refusing to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty on nuclear weapons and rejecting the Kyoto Protocols on global warming. In relation to the Arab-Israeli conflict, for years the United States ignored advice of European allies who urged support for the Palestinians' right to self-determination as the essential twin goal of support for the Israelis' right to security.

Positive Actions in U.S. Policy

Many additional examples could be cited to illustrate these four tendencies inherent in U.S. foreign policy and their consequences in the Middle East. Despite this troubling record, a review of efforts for Arab-Israeli-Palestinian peace reveals that the United States has been both part of the problem and part of the solution. The combination of multiple U.S. interests in the Middle East and complex Israeli and Arab politics continues to present opportunities for the United States to play a positive role. President Carter's role in

leadership. President George W. Bush, whose legacy related to Iraq is likely to be negative, is the first U.S. President to declare support for an independent Palestinian state. The President also announced plans for a U.S. hosted peace conference this fall.

A New Vision for U.S. Policy

The Iraq Study Group Report offered practical, bipartisan advice for what the U.S. should do in relation to Iraq and also emphasized the crucial importance of U.S. leadership to resolve the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Addressing the four issues I've discussed here, the Baker-Hamilton Report recommends that the United States rely more on diplomacy than military power; work with all of Iraq's neighbors, including Iran and Syria, and the United Nations to build a new international consensus for stability in Iraq and the region; and place greater emphasis on helping Iraqis resolve their conflicts and achieve security. Clearly concerned to reduce the threat of terrorism, the Report implicitly rejects making "the war on terrorism" the guiding framework

for U.S. policy. Instead, the Report argues for the centrality and urgency of renewed U.S. efforts to achieve Arab-Israeli-Palestinian peace. While more fundamental changes are needed, the Baker-Hamilton ideas offer a politically practicable start toward a new vision and strategy for U.S. policy in the Middle East. ~

Understanding the assumptions underlying policy decisions is crucial to conceiving and advocating for more constructive policies.

achieving the historic Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty, President Bush, Sr.'s role in organizing the Madrid Peace Conference, and President Clinton's role in bringing Israelis and Palestinians close to a final peace agreement are all important examples of constructive U.S.

¹ See my book, *Missed Opportunities for Peace: U.S. Middle East Policy, 1981-86.*



Rev. Tom Quigley served as President Director of the Church Council of Greater Seattle from 1996 to 2001. He has been an active volunteer with Churches for Middle East Peace for the past six years, coordinating their grassroots advocacy efforts within Washington State.

Called to be Faithful and Effective

Rev. Tom Quigley

Christians are claimed by a vision of human community characterized by justice, compassion, reconciliation, and peace. Christians have caught a glimpse of that vision in the life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth and are called to live their lives in ways that can help that vision become more concrete and real in today's world. We are called to be faithful to that vision. We are called to be peacemakers, even when lasting and genuine peace seems out of reach.

Christian Americans have particular responsibilities and unique opportunities to foster genuine human community and peace with justice in the Middle East. With others in the Abrahamic family of faiths, we have deep ties and strong attachments to the Holy Land and especially to Jerusalem. Many of our churches and church-based agencies have direct ties with part-

mean that we have important insights to share with U.S. policy-makers as they form and carry out American foreign policy throughout the Middle East. For me, being faithful to God's vision of human community includes helping to shape U.S. policy by bringing those insights to the table with passion and clarity. We have important ties to mission work in the Middle East that must continue, but we may have an even more important mission in our nation's Capital.

We are called to be faithful to the vision of human community marked by justice and peace, but I believe God also expects us to be effective, at least occasionally, in our efforts to bring the vision to reality.

I have grown to have deep respect for the work of Churches for Middle East Peace in Washington DC. As an ecumenical coalition, CMEP is a key resource to churches and to individual Christians in our call to peacemaking. Formed in 1984, the CMEP coalition includes twenty-two national churches and church bodies. CMEP works with Congress and the Administration to bring the insights, experience and policy perspectives of its members to the public policy arena.

CMEP works on behalf of

policies that will lead to a genuine and lasting peace throughout the Middle East, with a particular focus on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Together, the members of CMEP advocate positions that will realize the vision where two viable

states, Israel and Palestine, live side-by-side within secure and recognized borders and where an undivided Jerusalem

will be shared by two peoples—Israelis and Palestinians—and by the three religious communities that call it sacred.

CMEP and the DC-based staff of their members work daily with Congress and their staff persons and arrange meetings with key Administration officials in the State Department and the White House. CMEP stays in touch with Palestinian Christians and others throughout the region and helps to give voice to their concerns. Through an annual advocacy conference and an email network, CMEP lets those of us at the grassroots know when and how we can add our voices to the policy-making process in the most effective ways. Their site, www.cmepe.org, offers up-to-date information and resources for use with congregations and other groups to empower and energize their peacemaking efforts.

Christian Americans have unique and significant opportunities to enhance the prospects for genuine and lasting peace in the Middle East. Churches for Middle East Peace helps us to be both faithful and effective peacemakers. ~



ner churches in Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Egypt and Israel. For years, our churches have operated and supported refugee services, schools, colleges and hospitals throughout the region.

Our deep ties and experience

Oasis of Peace: A Binational Community

*n*eve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam (Hebrew and Arabic for “Oasis of Peace”) is a cooperative village of Jews and Palestinian Arabs of Israeli citizenship. The village, located equidistant from Jerusalem and Tel Aviv-Jaffa, is engaged in educational work for peace, equality and understanding between the two peoples. Central to the approach in the village is the idea that Jews and Palestinians can coexist successfully when there is acquaintance with and respect for each other’s separate cultures, sharing of responsibility and authority, and acknowledgement of each person’s role in the conflict and its resolution.

NSWAS was founded in the early 1970s on land originally leased from the adjacent Latrun Monastery. It was recognized as a village by the Ministry of the Interior in 1989. By 2007, more than 50 families had come to live in the village, with an equal number of Arabs and Jews. Eventually the village will include approximately 140 homes.

The village does not take special security precautions. Guards are employed where required by national law, such as at the school and at the swimming pool. Members of the village take turns in watching over the village at night (mainly to discourage burglars). Overall there is a relaxed atmosphere in the community and people probably feel a lesser sense of personal danger while in the village than do most of the people in the region.

The members of NSWAS are demonstrating the possibility of coexistence between Jews and Palestinians by developing a community based on mutual acceptance, respect and cooperation. Demo-

cratically governed and owned by its members, the community is not affiliated with any political party or movement. Their programs include bilingual/binational schooling for children in the village and from the surrounding Arab and Jewish communities, a School for Peace conducting educational outreach, a humanitarian relief program for Palestinian villagers, a Pluralistic Spiritual Center, and a program for visitors.

Naomi Mark, a daughter of NSWAS, is now 20 years old. Naomi attended the village’s binational primary school until sixth grade. After graduating from high school, Naomi faced compulsory enlistment in the Israeli Army. She refused to serve, claiming conscientious objection. She then chose to do national service. Now in her second year, she is working at the Israeli branch of Physicians for Human Rights, advocating for access to health care and more humane conditions on behalf of prisoners. One of her responsibilities is to serve as liaison between the Israeli prison authority and the families of Palestinian prisoners.

... you personally knew the other side in the most basic way. . . with friendship and learning.

For Naomi, the experience of growing up in an environment where equal relationships with Arabs were taken for granted gave her a perspective that was quite different from the average Jewish Israeli’s:

“Growing up in NSWAS makes things very natural, in the beginning. It’s very natural to have Arab friends,

it’s very natural to speak Arabic.

“For me, I didn’t have the feeling that it’s forced...Now, when I’m looking at it, it seems really hard work to make it natural for kids, to have a place with half Jews and half Arabs, and you have Christians and Muslims. You have



© Suleiman Mansour

to really think about everything... But when you’re little, you don’t think about it, it’s very natural.

“Afterwards, when I grew up, I understood that there is a conflict, that there are two sides and there are minorities and a majority, and there’s the Israeli Arabs and Israeli Jews and there’s the Palestinian-Israeli conflict...I think the significance of NSWAS is that you understand the conflict after you personally knew the other side in the most basic way, in the most pure way, with friendship and learning. And [only] *after*, that there’s a war, *after* you love your—I don’t even know whether to say ‘*the enemy*’...”

Naomi offers an inspiring example of an NSWAS graduate putting the values of the village and the skills she learned at its school to good use. Her story demonstrates the impact the village is having on Israeli society. ~

Compiled from www.nswas.org

In the Name of God

Jeff Siddiqui

There have been endless wars purporting to be based on religious differences that, stripped of their façades, turned out to be for power or greed. In modern times, faith in a divine entity has sometimes been supplanted by more secular philosophies such as communism or democracy. Nonetheless, the real reasons underlying war remain power and greed.



© Mark Bryan, www.arttoformarkbryan.com

Often, a new faith or philosophy is the target of established philosophies, trying to eradicate what is seen to be the new “evil.” Upon closer examination, we should not be surprised to find land, wealth and power as the driving forces. While small acts of piracy or theft can galvanize a battle, efforts of a prolonged war require a sense of righteousness to sustain the “good” war.

Sensing that the upstart leader of a growing cult could become a threat to the Roman Empire in a region where the Jewish zealots were already creating problems, the Romans would have wiped out Christianity in short order. But Jesus calmed their fears, telling the people to “Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s,

and unto God the things that are God’s.”

Israel’s creation was based upon a homeland for Jews, but the Arab population had to be removed to create a nation with a “Jewish character.” The lands before the establishment of the state of Israel in 1949 and the lands occupied after the 1967 war all serve to expand the power and control of the Jewish state. The public defense remains “the Promised Land for God’s Chosen People.”

Saddam was staunchly anti-religious, seldom hesitating to dispose of religious leaders. However, seeing that in order to rally the people to his side he would have to show support for Islam, he added “Allah Akbar” (“God is Great”) to the national flag.

Today, leaders of Muslim-majority states are seeing a weakening of their positions as despots. They realize that the easiest way to maintain power is to give a little support to the Mullahs. This is followed by more concessions, until many nations are falling to effective control by elements of religious fanaticism.

When the United States entered the war against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, the Mujahideen fighters were recruited on the basis of fighting the Russians, who

would supplant Islam with their “godless” Communism. Unwittingly, this led to the creation of the Taliban in Afghanistan.

Today, as we promote our war

in Afghanistan and Iraq, our President, his Cabinet and his military staff invoke the name of God almost reflexively. This is clearly a pretext for justifying a war that is fundamentally for the control of critical assets of oil in Iraq, the potential gas pipeline through Afghanistan and the strategic geography of both nations. President Bush started the war by calling it a “Crusade” and then continued to surround himself with his “High Priests” in the White House (Falwell, Robertson and Graham), who openly vilify Islam.

The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq are being turned into the biblical Armageddon scenario by political leaders and the Christian Right. As General William G. Boykin said, “We in the Army of God, ... the Kingdom of God, have been raised for such a time as this.” He continued, saying that enemies such as Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein “will only be defeated if we come against them in the name of Jesus.”

Boykin’s appointment as Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Intelligence was confirmed by the Senate in June 2006. America’s current “war” is regarded by the Christian Right as a war between

... this and all other wars are about asset-control and power. But the slogan remains the same: “God is on our side!”

Good and Evil, Christianity and Islam. Not surprisingly, Muslims almost universally view this

as America’s war against Islam.

At their hearts, this and all other wars are about asset-control and power. But the slogan remains the same: “God is on our side!” ~

A Journey of the Heart

Cantor Steven Puzarne

Pilgrimage of Peace is an interfaith journey through the Holy Land to visit and support grassroots peace work. Our goal is to bear witness, to tell the stories of Israeli and Palestinian peace-makers that are not being heard, and to strengthen and support

“If the kibbutz has a role in Israel’s future, perhaps it is showing how to live with your neighbor in peace.”

interfaith activists who stand up for peace, coexistence and compassion. Some of the groups we met with are described below.

Kibbutz Metzzer, Arab Village Meiser, Palestinian Village Quafin

In 1953 the founders of Kibbutz Metzzer received assistance from the adjacent Arab Village, Meiser. Ever since, Kibbutz members have worked diligently to cultivate warm relations with their Arab neighbors, and to reach out to the nearby Westbank village of Quafin, currently under Israeli military occupation. This continued even after a terrorist attack carried out by Palestinian extremists left a kibbutz woman and her two sons dead.

According to Kibbutz leader Dov Avital with whom we met,

“We were targeted because of our belief. They wanted to show there is no such thing as coexistence. They think Palestinians should fight Jews. If they kill our dream, our vision of life, then they will have succeeded. If the kibbutz has a role in Israel’s future perhaps

it is showing how to live with your neighbor in peace. I cannot see any other way. It’s not a dream, it’s the only solution.”

Arab Jewish Theatre Center of Acre

The center’s mission is to be a socially activist theater company, dedicated to addressing the *local* concerns of Acres Arab and Jewish communities. It deals with the subjects most relevant to the life of the actors and producers involved, often to the point of mingling theater and real life. They staged a powerful dance, drama and discussion evening especially for our Pilgrimage of Peace travelers.

Rabbis for Human Rights

Rabbis for Human Rights promotes justice and freedom while campaigning against discrimination. Key projects include actions on behalf of Palestinian villagers

facing administrative home demolitions, and providing aid and protection to Palestinian farmers working in their fields.

Bearing Witness

Those of us who created and travel on the Pilgrimage believe it is our sacred duty to lift up these stories over and above the clamor of extremists on all sides. We believe that to be proper emissaries, we must be able to speak from first-hand experience. From our



very first encounter, we knew that personally bearing witness to acts of generosity and loving kindness shared between supposed enemies would be transformative. ~



Cantor Steven Puzarne is a graduate of the HUC School of Sacred Music. He is the co-founder and Executive Director of Breeyah, a non-profit organization promoting music, spirituality, and social and environmental justice. His most recent project is Pilgrimage of Peace.

IN THE WORDS OF THE TRAVELERS...

“What has changed for me? I am now opening up to dialogue with others, including Muslims... I am now more interested in hearing the experience and the viewpoint of a broad spectrum of people. I can share my views, my worries, my questions, my love, and I can listen to all those things from people who are different and might not agree. . . I can speak up when I hear propaganda coming from any direction. I can open my heart to the truth that others speak from their vantage point.”

—Rebecca Jupiter, New York

“I was astonished by both the beauty and the harshness of the heart—my hope after this journey is that those with hearts and mind stuck in a vision created by our media/government, will reconsider this distortion and deepen their awareness to the current human struggle towards dignity, human justice and well being. To applaud the courage of those who stand in the olive fields protecting Palestinian farmers (Rabbis for Human Rights) and support the Imams, Rabbis, and Clergy who challenge their congregations to embrace all religions in compassion and understanding and promote healing and peace for persons of all faiths and spiritual paths.”

—Alima Sherman, Ph.D., Los Angeles



intercommunity

Parenting for Peace & Justice

Parish Groups are forming **NOW!** Call IPJC **NOW** to get your church or community involved in the ritual program. The five sessions include:



- 1st—Peace in the Family
- 2nd—Simple Living as a Family
- 3rd—Families that Care for the Environment
- 4th—Nurturing Respect for Diversity
- 5th—Living in a Global World

United Way

Designate the Intercommunity Peace & Justice Center with United Way. Please consider writing us in on your pledge. This is one more important way



for us to receive support for doing the work of peace and justice that is so needed in our world.

Northwest Coalition for Responsible Investment (NWCRI) Annual Report

Our 2007 NWCRI Annual Report is contained in this issue of AMOS and available at www.ipjc.org/programs/annualreport.htm. We encourage you to read the report and consider how you can partner with us by praying for the justice issues we address, writing corporations about your concerns, and being a responsible consumer. If you have investments, monitor them; talk with your manager about your values; vote your proxies.

IPJC Welcomes Melissa



We welcome Melissa Morales-Warming as our new Justice for Women Coordinator. She recently completed graduate studies with a focus on Women and Ethnic Studies. Melissa's cultural heritage, along with her experience as a teacher and her work with Oregon State University Women's Center, prepares her to coordinate the Justice Circles.

Contact Melissa at 206.223.1138 if you are interested in becoming a part of a Circle of change for women.

J U S T I C E C I R C L E S

What?

- Women sharing their stories and acting on behalf of low income women in an eight-week process
- Acting together to affect systems that address poverty
- A learning circle
- A two hour justice commitment for eight weeks
- An act of solidarity

Why?

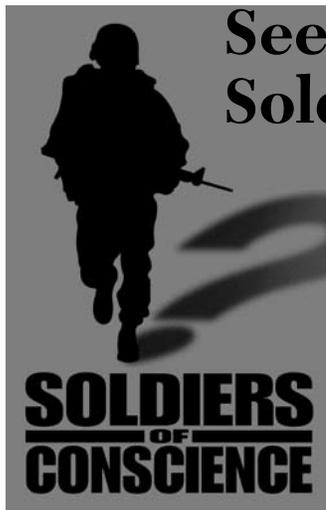
- It is an opportunity to take a first step, or make a short term commitment to justice
- A Justice Circle brings faith, spirituality and life practices into harmony
- Each woman in a Circle makes a difference
- Women's Circles model peace and justice

Where?

- ✱ Bellevue
- ✱ Bellingham
- ✱ Olympia
- ✱ Seattle (two locations)
- ✱ Spokane
- ✱ Sunnyside
- ✱ Wenatchee

To join or schedule a fall/winter Justice Circle in your community, call IPJC at 206.223.1138

peace & justice center



See the new documentary Soldiers of Conscience!

*"...has an eloquence and passion
that will open hearts as well as eyes"*

—Seattle PI

Free screening with discussion. Afterwards,
please tell others about the film's **Seattle
premiere, November 2–8 at SIFF Cinema,**
McCaw Hall, Seattle Center—SIFF Cinema
tickets and info at www.seattlefilm.org

Thurs. October 25th
Seattle University
TBA (contact IPJC)

Thurs. October 25th
St. Leo, Tacoma
710 S 13th St
7:00pm—Parish Hall

Sat. October 27th
Holy Rosary, West Seattle
4142 42nd Ave SW
6:15pm—School Hall

Sat. October 27th
St. Anthony, Renton
416 S 4th St
6:30pm—Parish Hall

Sun. October 28th
Plymouth Church, Seattle
1217 6th Ave
12:15pm—Church Lounge

Sun. October 28th
St. Joseph, Seattle
732 18th Ave E
6:45pm—Parish Hall

Sun. October 28th
Our Lady of the Lake, Seattle
8900 35th Ave NE
7:30pm—Jubilee Hall

SOLDIERS OF CONSCIENCE

Their country asked them to kill. Their hearts asked them to stop.

8 US soldiers today, some who killed and some who said no, reveal their inner moral dilemma over killing in combat. Made with official permission from the US Army, this award-winning film transcends the usual rhetoric of politics to reveal that all our soldiers are "soldiers of conscience." A story about war, peace, and the transformative power of the human conscience. (85 min, PG-13) www.socfilm.com

Sponsored by: Intercommunity Peace & Justice Center
Church Council of Greater Seattle • Fellowship of Reconciliation • Lutheran Peace Fellowship

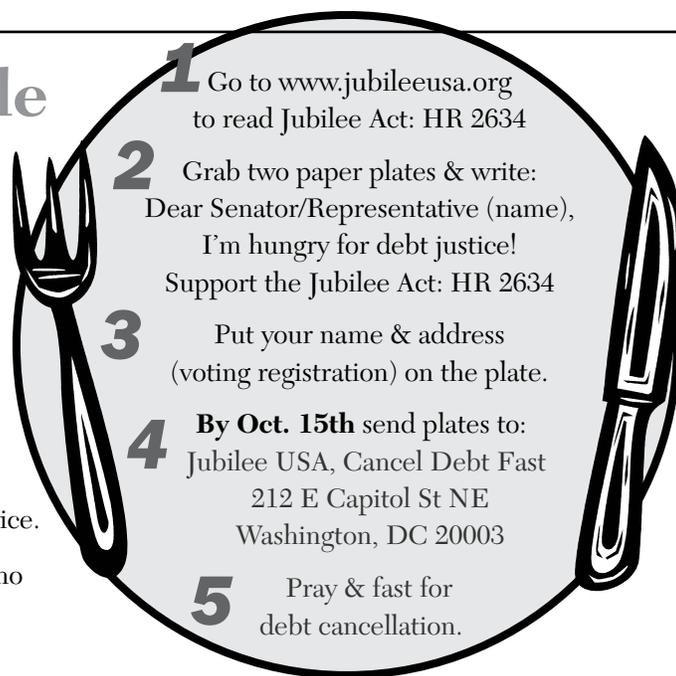
Called to be Sabbath People

Observing the Sabbath Year every seven years requires that debts are cancelled and those enslaved because of debts are freed. In 1997 the faith community came together to work for debt cancellation in the world's impoverished nations. The small amount of debt relief given over the past ten years has achieved startling results:

- Doubling school enrollment in Uganda
- Vaccinating 500,000 children in Mozambique
- Abolishing fees for rural healthcare in Zambia

Yet, for every dollar Africa receives in aid, it pays out \$2.30 in debt service.

Act: Stand in solidarity with the millions of people around the world who are literally starving for debt cancellation!



Miles for Peace

On May 10, 2007, an extraordinary group of 14 Iranian men and women embarked on a journey to bicycle around the U.S. and Europe with a mission of conveying a message of peace, friendship and solidarity from the Iranian people to the rest of the world. They traveled from New York to Chicago, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Baltimore and Washington, DC, offering a hand-made emblem of "Miles for Peace" to mayors in host cities along their way. They ended the U.S. leg of their journey in mid July in Washington, DC, where they met with members of Congress.



This is their message:

- **We Iranians are peace-loving people.**
- **We Iranians love all other nations.**
- **We Iranians wish to be constructive members of the international community.**

We believe that every success in every field by any individual in any part of the world belongs to the human community as a whole. In the same way, we believe that any form of aggression and moral transgression anywhere in the world, brings shame and disgrace to all humans and has a devastating impact on the entire body of human society. That is why each one of us has to take responsibility vis-à-vis all world events.

"..... we're just a group of fourteen Iranians, average Iranian citizens, who have decided to take actions because of the current state of the world. So we've

decided to travel through Europe and the United States while carrying the message of peace and friendship.

...we try to build these bridges of dialogue between the civil societies, because we believe that in today's world, what we need is people's diplomacy. State diplomacy has failed.

"The UN was established half a century ago, and yet we have more wars and atrocities and sanctions than ever before. So it shows that there's more to

do than state diplomacy... We need to involve the people and have their say.

"Most of us are from Tehran...and we are from different backgrounds, actually. The ages go from twenty-two to fifty-eight. There are students among us. There

*"...what we need is people's diplomacy.
State diplomacy has failed."*

are teachers, university professors and workers. We have tried to show a very wide range of the Iranian people, as we selected the team."

—Ali Nasri, one of the Iranian cyclists, speaking in an interview by Amy Goodman of *Democracy Now*, on July 16, 2007.

Compiled from www.milesforpeace.org

A Matter of Spirit is a publication of the **Intercommunity Peace & Justice Center**

SPONSORING COMMUNITIES

Adrian Dominican Sisters
Oregon Province Jesuits
Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary, U.S. Ontario Province
Sisters of Providence, Mother Joseph Province
Sisters of St Francis of Philadelphia
Sisters of St Joseph of Peace, Western Province
Tacoma Dominicans

AFFILIATE COMMUNITIES

Benedictine Sisters of Cottonwood, Idaho
Benedictine Sisters of Lacey
Benedictine Sisters of Mt. Angel
Religious of the Sacred Heart
Sinsinawa Dominicans
Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet
Sisters of St. Mary of Oregon
Ursuline Sisters of the Roman Union

EDITORIAL BOARD

Judy Byron, OP
Daniel Eiben
Anthony Gnanarajah, PhD
Gretchen Gundrum, PhD
Linda Haydock, SNJM
Pat Higgins
Jeff Siddiqui
Ron Young

Editor: Jean Anton

Layout: Michael Schwindeller

Intercommunity Peace & Justice Center

1216 NE 65th Street
Seattle, WA 98115-6724

return service requested

Send us
your change of address
before the post office does.
It will save us \$1.39!!!

phone: 206.223.1138
fax: 206.223.1139
e-mail: ipjc@ipjc.org
web: www.ipjc.org