

Date and Time: Friday, May 3, 2024 4:17:00PM EEST

Job Number: 223446056

Documents (100)

1. [*Your Say*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

2. [*UN says trickle of aid not enough*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

3. [*LETTERS*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

4. [*CLINTON PLEDGES TOUGH DIPLOMACY AND A FAST START*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

5. [*Puzzled by Dev's mystical powers*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

6. [*WFP, Trade Ministry partner to 'Get Food to Gaza'*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

7. [*A Happy New Year?*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

8. [*The Week in Review*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

9. [*The Week in Review*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

10. [*chatroom*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

11. [INSIDE THE TIMES: January 5, 2009](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

12. [INSIDE THE TIMES: January 8, 2009](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

13. [UNRWA: Immediate truce needed as Gazans have nowhere safe to go](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

14. [Casualty ward chaos your say](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

15. [New US Congress expected to consider resolution backing Operation Cast Lead](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

16. [*It's a miracle Golani soldier is still alive, doctor says. Wounded arrive at Soroka Hospital as anxious families await their recovery*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

17. [*Violence in the Middle East must be dealt with even-handedly*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

18. [*Gazans fear their nightmare is just going to get worse*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

19. [*Put An End To The Bloodshed*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

20. [*Just servitude?*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

21. [*Few places to relax in battle-scarred Gaza From historic bathhouse to nightclubs and hotels everything is closed in this impoverished territory*](#)
- Client/Matter:** -None-
- Search Terms:** Hamas
- Search Type:** Natural Language
- Narrowed by:**
- | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Content Type News | Narrowed by Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009 |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
22. [*Debate didn't become battle of the sexes*](#)
- Client/Matter:** -None-
- Search Terms:** Hamas
- Search Type:** Natural Language
- Narrowed by:**
- | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Content Type News | Narrowed by Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009 |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
23. [*In Beersheba, rockets bring Arab, Jewish neighbors together. Sharing a shelter underscores close ties*](#)
- Client/Matter:** -None-
- Search Terms:** Hamas
- Search Type:** Natural Language
- Narrowed by:**
- | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Content Type News | Narrowed by Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009 |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
24. [*Not all Jews are supporting Israel*](#)
- Client/Matter:** -None-
- Search Terms:** Hamas
- Search Type:** Natural Language
- Narrowed by:**
- | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Content Type News | Narrowed by Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009 |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
25. [*Excessive rhetoric marks anti- Israel protests*](#)
- Client/Matter:** -None-
- Search Terms:** Hamas
- Search Type:** Natural Language
- Narrowed by:**
- | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Content Type News | Narrowed by Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009 |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
26. [*Our role is that of fair reporting*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

27. [Sound of artillery fire may herald peace after relentless years of raining rockets](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

28. [Comment - There is something rotten in the state of Mubarak's Egypt](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

29. ['We cannot be quiet': East Carolina U. area locals gather to protest conflict in Gaza Strip](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

30. [What the commentators say today ...](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

31. [Tales of sex, cockatoos and murder at sea - settle back](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

32. [YOUR LETTERS](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

33. [With a Grain of Salt: Where the egg is...](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

34. [UNRWA '99.9% certain' gunmen didn't fire from shelled school. Arab press compares incident to '96 Kafr Qana shelling in Lebanon](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

35. [Chatroom](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

36. [Activists protest blogger's detention](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

37. [World Journal](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

38. [World datelines](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

39. [News in brief](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

40. [Welcome to My World, Barack](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

41. [British MPs suggest Global justice, human rights to ensure global democracy](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type

Narrowed by

42. [*Let's not forget to have fun Messageboard: What are your hopes for 2009?*](#)**Client/Matter:** -None-**Search Terms:** Hamas**Search Type:** Natural Language**Narrowed by:****Content Type**
News**Narrowed by**

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

43. [*The game has started?*](#)**Client/Matter:** -None-**Search Terms:** Hamas**Search Type:** Natural Language**Narrowed by:****Content Type**
News**Narrowed by**

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

44. [*Clinton aims for pragmatic diplomacy*](#)**Client/Matter:** -None-**Search Terms:** Hamas**Search Type:** Natural Language**Narrowed by:****Content Type**
News**Narrowed by**

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

45. [*PGA Tour suspends Daly for 6 months*](#)**Client/Matter:** -None-**Search Terms:** Hamas**Search Type:** Natural Language**Narrowed by:****Content Type**
News**Narrowed by**

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

46. [*Trade union leaders join call for ceasefire; Demonstrators jam Ste. Catherine St.*](#)**Client/Matter:** -None-**Search Terms:** Hamas**Search Type:** Natural Language**Narrowed by:****Content Type**
News**Narrowed by**

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

47. [*Three weeks or three years; give Abhisit a chance*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

48. [*Divisions inside pro-Gaza protests*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

49. [*Egypt providing help to wounded Palestinians*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

50. [*Column: The United States ' democracy shows how liberalism liberates*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

51. [*The rotten state of Egypt is too powerless to do anything in Gaza crisis*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

52. [*OPINION: Democrats once again proving Rogers correct*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

53. [And finally, Bush admits: Regrets, I've quite a few...](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

54. [Chatroom txt EDITOR \(0429 334 867\) please include your name & suburb](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

55. [Gaza crisis: a crossroads for Obama](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

56. [Vast wreckage of a president Americans want to forget](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

57. [Israeli bomb attack in refugee camp kills five daughters in one family](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

58. [Israel evicts settlers from disputed house Troops drag away 200 in Hebron](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

59. [The rotten state of Egypt is too powerless and corrupt to act Comment](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

60. [Communicating with the Divine](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

61. [Soccer home at last for Palestinians National squad to host Jordan on Sunday in first internationally recognized Palestinian home game](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

62. [LETTERS COMMENT & DEBATE](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

63. [*Criminals with guns should be the Target*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

64. [*Seeds of horror sown by blockade GAZA*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

65. [*Israel wages PR battle as Gaza conflict rages High-tech tools a key part of arsenal, while foreign media kept on tight leash*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

66. [*'I didn't see any of my girls, just a pile of bricks': Israeli air strike kills five daughters from one family as Gaza death toll passes 300: 'I didn't see any of my girls, just a pile of bricks'*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

67. [*Hospitals flooded by casualties Gaza doctors are struggling in appalling conditions to cope with rapidly mounting numbers of injured, write Sudarsan Raghavan and Reyham Abdel Kareem*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

68. [*Israeli Troops Force Jewish Settlers Out of Building in the West Bank*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

69. [*Race for the White House: Key issues: How the candidates compare*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

70. [*From drab to decadent: the evolution of Islamic TV*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

71. [*News in brief*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

72. [*TALKING POINT*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type

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News

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

73. [Israel's Mrs Clean](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

74. [Syracuse guard has feet on court, heart in Israel](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

75. [A unique voice from Sur Bahir](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

76. [No end in sight to the killing of innocents](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

77. [US president-elect Barack Obama has continued to remain silent MIDEAST: Obama Silence 'Ends Hopes From U.S](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

78. [*YOUR LETTERS Dredging up the past*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to
Jan 14, 2009

79. [*2008 A YEAR TO REMEMBER CONTINUING his latest review of the year, DAN O'NEILL looks at what was making the headlines in March.*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to
Jan 14, 2009

80. [*Comment & Debate: Wanted: an opposition: If they are to be elected, Cameron's cohorts must ditch the silly Bullingdon showboating and foolery*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to
Jan 14, 2009

81. [*Americans hold our futures in their hands*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to
Jan 14, 2009

82. [*FORGET NUCLEAR POWER, LET'S GO SOLAR*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to
Jan 14, 2009

83. [*Turkey feels Palestine 's pain*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

84. [*Beirutis put little faith in protest as means of ending Israeli war on Gaza*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

85. [*Zuma*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

86. [*Letters*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

87. [*Our readers' views*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

88. [*Letters*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

89. [*We need an all-out assault on inequality*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

90. [*Lebanon as seen through a warped looking glass*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

91. [*Letters*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

92. [*PEACE CHAIR: PROFESSORSHIP IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION COMING TO ASU*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

93. [*Meade High students tackle homeland security issues*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

94. [Letters to the Editor](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

95. [Israel 's path will alienate allies](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

96. [Stumbling along, in harmony with history](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

97. [New light on the Israeli side of the conflict FILM: 1982 Massacre Rendered Through Dark, Distorted Lens](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

98. [Focus: Middle East Crisis: 'Does it make pilots happy to kill Palestinian children and women?': Fida Qishta, in her diary of a week in Gaza, tells of life under a rain of fire](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

99. [UPDATE: Charity contacts speak of desperate situation](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

100. [International: Gaza: Anatomy of an attack: 'Some were decapitated. My cousin and his son died in front of me'](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2008 to Jan 14, 2009

Your Say

Herald Sun (Australia)

January 1, 2009 Thursday

1 - FIRST Edition

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Section: LETTERS; Pg. 23

Length: 537 words

Body

Big issues in transport missed

THOUGH the much-publicised Victorian Transport Plan runs to 164 pages, it fails to address the three key impediments to progressive public transport policy.

First, Lynne Kosky, the least competent minister to hold the portfolio, must be sacked.

Second, the bureaucrats or advisers who proposed, pushed and promoted untested, unsustainable money pits like the myki ticketing system and the fast rail system should be fired.

Finally, the farce of alternately imposing fines and paying bonuses to under-performing private transport operators must end.

The Government has to seize control of public transport today; tomorrow, it faces the polls.

Stuart McCulloch, Wendouree

Catholic Church hypocritical

ATTORNEY-General Rob Hulls was refused communion in a Catholic church over the State Government's Bill to legalise abortion.

That's the Catholic Church for you; it can be a very evil pack if it doesn't get its way and, can be the biggest hypocrites too.

Roman Kaminski, Lurg

Mid-East force disproportionate

WE write to express our outrage at Israel's latest assault against the 1.5 million people of Gaza, trapped in the prison it has created, the ordinary men, women and children locked in behind the walls and fences without the basic necessities, the vast majority of them refugees.

Thanks to Israel's two-year blockade, they mostly die in silence from lack of food and medicines, especially the sick and elderly, collective punishment for electing Hamas, even though Israel assisted in its creation to counter the influence of Yasser Arafat's Palestine Liberation Organisation.

Your Say

Israel's use of tanks, jets, gunboats and strategic settlements has failed dismally, simply providing a focus for resistance.

So what does it hope to achieve by this latest onslaught? Certainly not a peaceful resolution by punishing more than a hundred times over what has been inflicted on it.

Israel's use of disproportionate and excessive force contravenes all humanitarian law and human rights conventions and will be ranked alongside the horrors of Deir Yassin and the Sabra and Shatila massacres.

Joan and Cedric Coxedge, North Balwyn

Delightful visit to Victoria

WE recently returned from Victoria and, contrary to the doom and gloom forecast for your tourism industry, I believe you can only go from strength to strength.

We fed the possums apples in the evenings in Williamstown, saw koalas in their natural surroundings on the way to Apollo Bay and had to warn my husband that the seemingly harmless little brown snake he discovered in Torquay is extremely venomous.

The people we met were great and we didn't get ripped off with prices. We'll come again, certainly, and tell our friends, definitely.

Christina O'Neill, Ireland

Artist a true gentleman

I LIVED in Heathmont and knew Bill Green (WEG) for 30 years just as a fellow Heathmontonian.

If ever a man deserved the accolade of one of nature's gentlemen, it was Bill.

He made me feel good every time I saw him. A man like Bill really does leave a deep sense of sadness when he goes, knowing we will see him no more. Not many men reach his heights.

Farewell Bill. Well done, and God speed. You really were what we Aussies call a good bloke.

Graeme ``Digger" Dorman, Heathmont

Load-Date: December 31, 2008

UN says trickle of aid not enough

The Irish Times

December 30, 2008 Tuesday

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Section: WORLD; Gaza Raids; Pg. 13

Length: 549 words

Byline: MARY FITZGERALD Foreign Affairs Correspondent

Body

UN AID:ISRAEL ALLOWED trucks carrying relief supplies into Gaza yesterday but the UN has warned that the trickle of aid is not enough to address chronic humanitarian needs as the Israeli bombardment of the territory enters its fourth day.

People are simply overwhelmed by the scale of the attacks, said Aidan O Leary of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA).

According to the agency, at least 62 civilians have been killed in Israeli air strikes since Saturday. Mr O Leary, an Irish national who is deputy director of the agency's operations in Gaza, said that figure was based on visits by agency officials to hospitals and medical centres and it related only to women and children.

These are conservative estimates. The figure is bound to rise, Mr O Leary told The Irish Times in a telephone interview from Jerusalem.

Palestinian officials said yesterday the overall death toll had risen to at least 314 since the weekend, with as many as 1,400 others injured.

UNRWA has called for Israel to open more border crossings to allow the delivery of humanitarian aid into Gaza.

Yesterday 14 of the agency's trucks carrying food and medical supplies were permitted through the Kerem Shalom crossing. Mr O Leary said the agency hoped that more than double that number would be allowed through today.

UNRWA's commissioner general, Karen AbuZayd, said yesterday the agency's existing supplies there had completely run out.

She described scenes of panic in the densely populated streets of Gaza's capital.

It's very bad - people are running in all directions because of the bombings that are happening everywhere, Ms AbuZayd told CNN from Gaza. People are very agitated because the bombings are now concentrating on individual houses and individual families, apparently . . . People are beginning to fight among themselves, and it's just quite a chaotic time, she added.

Even before this week's attacks, Gaza languished under an Israeli blockade which prevented adequate stocks of foodstuffs and medical supplies from reaching the territory's 1.5 million inhabitants.

UN says trickle of aid not enough

Gaza's hospitals and clinics have now been stretched to breaking point, with reports of corpses lying on floors as morgues filled up. A small number of injured Gazans passed through the Rafah crossing into Egypt for treatment yesterday.

The medical system in Gaza was already struggling to cope with routine work, let alone the massive casualties of the last few days, said Mr O Leary.

This was a surprise attack. I don't think anyone was expecting anything like this. There is huge shock at the scale and scope of the killings, and there is also growing anger that this is happening.

Mr O Leary said incidents such as the killing of five girls who died when Israeli forces bombed a mosque near their home in the Jabaliya refugee camp yesterday had caused widespread outrage.

This is going to fuel anger here and **Hamas** will simply harvest that anger in the future, he added.

Priorities for the UN agency in the immediate term will include ensuring health services and feeding systems remain functioning and providing temporary shelter for people whose homes have been reduced to rubble. After that comes the mammoth task of rebuilding homes and lives.

All we can do is hope for the best, but plan for the worst, said Mr O Leary.

Load-Date: December 30, 2008

LETTERS

The Tampa Tribune (Florida)

January 11, 2009 Sunday

FINAL EDITION

Copyright 2009 Times Publishing Company

Section: VIEWS; Pg. 3

Length: 1822 words

Body

LETTER OF THE DAY

Drive Down The Price Of Autos

Automobile dealers are in a huge sales slump, a fact obvious to all observers. While there are many economic reasons for the lack of sales, there also is a self-inflicted one: Dealer fees running as high as \$699 are unprecedented in any other area of our economy. Your shoes are not priced at \$100 with a \$10 "handling fee" added when you approach the cash register.

Dealers, many times, do not disclose the fees except through tiny, hard-to-read print in their ads or in lines of figures on sales contracts not pointed out to the buyer. This is double-pricing at best and false advertising at worst. Stopping it will help car sales. State the price honestly, with a fair profit in the price.

Not all dealers charge the fees. Those are my dealers. I have bought 42 new cars in my life, and I plan to buy more - without dealer fees. The factories already pay the dealers for car prep. Think it over, dealers.

JAMES MUNRO

Seffner

The 800-Pound Bully

Let me take issue with you not printing one letter in Tuesday's paper to counter the arguments made in support of Israel's attacks on Hamas. It appears many supporters of Israel do not know the meaning of "self-defense." It also appears to me that Israel cannot do any wrong when it comes to dealing with Hamas.

Hamas was voted into office just as George W. Bush and Barack Obama were. That makes it a government of the people, and as such it had every right to refuse signing a piece of paper that it felt would cause harm to its people. And that is what this latest round of fighting is all about.

What bothers me most is seeing military arms built in the United States being used to attack a people without a standing army - M-16s and Abrams tanks used to take out rock throwers, houses, schools and medical facilities, and Apache helicopters used to take out anything that stands, including innocent men, women and children.

LETTERS

Such heavy hands should never be allowed to be used in gaining one's wish. The U.S. government for has for too many years stood by and watched as Israel conducted such heavy-handed policies against the people of Palestine.

The fighting taking place in Palestine is not an act of self-defense by Israel but one of Israel saying "to hell with how the rest of the world sees this." Israel is the 800-pound bully in the room, and no one wants to do or say anything about its bullying.

BOBBY MCGILL

Valrico

Bailout By Design

Since the advent of our country's economic woes, fellow "letters" contributors have suggested plans to alleviate our fiduciary concerns. All have one thing in common: If there is to be a bailout, bail out the American taxpayer.

Do you wonder why no such approach is ever considered by our government scalawags and their Wall Street hacks? The "Other Views" article "Bad News In Store At The Pump" (Jan. 6) is a perfect example. Because Americans conserved and bought less \$4-per-gallon gas, government revenue has declined. To make up the difference, bureaucrats have suggested raising the gas tax. What is never proposed is terminating the employment of all the bureaucrats who suggest such tripe to make up for lost revenue.

I just finished my third reading of "The Creature From Jekyll Island" by G. Edward Griffin, first published in 1994. Interestingly, Chapter 2 is entitled, "The Name of the Game Is Bailout." I encourage all concerned to read this book. Even if you only read the second chapter, you will see our economic woes were carried out by design. This fraud has been ongoing since 1913. It's called the Federal Reserve.

JOHN REINER

Tampa

Good, And Cost Effective

Regarding "Hillsborough Schools Put Meal Budget On Diet" (Jan. 6):

Do any of you who criticize the county's Nutrition Division have any concept of how much money it would cost to provide 235,000-plus meals daily as we do in the restaurants? It's not laziness or unconcern that dictates the food that is served as much as it is utilizing labor-saving items as well as cost-efficient ones.

Canned fruits and vegetables not only have longer shelf lives, they can be just as nutritious as fresh products. Plastic pouches are more green-wise, as well as economical, without sacrificing nutritional content. Prepared potatoes are cost- and labor-effective.

My granddaughters eat a hot lunch daily at school. While I would love for them to eat the quality meals such as those my chef peers serve in the restaurant industry, it would cost the school district a fortune in food products and salaries.

Instead of criticizing the division we should be questioning those "billions to education" dollars that don't seem to be filtering into schools.

PATRICIA LEE-LUCARDIE

Tampa

In All Its Splendor

Regarding "The Waterfront Revisited" (Jan. 3):

LETTERS

I am sorry this is late, but this amazing page was spectacular to this native 47-year Hillsborough County resident!

For Christmas, I received the most wonderful gift, a book called "Historic Photos of Tampa," which in the most absolute splendor shows the history of Tampa in glorious photographs. While the pictures are awe-inspiring, they are sporadic in their history of downtown Tampa. Your pictorial and history of the settlement of downtown Tampa has actually brought together the magnificent historical photographs of the book with the timeline and history that the book didn't include.

Thank you for the history lesson and the amazing history of my hometown. I cannot wait until the finished product is open for residents and visitors of our beautiful city in the fall.

SCOTT KJEER

Riverview

Take Spotlight Off Race

I was terribly disappointed in the Tribune's "Face Of A Nation" (Sports, Jan. 4). Can we please, pretty please, stop looking at everything through the prism of ethnicity?

The fact that University of Oklahoma quarterback Sam Bradford is one-sixteenth Cherokee means, or should mean, nothing. In the Sports section it means less than nothing.

The time has come for the Tribune and other news media to eschew the endless identification of people by race, nationality, gender and the rest of the terms used to put us into little boxes separate from each other.

I find it ironic that the members of the Fourth Estate, who consider themselves to be among the most open-minded and liberal of all professions, insist on reminding us of our differences.

JOHN S.V. WEISS

Spring Hill

Quarter-Cent For State

Prominent leaders of the Republican and Democratic parties are entertaining two basic strategies for filling the state's \$2.3-billion budget gap. One method involves simultaneously "borrowing" money from specifically reserved accounts while cutting back on funding of other essential programs, such as education and health care. The alternative route suggests an increased tax on certain products and services.

I propose an alternative solution, one that will close the budget gap without cutting government programs. A bill that imposes a temporary quarter-cent increase in sales taxes that would sunset at the end of a year will not only help balance our budget but give state officials time to critically analyze our state expenditures and make thoughtful, well-planned adjustments.

My proposal will buy legislators more time, not unlimited time. A quarter-of-a-cent boost in sales tax imposes a small burden without targeting one specific group or program. Another benefit of the sales tax increase is that a lot of the funds needed to balance the budget will come from out-of-state pockets.

Under most circumstances I would be opposed to an increase in sales tax, even a minimal increase on a temporary basis, but these are not ordinary times.

MICHAEL STEINBERG

Tampa

The FCAT Requirement

LETTERS

I am responding to a letter in the Dec. 25th Views section, "No FCAT A Holiday Wish." I have done some research and want to dispel some inaccuracies in Arlene Andrews' letter.

She stated that "hundreds of millions of dollars are spent on FCAT testing because a state law was passed to monitor the results in education." Actually, in 2008 the total amount was about \$51.5 million to develop, print, administer and grade the FCAT. This is a cost of \$19.44 per student tested.

Due to changes in the program, the Florida Department of Education estimates that the costs for 2009 will be significantly less. Details are at <http://www.fldoe.org/asp/k12memo/pdf/K-12AssessmentUpdate.pdf>.

The FCAT was started by a state law as she stated; however, it now comes under the direction of the federal No Child Left Behind Act. If we were to scrap the FCAT, we would stand to lose the federal portion of our schools' budget; approximately 8 percent of each school budget comes from federal sources.

Although this testing program might not be the perfect solution in an imperfect world, we have to make the best of what we are required to do.

ALAN KENT

Sebring

The Reality Of Sports

Let me open by saying that there are far too many football bowl games today. In my days as a student at Michigan State we went to the Rose Bowl twice. By now you probably have figured that I am an old guy still reliving the past.

In those days, I never had enough money to go all the way to California to attend either of those games. Several of us had considered hitchhiking out there, but soon abandoned that idea. Yes, in those days you could thumb a ride and not fear for your life.

In those days, the Rose and Orange bowls were the ones that counted, and both were played on New Year's Day. We have moved way past that time with dozens of bowl games now.

There are so many that they have to be strung out over several weeks. Now they are played for big bucks rather than just pride. Yes, I said big bucks, since the corporate world has even taken over college football. These schools get big bucks just for showing up at the stadium. Yes, I am talking millions here, so why worry about winning or losing what was supposed to be a fun game?

College football is not the only activity being invaded by the big-money corporate world. Auto racing has been taken over by big money, too. We have moved from the Indy 500 and the Daytona 500 to a race almost every weekend during the summer. Dozens of new tracks have been built the last several years, and there are so many ways to cheat that I don't even follow it anymore. I look at it as a gigantic waste of precious gasoline.

CHARLES KNAPP

Brandon

JOIN DISCUSSION

The Tribune welcomes letters and e-mails from readers. The text should be original and no longer than 150 words. By making a submission, you agree the Tribune may edit the letter for length and clarity, and publish it in any medium.

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LETTERS

Also, read and participate in the Tribune editorial board's blog, "Thinking Out Loud," at www.tboblogs.com/index.php/thinkoutloud/categories/C930.

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Load-Date: January 14, 2009

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CLINTON PLEDGES TOUGH DIPLOMACY AND A FAST START

The New York Times
January 14, 2009 Wednesday
Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section A; Column 0; Foreign Desk; Pg. 1

Length: 1306 words

Byline: By MARK LANDLER; Helene Cooper and Peter Baker contributed reporting.

Body

WASHINGTON -- Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton on Tuesday deflected calls for greater limits on her husband's fund-raising, struck a sharper tone toward Israel on violence in the Middle East and emerged from a daylong confirmation hearing headed for swift approval as secretary of state.

Appearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Mrs. Clinton showed a mastery of the issues that won praise from her fellow lawmakers, and outlined a muscular view of American foreign policy that she said would put diplomacy front and center in the Obama administration.

On most important issues, including Iraq and Afghanistan, Mrs. Clinton broke little ground, saying that she did not want to undermine President Bush before President-elect Barack Obama took office. But she left little doubt that she intended to be in the thick of all of these issues.

"I assure you that, if I am confirmed, the State Department will be firing on all cylinders to provide forward-looking, sustained diplomacy in every part of the world," she said.

Mrs. Clinton was one of five officials picked by Mr. Obama who faced hearings on Tuesday as Senate leaders laid the groundwork for confirmation votes next Tuesday.

The only testy notes in a day of cordial exchanges came when Republican senators warned that Mrs. Clinton could face conflicts of interest because of foreign donations to the charitable foundation run by her husband, former President Bill Clinton.

Mrs. Clinton stood her ground, saying that restrictions hammered out between Mr. Clinton and the Obama transition team were "probably as close as we can get" without hampering the foundation's work.

In addressing the spiraling violence in Gaza, Mrs. Clinton spoke more fully than either she or Mr. Obama had done previously, and she seemed to part from the tone set by the Bush administration in calling attention to what she described as the "tragic humanitarian costs" borne by Palestinians as well as Israelis.

Mrs. Clinton said she was "deeply sympathetic" to Israel's right to defend itself against rocket attacks by Hamas militants from Gaza, a stance that has been central to the Bush administration's message.

CLINTON PLEDGES TOUGH DIPLOMACY AND A FAST START

But Mrs. Clinton also said that the price being paid by Palestinian civilians as well as Israelis "must only increase our determination to seek a just and lasting peace agreement" that included a Palestinian state. Her emphasis on the civilian costs of the violence in Gaza suggested that the incoming administration might be more inclined than President Bush has been to urge restraint on the Israelis.

The top Republican on the panel, Senator Richard G. Lugar of Indiana, was among those who expressed disappointment over Mrs. Clinton's refusal to accept further restrictions on her husband's fund-raising. But he told Mrs. Clinton that he still intended to vote in favor of her confirmation. "Your qualifications are remarkable," he said.

Other senators tried with limited success to plumb how the next administration would conduct foreign policy differently from the current one.

On issues as varied as Iraq reconstruction, arms control and nuclear nonproliferation, Mrs. Clinton described a fortified State Department that would be an equal partner to the Pentagon. She noted that Robert M. Gates, who is staying on as defense secretary, has also urged that the State Department be given additional resources and that diplomats play a more active role.

Although Mrs. Clinton ranged widely in five hours of testimony, speaking in detail on topics that included the coming negotiations in Copenhagen on climate change, she acknowledged that the eruption of violence in Gaza was likely to dominate her first days as secretary of state. She reiterated her opposition to direct negotiations with Hamas unless it renounces violence and recognizes Israel.

Still, Mrs. Clinton said that "real security for Israel, normal and positive relations with its neighbors," as well as genuine security for Palestinians, must continue to be America's ideal.

"As intractable as the Middle East's problems may seem -- and many presidents, including my husband, have spent years trying to help work out a solution -- we cannot give up on peace," she said.

Likewise, Mrs. Clinton predicted a grinding process of diplomacy with North Korea, saying the United States would continue to press the government in Pyongyang on its nuclear program through multiparty talks with China, Japan, Russia and South Korea.

Mr. Clinton did not attend the hearing, but he cast a shadow over it. His foundation, which includes several initiatives to improve health and living standards around the world, has accepted large contributions from foreign governments. Donations have included multimillion-dollar gifts from Saudi Arabia, Australia, Brunei, the Dominican Republic, Kuwait, Norway, Oman, Qatar and Taiwan.

"This was bound to be a dilemma from the moment the president-elect asked you to be secretary of state," Mr. Lugar said.

In the day's only tough questioning, Senator David Vitter, Republican of Louisiana, challenged Mrs. Clinton to pledge that her husband's foundation would report its donations on a quarterly basis. The memorandum of understanding between Mr. Clinton and the Obama team stipulates annual disclosure.

"I really do think this poses a lot of real and perceived conflict issues," Mr. Vitter said.

Mrs. Clinton deflected the questions, saying, "This is an agreement that has been worked out between all the parties." At one point, the committee's chairman, Senator John Kerry, intervened to dispute Mr. Vitter's claim that the Clinton Global Initiative, which is a venture of the foundation, does not disclose its donors.

Under questioning, Mrs. Clinton defended her husband's acceptance of donations from foreign governments, but pledged to keep a close eye on the issue. "I hasten to add," she said, "my career in public service is hardly free of controversy."

CLINTON PLEDGES TOUGH DIPLOMACY AND A FAST START

The generally polite tone of the hearing was set at the start by Mr. Kerry, the Massachusetts Democrat, who is the new chairman of the panel, but who had hoped to be picked as secretary of state himself. He said that Mrs. Clinton's "presence overseas will send a strong signal that America is back."

Mrs. Clinton's daughter, Chelsea, sat in the row behind her.

In addressing other issues, Mrs. Clinton noted that Mr. Obama favored more engagement with Iran but offered no details.

She was more specific about American policy in the Darfur region of Sudan, saying that Mr. Obama might impose no-flight zones or other sanctions to rein in the actions of pro-government militia forces.

Mrs. Clinton said little about the next administration's approaches to Iraq and Afghanistan. But transition officials said that in addition to keeping Mr. Gates as defense secretary, Mr. Obama would be keeping another holdover from the Bush administration on his national security team -- Lt. Gen. Douglas E. Lute, who will keep his job coordinating Iraq and Afghanistan policy out of the National Security Council.

In addition to her answers on foreign policy, Mrs. Clinton made it clear that the State Department would have a higher profile on economic issues, which, she noted, had implications for relations with Russia. She also laid out an ambitious agenda for working on women's health.

"Of particular concern to me," she said, "is the plight of women and girls, who comprise the majority of the world's unhealthy, unschooled, unfed and unpaid."

Mrs. Clinton noted that Mr. Obama's mother, Ann Dunham, had worked on microfinance in Indonesia and that she had been scheduled to attend a microfinance forum at the women's conference in Beijing in 1995, in which Mrs. Clinton took part. Ms. Dunham, she said, was too ill to travel.

"We will be honored to carry on Ann Dunham's work in the months and years ahead," Mrs. Clinton said.

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

PHOTOS: Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton said she would "provide forward- looking, sustained diplomacy in every part of the world." (PHOTOGRAPH BY DOUG MILLS/THE NEW YORK TIMES) (A1)

PHOTO (PHOTOGRAPH BY BRENDAN SMIALOWSKI FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES) (A14)

Load-Date: June 25, 2011

Puzzled by Dev's mystical powers

Irish Independent

January 14, 2009 Wednesday

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Independent.ie 

Section: LETTERS

Length: 1313 words

Body

The caption on the photograph of the meeting of the first Dail (Irish Independent, January 13) states that Eamon de Valera was in the chair.

Most people would accept that the Chief had a long distinguished political career. However, he appears to have been a more remarkable person than we have ever realised.

I know the wily old fox was a political genius who saw most of his opponents off the premises. However, I never knew that his political prowess extended to the supernatural.

Apparently, he had the gift of bilocation.

For while he was "chairing" the first meeting of the Dail in Dublin, at the same time he was "fe glas ag Gallaibh" (jailed by the foreigner) in England.

Indeed, was the great Michael Collins not in England at the time trying to spring his chief from prison?

I have always been sceptical when Padre Pio fans claim the great man had the gift of bi-location. However, now that Dev appears to have been equally endowed I must confess that I am no longer so sure.

Only option is for UN to take over

Regarding the Palestine/Israel conflict I would like to share with you a short story as to my own personal involvement.

In 2000, I was just your average typical Irish male in his 20s. I had left my initial career in science and had moved to Galway to figure out my life.

I had absolutely no interest in the world of politics. I had, of course, seen 'Schindler's List' and like most decent people, wished I had been born in time to help the Jews of Europe in their darkest hour.

After the start of the Intifada or War of Independence I noticed something very strange occurring in the news I was watching.

Puzzled by Dev's mystical powers

We had access to a variety of news channels. I became increasingly anxious when I noticed that any Israeli death was reported prominently on all news channels, often with background information on the victims' lives. But this never happened for the Palestinians, except on Euronews.

One weekend, when over 50 Palestinian men, women and children were murdered, I realised then that there was something very wrong.

I joined the Ireland Palestine Solidarity Campaign and, with a few good people, we set up the Galway branch.

We visited the occupied territories, and did our best to inform the people of what was really going on in the Holy Land.

Following that, I went into teaching -- a profession I love dearly -- and I stayed out of the conflict, until now.

I have been so distressed by the slaughter in "Concentration Camp Gaza" and by the coverage in the media that I felt compelled to put pen to paper. I know journalists have to report on both sides of a conflict but the proper context must be set.

Al Jazeera English has reported accurately, giving the correct reason for the end of the ceasefire -- Israeli attacks, coupled with the complete siege that Gaza had endured for months on end.

They report the views of both sides, but more importantly each day they give a breakdown of the casualties -- Israeli deaths, soldiers and civilians, and Palestinian deaths, in particular the numbers of women, children, journalists and medical staff.

Close to half the population in Israel proper are Palestinian, not to mention the large populations of the West Bank and Gaza. Within a generation or so, they will outnumber the Jewish population.

In my opinion, the only true hope for peace is a Holy Land where no religion claims supremacy, where Christians, Muslims and Jews live side by side, as equals, with Jerusalem as a city under UN control, owned by none and shared by all. The alternative is too terrible to contemplate.

Israel is right to defend its own

I find myself in complete agreement with Kevin Myers' analysis of the current violence in Gaza.

Although I'm saddened by the huge loss of life amongst the Palestinian civilian population, Israel had no other choice but to attack Hamas in order to protect its own population.

Quite clearly, Hamas has located its rocket-firing facilities in civilian areas (just like Hizbollah in Beirut in 2006) in the hope that Israel would not respond to its repeated attacks.

No responsible government, charged with protecting its people, could fail to respond to such repeated and sustained attacks.

Since the foundation of the state of Israel, the Arabs have repeatedly chosen conflict over people; Hussein's decision to go to war with Israel in 1967, when he might have remained neutral, being one example -- a decision that cost him East Jerusalem and the West Bank.

There are others.

Israel is defending its very existence and its critics do not seem to acknowledge that it has the right to do so.

The Church was far from ignorant

Puzzled by Dev's mystical powers

Ralph Riegel, in his report on child abuse (Irish Independent, January 12) referred to a claim by an unidentified Catholic Church official that child abuse received little attention because of the lack of appreciation of how common the practice was and of the serious damage it caused.

This is an utterly dishonest proposition.

No other Irish institution had such long experience of suppressing information about the fact that over the decades, many priests, albeit a small minority, were sexually abusing children.

The Church even moved offenders from parish to parish in order to protect its own reputation and thereby facilitated further criminal acts of sexual abuse. This mirrored the behaviour of the Catholic Church in the United States which suggests that this was a considered and deliberate response by the Catholic Church.

The Church's own very peculiar attitude to sexual morality makes a nonsense of the suggestion that it was unaware of how evil and damaging this type of sexual behaviour was.

For decades, girls who engaged in normal sexual behaviour, and thus transgressed the Church's rigid rules relating to sex, were incarcerated in institutions like the Magdalene laundries.

How then can we take seriously claims of ignorance about the rape and sexual abuse of children by adults?

Knowledge of what was happening went to the very highest levels of the Church and we have to assume that the policy of containment was approved of at a high level within the Vatican.

If Bishop Magee had been preaching that priests should be allowed to marry, he would have been recalled to Rome and silenced. Instead, in the tradition of Pontius Pilate, the Vatican seeks to wash its hands of the affair.

As Shane Dunphy says in the same edition of the paper: "By remaining tightlipped, each and every cleric is complicit in what happened".

No film ending to life in the slums

It is great to see a film set in India winning four Golden Globes and being tipped for an Oscar nomination.

'Slumdog Millionaire' doesn't shy away from the dangers of growing up in the slums. Violence, gangs and sexual abuse are all living realities for the hundreds of thousands of children living on the streets of India.

Sadly, though, there are fewer Bollywood endings in real life.

I work in Chennai, the fourth largest city in India, helping to rehabilitate street children for the leading international development agency, World Vision.

More than 100,000 children, of all ages, wander the streets of Chennai.

They turn up at the main railway station every day, driven by extreme poverty and domestic violence to the 'shining lights' of the big city. That's where we go initially, trying to find runaway children before they are swept up into crime and exploitation.

Without access to basic human rights, like safe water, sanitation and healthcare, they are susceptible to all sorts of infections and diseases. Most also suffer psychological trauma or drug addiction.

There is no quick gameshow solution for them; but, with public help, agencies like World Vision can make a difference.

As well as striving to meet basic needs like shelter, food and protection, we are working to ensure these children grow up knowing they have the same human rights as their favourite film stars.

Puzzled by Dev's mystical powers

Load-Date: January 14, 2009

End of Document

WFP, Trade Ministry partner to 'Get Food to Gaza'

Daily News Egypt

January 11, 2009 Sunday

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Length: 1305 words

Body

CAIRO: As Israel and ***Hamas*** remained locked in a 16-day-old Gaza war on Sunday " ignoring international calls for a ceasefire " the World Food Program (WFP) launched Operation Lifeline Gaza, a three-month initiative to respond to growing hunger needs in the war-torn city.

"This is a global appeal; and as Gandhi once said: To a hungry man, a piece of bread is a face of God. And right now, there's no more vulnerable moment to men, ***women***, families, and individuals in Gaza than not having food,- Josette Sheeran, executive director of the WFP, told a press conference in Cairo on Saturday.

She announced that the WFP would begin Sunday Operation Lifeline Gaza, a global appeal to ramp up the distribution of food to people caught in the conflict in the occupied Palestinian territory. The three-month operation aims to secure some 6,402 tons of foodstuffs to citizens of Gaza at an estimated budget of \$20 million.

Operation Lifeline Gaza, also referred to as "Get Food to Gaza,- aims to provide an estimated 1,340 tons of cereals such as rice and wheat flour, 1,150 tons of beans or tuna for the needed protein component, 1,340 tons of oil, 968 tons of sugar, and 164 tons of salt during the upcoming three months " to be delivered into Gaza via the Kerem Shalom crossing near Al-Arish.

According to the ministry, as part of the immediate response to the crisis, Egyptian manufacturers producing fortified date biscuits and bars have agreed to increase their production starting Sunday.

"We have enough in the warehouses to meet the needs for at least a couple of weeks so we need more contributions to be able to handle this three-month operation, - Sheeran said, adding that contributions can be made to the WFP, Egyptian Red Crescent, and the UN Relief and Work Agency (UNRWA).

During her visit to Cairo, Sheeran met with First Lady Suzanne Mubarak, the head of the Egyptian Red Crescent, and Egypt's Trade Minister Rachid Mohamed Rachid. The Egyptian government, which gathered a large number of Egyptian companies in Cairo at the launch of the new initiative, pledged to facilitate Operation Lifeline Gaza by offering assistance to companies that can provide food to WFP.

WFP, Trade Ministry partner to 'Get Food to Gaza'

"As of Sunday, the WFP in cooperation with the Egyptian Red Crescent will augment food assistance given to people in Gaza by increasing quantity of foodstuffs as well as developing means of food distribution in light of the Israeli offensive that crippled means of life in Gaza,- Rachid said.

He explained that the WFP held two meetings with the ministry, a number of Egyptian food producers and the Egyptian Chamber of Food Industries to discuss means of taking part in the initiative.

"Egyptian food producers will take part by providing foodstuffs that are difficult to prepare in absence of electricity, fuel, and sometimes even houses. They will also provide food commodities for children,- the minister said.

Some companies offered to provide these commodities at no charge and others will provide them at zero profit margins, he added.

"Egyptian food manufacturing factories will at once begin increasing deliveries of these products as well as intensify their production capacity because some of these products are not [entirely] available on shelves."

The WFP said Friday it was becoming increasingly difficult to find food in Gaza, with little available in markets, bakeries running out of wheat flour, flour mills running out of grain and many people too frightened to leave their homes.

"The situation in Gaza is dire with at least 80 percent of the people needing urgent food assistance,- Sheeran said Friday during a visit to Rafah, on the Egyptian border with Gaza, to assess the crisis.

By press time on Sunday, death toll in Gaza in the two-week Israeli offensive had reached 885, more than a third of them children, and thousands of injuries, the Hamas-run Health Ministry said.

Some 365,000 people need food aid in Gaza, equivalent to nearly two-thirds of the population not including refugees, said WFP officials.

"We are in the business of feeding hungry people in difficult situations " in earthquake zones, droughts, or after tsunamis " but Gaza presents one of the toughest challenges we have faced because access to the hungry is so limited, - Sheeran stated

"We are proposing an immediate, innovative solution to hunger in an unusually challenging situation, where many people are suffering from a complete breakdown in access to food and clean water,- she added.

"Even in the limited windows of opportunity when we can distribute food we have to remember that many people lack the means to cook and prepare meals for their families."

She reiterated Saturday her appeal to the international community by saying, "We feel the needs are getting more and more severe every day, and basically the entire population in Gaza is suffering from food insecurity."

She explained that new and innovative strategies are needed to ensure that women and children in Gaza are getting not only enough food but also food that can be consumed in the absence of electricity, water and cooking oil.

"We need highly innovative food items that are very nutritious. This date bar can be used in disasters even though it was not originally designed for that purpose. If a child has one of this [date bar], s/he will get essential amount of vitamins and minerals, - she told reporters in Cairo. "And these are locally manufactured here."

"We need to send specific kinds of food to Gaza because if we send regular food it might not be useful to those stranded in the streets with no access to refrigerators, storage, or heating stoves,- Rachid clarified. "We need to send in food that doesn't require cooking or storage and is also highly nutritious with vitamins and minerals.

"The problem is not only with food transportation but also with quality of food that is needed in war and disaster zones, and the [WFP] has a long experience in dealing with this kind of situation both inside and outside Gaza."

WFP, Trade Ministry partner to 'Get Food to Gaza'

The WFP said it had distributed food to more than 75,000 people during pauses in fighting in the past two weeks, taking food to hospitals and flour to the few bakeries still operating. The WFP said its ability to deliver food aid was hampered by the dangerous conditions. It has 130 trucks carrying about 4,000 tons of food ready to be delivered into Gaza via the Kerem Shalom crossing, but it had been too dangerous to deliver most of it.

Sheeran has sent senior WFP officials to Jerusalem to urge the Israeli authorities to free up access for aid, the WFP said in a statement issued by its Rome headquarters.

While WFP has food stocks sufficient to feed almost 360,000 people for the next three weeks, the heavy fighting has limited the possibility of wide-scale distributions. Many truck drivers and fork lift truck operators have been unwilling to work due to the insecurity and the civilian population is often too frightened to go to food distribution points, the statement reads.

"It's critical that WFP and all humanitarian workers have free and unfettered access to the people of Gaza at this difficult time, - Sheeran said, adding that food supplies were waiting in warehouses to be supplied to the hungry in Gaza.

"With families too afraid to come to these warehouses, that's the distribution [effort] needed to make sure they receive nutrients they need,- she pointed out. "We have been trying to get food more evenly distributed throughout Gaza but some areas are more difficult to reach than others."

Besides distributing food to families, the WFP is also supplying hospitals with food needed for doctors and nurses who are unable to leave their hospitals. The WFP has so far given out 6,000 meals to hospitals.

The WFP said it has raised its Gaza appeal budget to \$141 million due to higher logistical costs and the rising price of foodstuffs.

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Load-Date: January 20, 2009

A Happy New Year?

The Nation (AsiaNet)

January 10, 2009 Saturday

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Length: 1259 words

Byline: Hamid Maker

Body

Tell that to the Marines or to the people of Gaza and see if they agree. While most of the world was celebrating the New Year, the men, women and children of Gaza were crouching under their beds in the rubble of their homes in fear or busy mourning and burying their dead.

One is amazed at the savagery of the attacks and the callous behavior of the non-state Israeli leaders, who seem to lack all sense and sensitivity. How can they unleash this carnage and the slaughter of men, women and children? How can our insensitive world leaders watch this slaughter, remain silent and allow the Israelis to bomb schools and hospitals, and deny them even medical aid?

And while Gaza was being sadistically and brutally destroyed, the 'non state' leaders of the Super Powers were toasting in the NY and bickering over the wordings of the resolution condemning Israel's aggression, with the US, that preaches the world about democracy, respecting human rights, etc., repeatedly vetoing resolutions condemning the Israeli aggression.

Over 700 innocent citizens have died and thousands injured since the carnage began. And the reason for this savage massacre, to protect the Israeli families who are living on Palestinian land, illegally occupied by them. And the tragedy is that it is with the approval of the American President and the leaders of the Muslim world, who have endorsed the US veto with their deafening silence.

This is what we witnessed in Afghanistan and Iraq and now we are watching the same tragedy unfold in Palestine. Are Iran and Pakistan next? The west keeps brandishing Islam as a religion that preaches violence, yet refuses to condemn the barbaric behavior of the Israelis, who are even refusing to allow foreign reporters, aid workers and volunteers to go into Gaza, because they do not want the world to see the brutal suffering of the people.

Hamas is also guilty for giving the Israelis an excuse to unleash its 'dogs of war' on its people, by firing missiles on them and using citizens as 'human shields'. No doubt, a justification is there, but knowing Israeli's fanatical behavior of 'a body for a tooth' and a neighborhood for an eye' policy, Hamas should have realized the consequences and should not have exposed their people to this terrible tragedy.

The citizens of the world have at least reacted strongly, with protest rallies, but as always, with little effect. The brutal killings and the carnage continue, with no sign of stopping and if this is what the New Year has in store for us, then even God will not be able to help us.

A Happy New Year?

Now let us take a look at what the NY has in store for us in Pakistan. Well, there is some good news and some bad news. First the bad news. Surprise, surprise, Pakistan has finally admitted that Ajmal Kasab, the sole survivor of the Mumbai terrorist attack is a 'non-state' Pakistani.

In other words, we are trying to tell the world that we have no clue of how many of the 170 million citizens living in Pakistan, are state or non-state Pakistanis. Not bad for a nuclear power. So where do we go from here? How many more options do we have, to continue this never-ending denial game?

The Indian government has stated that the Mumbai attack was very professionally managed and could not have been carried out by so-called non-state actors. Those involved were skilled and experienced professionals, who could not have operated without being properly coached and trained. And if they were 'non-state actors', then they certainly deserve an Oscar. The operation was no sight seeing tour of Mumbai, but a very ambitious and audacious plan and carried out and executed with military precision. Therefore, to still maintain that they were non-state actors will no longer carry any credibility.

However, there is one question that nobody has asked, who were the other nine dead terrorists and where did they come from? State or non-state, they must have come from somewhere. And how is it that the name and picture of the sole survivor has been splashed all over the world and his family conveniently located, but not a single picture or name of any of the other terrorists has been mentioned?

And the government's response so far has been, the unceremoniously sacking of Maj. Gen. (Retd) M.A. Durrani, our National Security Advisor, for speaking the truth and Ms. Sherry Rehman's demand that Pakistani investigators should be allowed to visit the 'crime scene', almost 40 days after the tragedy.

There are now speculations that next to go would be our very vocal and active Rehman Malik, PM's Adviser on Interior Affairs, who is also very fond of shooting from the hip. How many more will be made the sacrificial lambs, one time will tell?

The heat is on and it is time for the government to get real, stop stalling and end 'pass the pillow game'. We will not be able to 'buy' American protection by pinning medals on their chest. It is time to take firm and immediate action against those responsible for the Mumbai attack and punish them. If the government fails to do so, then it should read the writing on the wall, before it is reduced to rubble.

And adding insult to injury, our President has proudly presented to Richard Boucher, Assistant Secretary for the US, Pakistan's prestigious Hilal-e-Quaid-e-Azam, forgetting that American drones are still flying unhindered, over our NWFP hills and bombing where and when they please, killing innocent citizens in the process. But such is the mind set of our non-state leaders and their non-state advisors. No doubt, we can not bite the hand that has been feeding us for the last five decades, but to present Mr. Boucher such an award is an insult to all those who have received them over the years.

Must we stoop so low to please Uncle Sam? Where is our national pride? As my friend, NS has suggested, it would be a great gesture if the previous recipients of the award were to return them, with a simple note, 'Thank you, but no thank you'. But then, how many have the moral courage to do so?

Now to the good news. First, for once, there were no ugly incidents during Ashura and the LEA and the City Government must be congratulated for this. The other good news is that our beloved President, in his infinite wisdom, has blissfully announced that there will be no more load shedding. The Lord be praised, the crisis is over, factories will hum to their full capacity, there will be no job losses, exports will increase, dollars will pour in and the City of lights will be restored to its past glory. However, turning on the lights of our city will not be that easy or just by throwing a switch.

According to our electrical engineers and experts, the country faces a shortfall of over 1500 MWs, a totally collapsed distribution system and over 40% line losses and power theft. All these require massive investments and at least three years to overcome. So hold on to your generators and UPS systems, as there might be a temporary lull in the load shedding, but you will still need them.

A Happy New Year?

And before we start celebrating, another word of caution. Cyril Almeida, in her article, In the year 2 AZ, (Dawn, 2nd Jan 09), she writes, 'With conventional wisdom, off the record or on the record, between the lines or straight shooting, political foes and friends alike agree that the Zardari system won't last'.

Others have also voiced similar concern, but more of that in the next article. So dear citizens, put away the champagne glasses and let's see what surprises the coming months will bring us.

E-mail:

trust@super.net.pk**Load-Date:** January 14, 2009

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The Week in Review

CongressNow

January 9, 2009 Friday

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Section: Agenda

Length: 1325 words

Byline: Michael Lepage and Amanda Temple, CongressNow Staff

Body

Members of Congress returned to Washington, D.C., this week to convene the 111th Congress and proceeded with a mix of organizational, ceremonial and substantive business.

The House formally convened for the 111th Congress on Tuesday. By the end of the week, the House had approved a new internal rules package and passed several bills, including two contested measures aimed at combating discrimination in employment.

The House's first official act was the election of Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) as Speaker, a vote that is virtually the definition of a Member's party affiliation. As expected, 255 Democrats voted for Pelosi, and all 174 Republicans voted for House Minority Leader John Boehner (R-Ohio). After the vote, the two leaders met at the Speaker's rostrum, where Boehner ceremonially presented the Speaker's gavel to Pelosi.

Boehner and Pelosi spoke at the ceremony, and both pledged to work in a bipartisan fashion to address the current economic problems.

"When things are at their worst for the American people, I think we owe them our best," Boehner said. "And this Congress must rise to the occasion."

"Let us all pledge to the American people that we will look forward, not backward," Pelosi said. "We will join hands, not point fingers. We will rise to the challenge, recognizing that our love of country is stronger than any issue which may divide us."

The bipartisan spirit vanished later that day when the House considered its internal rules package (H.Res. 5), which passed by a near party-line vote, 242-181.

The package, which was written by House Democratic leaders, contained several rules changes that were strongly opposed by House Republicans. Among other provisions, it eliminated the three-term limit for full committee chairmen. That provision was added to House rules in 1995 by then-Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.) as a way to reduce the power of committee chairmen, who many believed had grown too powerful under the previous Democratic majority.

The resolution also sharply limited the ability of the Republican minority to offer procedural motions, known as motions to recommit, that are used to amend or slow consideration of legislation on the House floor. The new provision bars motions to recommit that include language preventing same-day consideration of bills. These

The Week in Review

motions were used by House Republicans to stall House passage of several bills in the previous Congress, including one to overhaul the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act.

Other changes in the rules package include strengthened disclosure requirements for outgoing Members who are negotiating private-sector employment contracts, changes to revenue-neutral "pay-as-you-go" rules and the repeal of a rule prohibiting the practice of holding open of electronic votes for the sole purpose of changing Member votes.

House Republicans strongly opposed the rules package, arguing that the repeal of committee chairmanship term limits and the restrictions on motions to recommit were contrary to President-elect Barack Obama's pledge to foster openness and bipartisanship in Washington.

Democrats said the provisions would not hinder minority rights and would allow the House to operate more efficiently.

The rules resolution also provided for the consideration of two bills related to gender pay discrimination. The Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act (H.R. 11) and the Paycheck Fairness Act (H.R. 12) were considered in the House this afternoon and passed by votes of 247-171 and 256-163, respectively. After the votes, both bills were folded into a single bill (H.R. 11) and sent to the Senate.

The Ledbetter bill, sponsored by House Education and Labor Chairman George Miller (D-Calif.), would overturn a recent Supreme Court decision and extend the time frame for employees to file pay discrimination lawsuits.

The Paycheck Fairness Act, sponsored by Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-Conn.), would remove caps on compensatory damages for wage discrimination and allow for punitive damages.

Both bills passed the House last year but were blocked by Republicans in the Senate.

The bills' supporters, predominantly Democrats, called the legislation necessary to correct ongoing pay discrimination in the workplace. They cited studies showing that some women earn 20 percent less than men performing similar jobs.

Republican opponents of the bills said they would do little to alleviate discrimination and burden businesses with unnecessary restrictions. They argued that the bills were a payoff to trial lawyers, who traditionally support Democrats.

The combined bill now goes to the Senate, where its chances of passage are high, despite strong opposition from business groups. Obama has promised to sign the bill after he takes office.

Also this week, the House passed two bills (H.R. 35 and H.R. 36) relating to the classification of presidential records and the disclosure of donors to presidential libraries. The House also passed a resolution (H.Res. 34) supporting Israel in its war against Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

Meanwhile, in the Senate, the expanded Democratic majority devoted most of the week to organizational responsibilities and settling disputes over Minnesota and Illinois Senate seats.

Outgoing Vice President Dick Cheney on Tuesday swore in newly elected and re-elected Senators. Despite the twin electoral controversies, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) called on both parties to work together.

"When we fail to reach for common ground, when we are unable - in the words of President-elect Obama - to disagree without being disagreeable, we diminish our ability to accomplish real change," Reid said Tuesday.

Democrats return to the majority with 57 Senate seats, including those of two independents, while Republicans hold 41 seats. The Senate did not finalize the contested seats in Illinois and Minnesota.

Off the floor, Democrats initially refused to seat former Illinois Attorney General Roland Burris, who was appointed by embattled Democratic Gov. Rod Blagojevich to fill the Senate seat vacated by Obama.

The Week in Review

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After meeting with Burris on Wednesday, Reid and Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) backed away from their initial refusal, potentially opening the door to Burris joining the Senate.

The hotly contested race between former Sen. Norm Coleman (R-Minn.) and Democrat Al Franken also has yet to be settled. Coleman's term expired with the end of the 110th Congress.

The Minnesota state canvassing board on Monday certified Franken the winner with a 225-vote lead. Senate Republicans vowed to block any attempt to seat Franken in the Senate until after Coleman's legal objections have been resolved.

The Senate did conduct some legislative business this week, while also setting up a rare Sunday session on the floor.

Reid sought passage of the Omnibus Public Lands Management Act (S. 22). Sen. Tom Coburn (R-Okla.) has opposed the package of bills, arguing that they should not be a priority given the current economic condition of the country. Reid is expected to file cloture on the bill today, setting up a vote for 2 p.m. Sunday.

The lands bill is a collection of more than 150 separate measures that designate certain land components of the National Wilderness Preservation System to authorize programs and activities in the departments of the Interior and Agriculture.

On Thursday, Reid and Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) appeared on the floor together to pass a resolution (S.Res. 10) recognizing the right of Israel to defend itself against attacks launched from Gaza by the group **Hamas**. The resolution was passed by unanimous consent.

Finally, the beginning of the new Senate session marked a milestone for one Senator. Sen. Robert Byrd (D-W.Va.), the longest-serving Senator, celebrated his 50th year in the chamber.

Load-Date: January 15, 2009

The Week in Review

CongressNow

January 9, 2009 Friday

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Section: Agenda

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Load-Date: January 12, 2009

[chatroom](#)

The Gold Coast Bulletin (Australia)

January 6, 2009 Tuesday

B - Main Edition

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Section: Pg. 14

Length: 1140 words

Body

FOUR of your first 5 pages bout paris hilton thats why bully n journos r called trashy u cater 4 a small part of this town. - nick

HERE we are sitting on highway outside the watermark hotel waiting for the bloody lights at beach rd. This place is a joke. Coz ya cant be serious.

LIKE Flakey, like Paris is like totally like hot! LOL! - Cee Gee

POOR old aussies - cant play league, cant play union, cant play cricket, cant play soccer, afl dont count. Just as well you've got saucers to drink out of. Pussies! - Pounamu

WHAT a pathetic society we have become where people will wait for hours to watch Paris Hilton shop. Get a life! I'm embarrassed to be a human being. - The real deal

WHENS that road train full of ugly women leavin 4 mt isa? Things arent gettin any better in palm bch im here t tell u. - Two

coat plasterer

ALL this talk about drink driving and road deaths, wot about the cop who was nearly 7 times over the limit up near hope island road? How hypocritical are the cops. - Reg

FOXTEL Telstra not a winning team iq2 sux. Did any1 test the tuners b4 launching. No TV for 3 weeks who cares not that team! - JS

WOULD the person who picked up the Vodafone mobile in Molendinar/Ashmore on Friday Jan 2, pls reply 2 num sent 4 reward on return. - Teddybear

RON Barassi, u r a hero 4 going 2 the aid of a woman being hurt on NYE. Pity males of yngr gen don't do same. U r a great role model. Boys watch n learn. - Mum

IF it is deemed to be dangerous to our health to refill a plastic water bottle how safe is the water we drink out of these bottles in the first place and how can they justify \$3 for a bottle of water. - confused and concerned

chatroom

HOW tacky is The Bulletin? A front page devoted to a visiting young American woman whose main claim to fame appears to be a grandfather who made a fortune from hotels. So what. Real life is actually happening out there. So let's have it in the local paper. - Cate

NATHAN the fact is what you are saying did not happen the robber could have tripped or anything could have eventuated but it didnt, coulda shoulda woulda mighta, good on the bloke i would have done the same. - sv6

FLAKEY not me mate biggest waste of space i have ever seen. - lenny

WARNING or threat. Rambo how will you catch these red light bandits? Fly? Try leaving the titanic bar once in a while if its all too much. - Jennifer

CANT believe the new drive thru liquor laws, even though i had id my older 30yr old brother, who didnt want anything, didnt. I was told the law is everyone in the car must have id, i said ill drop him home and come back, he protested saying he wouldnt serve me because my friends at home dont have i.d.! I asked what about parents with kids in the back? His response was that this bizarre new law only applied to passengers who look 18 but had no id, so mums, drop your teenage kids outside the pub, if u want a bottle of wine. - cedric

CRAIG. What a lot of hogwash that Israel will try & dominate other nations. Israel (5.3 million) is just trying to survive while the Arabs (26 million) are determined to eradicate Israel. The fighting will stop when Hamas stops firing their rockets into Israel. - John Oxenford

NATHAN are you serious? Imagine if the gun was pointed at you and he stopped the gunman, then you wouldn't make such a

comment. - Zac

IT must be Pick on Paris week. Some of that Tedder Ave mutton trying to look like lamb wouldn't even make it to the back

page. - Bernie

HEY Nathan of Broadbeach how dare you criticise the old bloke who tackled an armed robber i tell you he's a hero and a legend pal and he will get a bravery award for this, you young blokes wouldn't have the courage to do that. - Joe

TO nathan of broadbeach regarding man tackling robber i am glad your not a mate of mine I am sure ya not an aussie. - Bosso

WHO wrote that rubbish about paris hilton in sat bully do you honestly believe she would be here if she didnt get paid to come here gc treat her like a super star but she is a super twit. - bp

NATHAN, evil prevails when good men do nuthin.

TO the journalists who keep bitching about hilton and what she is up to. Who cares leave it alone. Find some better news.

THE Strip deserved 2 be canned, terrible. Maybe we will get a series that actually has Gold Coast people in it. After all, true local productions have local talent, no budget and no help yet win US film festivals, get shown in Cannes and dont keep showcasing the same old heads that we are told r talented. Start backing our own, dont fund blow ins. - Chris

PARIS Hilton the world's biggest waste of dna is in town. Who cares! - gb miami

I DROVE 450km down south on Pacific Hwy and back 2 Gold Coast ova xmas holiday break 2 c only 1 police vehicle. I could have booked 10 other road users in that time. No wonder the road toll has doubled. - Treeman

chatroom

CAN anyone explain what has happened to the parkwood international golf course from being a great course to an overgrown goat track. - keen local golfer

GOLD coast you are doing it again. here we have an international celebrity who loves gold coast, well groomed, well mannered, stunning, and visited the children's hospital in her time. Paris hilton you go girl. - Lisa

WHY shud detainees from Guantanamo Bay be able to settle here wen we cant/dont even look afta own ppl. They shud be sent back to their own countries. Kruddy Rudd's power trip has gotten way out of control already. - Pac Pi

HOW come my son's ex can pump a cocktail of drugs in2 my 12 y.o. grandson (4 anxiety) without any by-your-leave and yet he can not be smacked. He's a normal 12 y.o boy.

HOW sick it is that paris hilton uses sick kids as a PR exercise. IF she had just 1 caring bone in her body + visited these poor little blokes without the fuss plus cameras, I may change my opinion of her, which is yuk, yuk + yuk. - Sandy, The Sanctuary

SEEING young kids oohing, aahing and saying I luv U 2 that parasitic leech paris hilton. How friggin sick is that! - Deni Danielson, Pac Pines

TELL me Y it is in this country that govts refuse to fix a problem.This is bull - ppl know the rules, its just that they choose to ignore them. - Maudie

HEY Nathan. Think u might be a bit hard on the poor fellow who at a moments notice reacted in a way that ended in the scumbag would be bankrobber being caught and dealt with. He had the chance and obviously knew what he was doing! I say good on him, good work and be proud! Do u realise what terror these lowlives can cause to banktellers and customers like you and me! I am glad this brave guy was there at the time and not you! - Chez of Currumbin

AMERICA only assisted us in ww2 to stop japan using us as a staging station to get to them. They only got involved because they were attacked, i.e, pearl harbour. America is all about domination, financial and otherwise. Israel is about survival. Hamas is a terrorist group that won an election. Enough said. - Kaz

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Body

International

IRAN CRACKS DOWN ON REFORMERS

As Iran's presidential election heats up, hard-liners are cracking down on activists who have supported reformist candidates in the past. PAGE A6

IRANIAN PILGRIMS KILLED IN BAGHDAD

At least 40 people were killed and 72 wounded in Baghdad, many of them Iranian pilgrims, in a suicide bombing at the doorstep of one of Iraq's holiest Shiite shrines, government and hospital officials said. The attacker appeared to be targeting a procession of Iranian pilgrims visiting the shrine. PAGE A6

PATIENTS SUFFER UNDER OLD LAWS

In Bulgaria, as in many former Communist countries in Europe, people with mental disabilities are stripped of rights and sequestered without recourse under rules left over from the Communist era. The laws give control of the patients to guardians, often regardless of the severity of the patient's disability, according to human rights groups. And the laws in Bulgaria and the region often fail to ensure any oversight of the guardians. Memo from Pravda PAGE A7

RUSSIA RAISES GAS PRICE FOR UKRAINE

Gazprom, the Russian gas monopoly, raised the price it wants Ukraine to pay for fuel again, escalating a politically tinged dispute that led to a complete halt in supplies to Ukraine and disruptions to four other Eastern European countries. The dispute has caught Ukraine's economy, already shaken by the global financial crisis, at a bad time PAGE A7

Conflict in Gaza

WITH WORDS ONLY, HEZBOLLAH ASSAILS ISRAEL

The leader of Hezbollah has been delivering furious speeches in Beirut, Lebanon, against Israel for its assault on Gaza and against Arab countries for their passivity. But he has not ordered his own powerful militia into action,

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because Hezbollah believes Hamas will emerge triumphant, and it cannot risk drawing Lebanon into a conflict. PAGE A9

EUROPE SEEKS CEASE-FIRE

Europe, stepping into the diplomatic shoes left by the departing Bush administration, is sending two missions to the Middle East to try to get a cease-fire in Gaza and is offering more humanitarian aid. PAGE A10

BUSH STAYS BESIDE ISRAEL

As others called urgently for a cease-fire in Gaza, the Bush administration has blamed Hamas for the fighting, maintaining to the end its eight-year record of stalwart support for Israel. A News Analysis. PAGE A10

National

PELOSI MAKES ROOM

For New No. 1 Democrat

In her two years as House speaker, Nancy Pelosi has been the driving force behind the Democratic Party, using her influence to set its course. But in the coming months, her role will change, as she concedes the party's reins to the next president, Barack Obama, whose success could cement her legacy as a pivotal Congressional figure. PAGE A13

THE MALL ARCADE AS RECRUITING TOOL

The Army hopes a \$13 million video arcade in Philadelphia's Franklin Mills mall will become a model for recruitment in urban areas, where the armed services typically have a hard time. The arcade boasts 14,500 square feet of mostly shoot-'em-up games and three full-scale military simulators -- including of an AH-64 Apache Longbow helicopter, an armed Humvee and a Black Hawk helicopter with M4 carbine assault rifles. . PAGE A11

VIRGINIA GOVERNOR TO HEAD PARTY

Gov. Tim Kaine of Virginia, who was once a contender to be President-elect Barack Obama's running mate, has been selected by Mr. Obama to become the next chairman of the Democratic National Committee. PAGE A12

CHALLENGE TO DISCRIMINATION RULING

President-elect Barack Obama and Democrats in Congress plan to write legislation to overturn the Supreme Court's decision in a 2007 case that made it harder for people to challenge discrimination in employment, education, housing and other venues. The legislation would give people more time to file charges by relaxing the statute of limitations in various civil rights laws. PAGE A13

WITNESS'S IDENTITY SHOCKS ACTIVISTS

Brandon Darby, a community organizer from Austin, Tex., surprised fellow activists when he announced in an open letter that he acted as a government informant in the scheduled federal trial against two Texas men arrested during the Republican National Convention in St. Paul. The two men are charged with making and possessing Molotov cocktails. PAGE A14

Obituaries

PAT HINGLE, 84

A versatile character actor of stage and screen, he was used to winning the approval of critics and the delight of the public in a career that spanned five decades. PAGE A17

NICK SCANDONE, 42

A sailing gold medalist at the Beijing Paralympics, he was a former United States Yachtsman of the Year. PAGE A17

Metro

TRADING SAFETY FOR PRIVACY TO END A PREGNANCY AT HOME

In the socially conservative Dominican neighborhoods of Manhattan, many Latinas want to end their pregnancy at home. Experts offer a variety of reasons, like mistrust of doctors and a culture where women solve their own problems. Two new studies found reports of women mixing malted beverages with aspirin, salt or nutmeg; throwing themselves down stairs or having people punch them in the stomach; and drinking teas of avocado leaf, pine wood and oak bark. PAGE A15

BLOOMBERG SHOWS SUPPORT IN ISRAEL

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg went to Israel to show his support for the country and to enhance his standing with Jewish voters back home. The mayor got a taste of the conflict when he was touring a rocket-battered town and had to take cover in a safe room. He emerged unscathed, calm but somber. PAGE A15

Big City: In the Attic, Newspapers From 1930 A16

Sports

THE EAGLES TOPPLE THE VIKINGS, AND GET TO MEET THE GIANTS AGAIN

For the better part of the National Football Conference wild-card game, the Philadelphia Eagles' offense suffered an afternoon of frustration against the Minnesota Vikings. Philadelphia led by 2 points late in the game, but the Vikings seemed one big Adrian Peterson play away from stealing the game. Then, with less than seven minutes to play, Brian Westbrook took a short pass, turned upfield and dashed for a 71-yard touchdown, earning a trip to the second round, where the Eagles will face the New York Giants. PAGE D1

Stoops Seeks His Own Legacy D2

Florida's Sun-Kissed Walk-On D2

N.B.A. PLAYERS STILL FEEL OLYMPICS

As the regular season approaches intermission, the results have been mixed for the 25 N.B.A. stars who played in the Beijing Summer Olympics. Some of them used the games as a springboard into the new season; half the league's top scorers participated in Beijing. But of the 25 Olympians, 17 are scoring fewer points this season than they did a year ago. PAGE D3

An Understudy on Center Stage

The Chargers' LaDainian Tomlinson, hobbled by a groin injury, started San Diego's American Football Conference wild-card game against the Indianapolis Colts, but he couldn't finish it. He stepped out of the spotlight, and his backup, Darren Sproles, stepped into it. PAGE D4

Business

BLU-RAY FORMAT STRUGGLES

With Uncertain Prospects

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At this year's Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, many eyes will be on Blu-ray, which is viewed by many in the industry as the only high-definition heir apparent to the DVD. A growing chorus of skeptics say the window for a high-definition disc format like Blu-ray may be closing fast as a new wave of digital media services will soon begin flowing into living rooms. PAGE B1

CNN'S NEW YEAR'S HANGOVER

Like New Year's Eve partygoers who may have pushed the revelry a bit too far, CNN, chasing a younger audience, may have greeted Jan. 1 with a tinge of regret. The network's live New Year's Eve program included eyebrow-raising performances and cringe-worthy jokes. PAGE B1

MOVIE STUDIOS COUNT BLESSINGS

As companies big and small stagger into January after a dismal 2008 -- if they still exist at all -- Hollywood is quietly celebrating solid if not spectacular box office sales. PAGE B1

Auto Sales Expected to Dip 30% B1

Breakingviews.com

New Year's Resolutions for Obama

The Breakingviews.com gang offers some resolutions that President-elect Barack Obama should make. A few of them are: Raise the federal excise tax on gasoline; offer incentives to exchange clunkers for new, green cars; and take a 10 percent salary cut. PAGE B2

TWEETING WHILE FAMOUS

As celebrities take advantage of Internet tools like Twitter that break down the barrier between stars and the public, they are being forced to weigh the benefits of having intensely loyal fans deeply engaged in their daily lives against the pitfalls of having intensely loyal fans deeply engaged in their daily lives. PAGE B3

Universal Sells Rogue Pictures B3

A TV THAT CAN TALK TO THE INTERNET

LG Electronics, the third-largest television manufacturer in terms of United States sales, is set to announce a line of televisions that can directly receive Internet video in addition to satellite and cable signals. PAGE B4

Investors' View of Future Technology B4

WB'S YOUTH PULL REMAINS

Though the WB ceased to exist as a broadcast network, its brand remains potent among the coveted 18-to-24-year-old demographic. Warner Brothers hopes that brand loyalty and exclusive content will attract those young eyeballs - and advertisers -- to TheWB.com. PAGE B5

Arts

AMID LAYOFFS AND CUTBACKS,

A New Austerity in Publishing

For decades, the New York publishing world promised employees a romantic life of fancy lunches and sparkling parties. If the salaries were not exactly Wall Street caliber, well, they came with a milieu that mixed cultural swagger with pure Manhattan high life. But amid a relentless string of layoffs and pay freezes, book publishers are clamping down on some of the industry's cozy traditions, and the cushy schmooze fest seems to be winding down. PAGE C1

Music Review

Bandleader Accents Cuban Roots

Cuban music is the core of the Cuban saxophonist, clarinetist and composer Paquito D'Rivera's repertory, but he has never before now, with a first-time run of shows at Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola, led a Cuban band in this country. Mr. D'Rivera is a complicated performer: a virtuoso, a scholar and a gold-plated ham in equal parts, Ben Ratliff writes. PAGE C1

REISSUING A TREASURY OF CHOPIN

A remarkable new four-CD set, "Nadia Reisenberg: A Chopin Treasury," has the potential to bring the pianist Nadia Reisenberg's musically sensitive and technically effortless artistry to the attention of a generation of listeners who have heard little about her since her death in 1983. In all these works, her playing is exceptionally beautiful, distinguished by warm tone, impressive clarity, unostentatious virtuosity and unerring musical insight, Anthony Tommasini writes. PAGE C1

Television Review

Spinoffs Plucked From 'The Hills'

In MTV's new series "The City," the person-character of Whitney Port from the "The Hills" moves to New York to work as a publicity assistant. She describes it as "an opportunity of a lifetime," but the job seems to require only that she show up in good shoes. Still, its pleasures are greater than any attempted in "Bromance," which "The City" follows in the broadcast lineup, in which Brody Jenner, also from "The Hills," sets out to find a best friend among a bunch of competing chumps, Ginia Bellafante writes. PAGE C1

A PARADE OF INDIAN HISTORY ON PBS

"The Story of India," a six-hour, three-night PBS mini-series, is the latest television opus from the British pop historian Michael Wood, whose projects have included "Art of the Western World" and "Conquistadors." If you like the idea of watching a National Geographic article brought to life, with the lush photography, fascinating facts, sense of discovery and slight superficiality that implies, you'll love the series, Mike Hall writes. PAGE C5

Books of the Times C4

Editorial

NO MUGS, BUT WHAT ABOUT THOSE FEES?

New pharmaceutical industry guidelines should stop most drug companies from distributing trinkets to doctors. The rules are the industry's latest attempt to restore public confidence that doctors are prescribing medicines in the patient's interest, but the code still has far too many loopholes. PAGE A20

A PITCH FOR MASS TRANSIT

Barack Obama comes to the presidency with a clear appreciation of the urgent problems of climate change and America's growing dependency on foreign oil. One way he can address both is to give mass transit the priority it deserves and the full financial support it needs. PAGE A20

Op-Ed

WILLIAM KRISTOL

Israel -- assuming it succeeds -- is doing the United States a favor by taking on Hamas now. The huge challenge for the Obama administration is going to be Iran. PAGE A21

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PAUL KRUGMAN

Recent economic numbers have been terrifying. So this is our moment of truth. Will we do what's necessary to prevent a second Great Depression? PAGE A21

RESTORE THE SENATE'S TREATY POWER

Presidents are often tempted to circumvent the requirement that treaties be approved by two-thirds of the Senate. In an Op-Ed article, John R. Bolton and John Yoo write that Republicans can help shape a bipartisan foreign policy by insisting that Barack Obama obey the Constitution. PAGE A21

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Body

International

EUROPE INTERVENES IN QUARREL

Between Russia and Ukraine

The European Union has stepped between Ukraine and the Russian natural-gas monopoly, Gazprom, in a scuffle that led Gazprom to halt the flow of gas through Ukraine for Europe. The union secured promises from both countries to allow international and independent monitoring of the flow of natural gas through Ukraine. Page A6

MODERN-DAY 'COMFORT WOMEN

A group of former prostitutes in South Korea is accusing former government leaders and the United States military of complicity in supporting and encouraging prostitution between the South Korean women and American soldiers stationed in Korea. The women, who are seeking compensation and an apology, have compared themselves to the so-called comfort women who were forced into prostitution by the Japanese during World War II. Page A6

PAKISTAN FIRES SECURITY ADVISER

Pakistan's national security adviser confirmed that the surviving gunman from terrorist attacks on Mumbai, India, in November is a Pakistani citizen. Hours after the announcement, the adviser was fired for irresponsible behavior. Page A8

Saltillo Journal Abduction Site Joins

El Meson Principal del Norte, a restaurant, was the scene of the kidnapping of Felix Batista, an American security consultant specializing in abduction cases. He is still missing. The restaurant joins a long list of places in Mexico linked to violence, and it is also a pretty good place for spit-roasted meat. Page A8

ISRAELIS RESOLUTE AS DEATHS RISE

As Israel's soldiers mourned fallen comrades, and the body count climbed among Palestinian civilians, many Israelis reaffirmed their determination to continue the campaign against Hamas. Page A10

ISRAEL TO DISCUSS CEASE-FIRE

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Israel promised to send officials to Egypt to discuss halting the conflict in Gaza. But there have been no immediate diplomatic achievements, and the fighting between Hamas militants and Israeli soldiers did not abate beyond a brief pause. Page A12

Grief and Rage at U.N. School A12

INTERVIEW WITH BRITISH INTELLIGENCE

MI5 is Britain's domestic intelligence agency, and as such, secrets are its business. At the top of that list is its own existence and details thereof. That is, until the agency's director general granted an interview for its centennial, the first interview of its kind. Page A13

Iraqi Shiites Celebrate Ashura A14

National

LABOR LEADERS NOW CALL FOR SINGLE FEDERATION OF UNIONS

The presidents of 12 of the nation's largest labor unions called for reuniting the American labor movement, which split three and a half years ago when seven unions walked out of the A.F.L.-C.I.O. PAGE A16

Settlement in Arabic T-Shirt Case A16

'John Doe' Letters Sent to Survivors A17

U.S. PLANS FOR DRUG WAR SPILLOVER

Warring drug cartels in Mexico have escalated violence and mayhem there to such a level that United States officials have developed plans for military and civilian law enforcement to quickly beat back any spillover, the Homeland Security secretary, Michael Chertoff, said in a wide-ranging interview two weeks before he leaves office. PAGE A16

U.S. Measure of Cancer Risk Faulted A18

A.P. ITALIAN TEST TO END

The College Board will drop its Advanced Placement Italian program at the end of this academic year, just three years after it began offering it. PAGE A19

Senate Democrats May Seat Burris A21

A GRAND AND CONTROVERSIAL PLAN

One of the most ambitious aspects of Barack Obama's domestic agenda, a plan to create a new public health insurance plan to compete with private insurers, also happens to be anathema to many insurers, employers and Republicans. No other proposal so clearly defines the political and philosophical differences between Mr. Obama and Republicans. PAGE A21

MORE NAMES FOR TOP OF STATE DEPT.

As she awaits Senate confirmation as secretary of state, Hillary Rodham Clinton is filling out the senior echelon of the State Department. She will keep William J. Burns, above left, as the under secretary for political affairs, and is likely to name Richard C. Holbrooke, above right, a longtime diplomat who brokered the accord that brought peace to the Balkans, as a special envoy to Pakistan and India, according to people who have been told of the decisions. PAGE A21

TV Host Decides Against Senate A21

INSIDE THE TIMES: January 8, 2009

CRITIC JOINS JUSTICE DEPARTMENT

The president-elect's nominee to head the Office of Legal Counsel at the Justice Department, Dawn Johnsen, has harshly condemned some of the legal opinions the office has produced on presidential power in the war on terror under the Bush administration. If Ms. Johnsen, a constitutional law professor at Indiana University, is confirmed, she will have a chance to do some overturning. PAGE A22

Obama May Lose BlackBerry Fight A22

New York

GOVERNOR'S STATE ADDRESS:

Straight-Up, No Chaser

There's no way to sugarcoat what Gov. David A. Paterson had come before the Legislature to say. In his first State of the State address, Mr. Paterson unveiled a few new programs but mostly was frank about the year ahead. Page A24

ELDERLY MADOFF INVESTORS

Lose Their Safety Net

While Madoff's scheme has certainly rocked thousands of lives, many of the 8,000 customers will survive financially: the universities, the foundations or the wealthy. But dozens, if not hundreds, of victims lost their life savings. For elderly investors, that lost money was a safety-net. With it gone, how will they afford the care they need to get through their day-to-day lives, like the monthly fees to assisted-living facilities and home-health aides they have come to depend on. Page A24

CHARGES FOR 3 IN ELECTION ATTACKS

The three Staten Island men who went on a post-election rampage, assaulting four people leaving one in a coma, have been charged with several crimes. In particular, all three have been charged with conspiracy to interfere with voting rights, which has elevated this case to the Federal level. All three have pled not-guilty to all the charges. Page A25

Sports

A ROAD DICTATED BY HARD WORK

Has Landed This Coach on Top

It's a road that spans decades, countries and multiple states. It has been hard-scrabble, and he had to struggle up from the bottom relying on nothing more than his ability. But now, the Giants coach Steve Spagnuolo can write his own ticket as one of the most sought-after coaches in the N.F.L. Page B11

First Black Football Coach at Yale B11

THE UNSUNG HEROES OF FOOTBALL

Even the most die-hard fan would have a hard time recognizing the men that some head coaches point out as among the most valuable people in the program. It's not a player, but the head strength and conditioning coach. N.C.A.A. rules prohibit position coaches from working with players in the off-season, but such a restriction does not apply to the strength and conditioning coaches who practically become head coach, their voices providing the cadence for players' lives in the off-season. Page B11

A Sooner From Detroit B12

Business

MADOFF'S EXPENSIVE GIFTS

Bring About a Harsher Cost

Bernard L. Madoff, the financier accused of running a \$50 billion Ponzi scheme, violated his bail terms by sending his friends and relatives packages containing 16 watches, 4 diamond brooches, 2 sets of cufflinks and an emerald ring with a total value of at least \$1 million, federal prosecutors said. The prosecutors argued in a court filing that Mr. Madoff's bail be revoked and that he be sent from his \$7 million Manhattan apartment to jail. PAGE B1

THE AMISH FLOCK TO SMALL BUSINESS

The Amish, the religious sect that has kept the modern world at bay, have been leaving a quiet life of farming for jobs in small businesses that favor skills like furniture-making, quilting and cooking. Though they still drive horses and buggies, remain off the power grid and wear simple, handmade clothing, some try to balance their own values with the culture of the marketplace by using computers and power tools and talking on cellphones at their jobs. PAGE B3

Intel Lowers Its Forecast Again B3

BRITISH RETAILER PLANS CUTBACKS

The Marks & Spencer Group, which sells clothes, food and furniture, became the latest British retailer to announce job cuts and store closings as the sector grappled with the country's worst downturn in more than 17 years. PAGE B4

EUROPE NEARS RECESSION, DATA SAYS

Data suggests that more than a year after the United States entered a recession, Europe is now catching up quickly as the pain of job losses and shrinking orders spreads. Bart van Ark, chief economist of the Conference Board, a nonprofit group that assesses business trends, said, "Europe is now rushing rapidly into a recession, faster than the United States." PAGE B4

A PLEA FOR MORE LENIENT TAX LAWS

In its annual written report to the nation's lawmakers, the National Taxpayer Advocate, the watchdog agency of the Internal Revenue Service, said that Congress should ease certain tax laws and practices governing defaults by ordinary Americans on their mortgages, credit cards, car loans and other consumer debt, to avoid adding to thousands of taxpayers' financial malaise in the economic downturn. PAGE B5

Change for Freddie and Fannie B6

Arts

WHEN A FAMOUS FILM UNDERDOG

Is Honored by Punk Rock

If art teaches us anything, it's that all paths can eventually lead to a crossroads. Peter Lorre, cabaret, ska-punk and performance art meet on a dark and stormy night -- enter The World/Inferno Friendship Society with a sound blended from the latter three and a new show that tosses in the first. "Addicted to Bad Ideas: Peter Lorre's 20th Century," is part of the Public Theater's Under the Radar Festival at Webster Hall. page C1

'24' AND POLITICAL PALATABILITY

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Can a television show whose decline in viewership has matched the public's distaste for the Bush administration and the war on terror survive a shift in politics? When the season opens with the protagonist himself testifying before a Senate committee investigating the use of torture, perhaps his audience has moved beyond him. page C1

Dance Review Same Form, Expression Shifts

As the curtain rises and falls, worlds change, atmospheres shift and wildly disparate visions are presented, writes Alastair Macauley of three Balanchine works at the New York City Ballet. page C1

Finding the 5th Gospel C1

Abroad

Berlin Honors One of Its Own

The photographer Gisele Freund caused a fair bit of puzzlement and a particular aggravation in the United States when she published an unflattering photo of a foreign dignitary. Such can be the plight of pioneers that what they may lack in talent, they make up for by being unafraid to go somewhere new, Michael Kimmelman writes. Now her hometown of Berlin shows her some love. page C1

Arts Briefly C2

Familiar Music, Breezy Show C3

Music Reviews

When a Tribute Falts C3

ILLUSIONS, MEET SLEDGEHAMMER

With a lyrical range that snarls at illusions and carries a nasty bite of self-awareness, Okkervil River and lead singer Will Sheff offer sharp gifted lyrics, Nate Chinen writes. page C5

Editorial

STARTING THE REGULATORY WORK

For decades, federal regulators have relied less on rules and enforcement and more on faith in market discipline to limit risk to the system -- and that has been a manifest failure. Anything less than a new rules-based regime would be inadequate in the task of restoring confidence and, eventually, reviving the economy. PAGE A26

MOVING FORWARD IN HARD TIMES

Over the last few months, Gov. David Paterson of New York has been handing out gloomier and gloomier news in the face of a huge budget deficit. But in his first State of the State address, he said this was exactly the wrong time to hunker down and accomplish nothing. PAGE A26

BEHIND THE HEALTH SPENDING DATA

Spending on health care in the United States grew in 2007 at the lowest rate in nine years. But buried within the statistics was sobering evidence that health costs can be remedied only through deep-seated reform. PAGE A26

Op-Ed

GAIL COLLINS

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Was the selection of Roland Burris to replace Barack Obama in the Senate by the rogue Governor Rod Blagojevich "tainted," according to the Senate majority leader, Harry Reid, or "what the Lord has ordained," in the words of Burris himself? PAGE A27

NICHOLAS D. KRISTOF

What we're seeing in the Middle East right now is the Boomerang Syndrome. Extremists on each side sustain the other, and the excessive Israeli ground assault in Gaza is likely to create more terrorists in the long run. PAGE A27

WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW ABOUT GAZA

In an Op-Ed article, Rashid Khalidi, a Columbia University professor, says that nearly everything we know about Gaza is wrong. He lists some of the top issues that he believes are omitted from the discussion about Israel's war against **Hamas**. PAGE A27

FOR A LITTLE SCRAP OF HAIR

It Sure Garners Attention

It's the object of fluctuating opinion. The moustache can provoke reactions that seem a bit extreme considering it's mostly limited real-estate. Stars and sports figures alike are sporting thick, full moustaches. Just a few examples: from left to right, Burt Reynolds, Josh Brolin, Geraldo Rivera, Hulk Hogan and Jeffrey Wright . Is the hairy frown back in style? Page E1

BEHIND THE MANSCAPE

The art of the 'stache, the whys, the whiches, the hows and the all-important whether. The tools of the trade, and the proper employment of them are a key step to maintaining the right mustache. For example. delicate trimming, not unlike that of the Japanese art of Bonsai, is a must. Page E7

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Graphic

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UNRWA: Immediate truce needed as Gazans have nowhere safe to go

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Body

Khamis Alawi, 44, huddled with his wife and six children in their kitchen as the IDF pushed past their home in Gaza City's northern Sheikh Ajleen neighborhood early Sunday morning.

Bullets from the fighting outside came through their windows and riddled their walls.

At a Jerusalem press conference on Sunday, UN officials warned that if Israel expanded its offensive, things would only get worse for the Alawis and the 1.4 million other people in Gaza, who had no place to flee.

It would also be more difficult to distribute food and medical services, the officials said.

"The protection of civilians will be further jeopardized and our staff will face further dangers," Filippo Grandi, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency's deputy commissioner, told journalists.

According to the UN, as of 3 p.m. Sunday, 884 Gazans had been killed in Operation Cast Lead, including 275 children, 93 women and 12 medical personnel.

In addition, 3,860 people had been injured, including 1,333 children and 587 women. The UN based its figures on information provided by Hamas's Health Ministry in Gaza.

UNRWA is currently supporting 26,000 Gazans in 31 shelters, said Maxwell Gaylard, the UN's humanitarian coordinator in the Palestinian territories.

But a much greater number had taken refuge with other families, he added.

While the IDF has urged residents of Gaza City to flee the area, they had nowhere to go because the Strip's borders were closed, Gaylard said.

Israeli military fire endangered their lives and made it difficult to provide them with necessary services, he said.

Transporting patients and supplies to hospitals was dangerous, said Gaylard, who added that three ambulances and three mobile clinics had been damaged by gunfire.

"People are hungry, they are cold, they have no electricity, they have no water," he said. "It is a massive crisis by any standard."

UNRWA: Immediate truce needed as Gazans have nowhere safe to go

Every day since Wednesday, Israel has suspended its operations during a three-hour window to allow the UN and other humanitarian agencies distribute food and medicine.

Still, UNRWA claims that on Thursday its personnel were twice fired on by the army, and that in the second incident a Palestinian driver who was a contractor for its organization was killed by IDF gunfire. The IDF denied killing the truck driver.

In an effort to prevent such incidents and to improve coordination, IDF officers met with officials from UNRWA and the International Red Cross on Sunday.

In addition, the army let 91 truckloads of humanitarian aid into Gaza. To increase the flow of humanitarian supplies, the IDF is looking to open the Erez crossing into northern Gaza and the wheat chute at the Karni crossing farther south. At present the only open crossing is at Kerem Shalom, which has a limited capacity.

Given the lack of supplies and the difficulties in distributing them, there is a shortage of flour, cooking gas, clean water and cash, said Gaylard.

"We remain deeply concerned regarding the risks of epidemic outbreaks resulting from the discontinuation of vaccinations, garbage pileups and poor and unsafe drinking water," he said.

Hospitals continue to be overburdened. Doctors are working 24-hour shifts and intensive care units are full, he said.

Both Gaylard and Grandi said that what was needed was an immediate cease-fire.

"As long as the hostilities continue, civilians remain unprotected and more will be killed and injured," Gaylard said.

"For every day the hostilities continue the cost to the civilian population intensifies."

Graphic

Photo: BOYS INSPECT a mosque destroyed by an IAF missile in Rafah yesterday. (Credit: Eyad Baba/AP)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

Casualty ward chaos; your say

Illawarra Mercury (Australia)

January 9, 2009 Friday

First Edition

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Section: NEWS; Letters; Pg. 19

Length: 604 words

Body

Casualty ward chaos

Recently, I had the misfortune to take my wife to the casualty ward at Wollongong Hospital as a patient - the ambulance personnel were both courteous and efficient.

My wife entered the ward on a stretcher, joined a queue of seven other stretchered beds all lined up in a corridor. The scene resembled a war-time assembly line.

Four and a half hours of waiting passed - some had been six hours without consultation. All staff seemed very busy and apologised for "no available beds". A hospital doctor attended to ease the corridor tension, stated he would attempt to locate a bed for examination and also apologised for "no beds".

One could not resist recalling the ridiculous statement made by our local minister that Wollongong Hospital was among the most efficient in NSW.

Casualty ward staff have commented on the fake facelift the ward underwent when the out-of-touch politicians and bureaucrats recently visited.

I would suggest to our local politicians, you have a short period to improve our hospital, education and transport systems.

Branch out and see how the real world and its people function, otherwise it means working for a living.

With no apologies.

Ted Drain, Wollongong.

Replant not destroy

The draft Wollongong LEP 2009 plan rezoning Excelsior No 2 colliery site from 7b Environmental Protection - Conservation to E2/R2 Residential requires removal of all trees and vegetation from the 36ha site to conduct geo-technical assessment.

Tree removal exacerbates risks of floods and mudslides since the area is subject to slippage from the escarpment. Creeks handling runoff will be disrupted. Wildlife habitats will disappear. In 2005 Sheargold clear-felled the area it

Casualty ward chaos your say

now describes as "highly disturbed" and plans to "rehabilitate" it by building 50 to 60 houses ... increasing population by 130 persons. (Does this compute?)

If the area is rezoned, thousands of tons of coal could be trucked out, and capping material trucked in using the inadequate one-lane bridge on Mountain Road.

Noise and traffic results would be horrific for all northern suburb communities. The only way to rehabilitate the damage they inflicted is to replant trees, not destroy what remains. Excelsior must retain its protected zoning for natural heritage. Express alarm and dismay to the council now before it's too late.

Lori Lebow, Austinmer.

Peace in Palestine

Hamas has declared continuous war against Israel since its inception. The Iranian leader, who takes orders from the Ayatollah, has threatened to annihilate Israel simply on grounds of racial hatred. The Jews do not hate Muslims, they merely wish to live in peace, free from rocket attacks on their people.

Negotiations for peace have repeatedly failed, each time broken by further rocket attacks on Israel. Therefore, Israel is entitled to defend itself by destroying the rocket-firing bases in Gaza and if possible those responsible for them.

They have no other option but must strive to ensure minimum loss of innocent lives.

New settlement by Orthodox Jews in Palestinian territory is in these times unnecessarily provocative and should be withdrawn altogether. Palestinian Arabs are entitled to their land too.

But when three-year-old Muslim children are taught to hate Jews, and when teenagers are trained to blow themselves up, murdering innocent civilian **women** and children, sympathy for their plight is lost. Believe me, they are not martyrs but murderers.

We, as Christians, should always support the integrity of the land of God's chosen people, Israel. At the same time there should be allowance for a Palestinian state for peaceful Arabs.

Ron Graham, Albion Park.

Load-Date: January 8, 2009

New US Congress expected to consider resolution backing Operation Cast Lead

The Jerusalem Post

January 7, 2009 Wednesday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 9

Length: 632 words

Byline: HILARY LEILA KRIEGER, Jerusalem Post correspondent, AP contributed to this report.

Body

WASHINGTON - The 111th Congress convened for the first time on Tuesday, with strong Democratic majorities in both houses that will soon be complimented by a Democrat- controlled White House for the first time in 16 years.

The spiraling economic crisis is set to dominate the new Congress's first weeks, as the leadership works to ready a \$775 billion stimulus bill for US President-elect Barack Obama's signature after he takes office.

Several US House leaders are also expected to sponsor a nonbinding resolution backing Israel in its battle with **Hamas** as one of their first pieces of business.

Democrats have also begun welcoming Al Franken as the newest Jewish member of Congress, after the Minnesota canvassing board certified the former Saturday Night Live comedian as the razor-thin winner of the Minnesota senate race on Monday.

Challenger Norm Coleman, one of two incumbent Jewish Republicans in the US Senate, was originally seen as getting more votes on Election Day in November and has promised a lawsuit over the conclusion, which might keep the verdict in limbo for several more months.

Obama is also filling the last of his major staff openings, choosing Elana Kagan as solicitor general and Leon Panetta as the director of the Central Intelligence Agency.

Kagan is currently the dean of Harvard Law School, where Obama received his law degree, and once clerked for Judge Abner Mikva, an early political mentor of Obama's in Chicago. Obama and Kagan also both once taught at the University of Chicago Law School.

Kagan would be the first **female** solicitor general, the government's advocate before the Supreme Court. She has received widespread praise for her intellect, leadership skills and consensus-oriented approach.

Conservative voices have also lauded her for welcoming ideologically diverse faculty members and otherwise doing a strong job as Harvard Law School dean.

Kagan also won kudos from Washington Jewish voices.

Rabbi David Saperstein, who directs the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, worked with Kagan when she was an attorney and policy adviser in the Clinton White House.

New US Congress expected to consider resolution backing Operation Cast Lead

"She's intellectually brilliant, and politically gifted at finding common ground and finding consensus," Saperstein said, according to the Jewish Telegraphic Agency. He added that Kagan "knows First Amendment issues very well" and "really knows the Jewish community well."

The Forward once reported that Kagan appeared at an American Friends of the Hebrew University lawyers lunch in New York, and told the gathering that her mother "would be proud" that she was the keynote speaker at the "Torch of Learning" luncheon.

Her late parents, Gloria and Bob Kagan, were longtime active members of Manhattan's West End Synagogue, a Reconstructionist congregation.

In contrast to Kagan's reception as well as that of most other Obama appointments, the Panetta pick has come under criticism. Some has even originated from within his own party, which could complicate his Senate confirmation.

Several Republicans and Democrats alike have attacked Panetta, former US president Bill Clinton's chief of staff, as lacking experience on intelligence issues.

Though Panetta has a history of good bipartisan relations and strong management experience, even his longtime friend and fellow Californian, Democratic Sen. Dianne Feinstein, took issue with the choice.

She complained about Panetta's lack of intelligence experience and Obama's failure to consult with her on the decision. Feinstein chairs the Senate Intelligence Committee, which will consider the nomination.

Obama is also expected to nominate retired Adm. Dennis Blair, a former chief of the US military's Pacific Command, to be director of national intelligence.

Blair oversaw anti-terrorism efforts in southeast Asia after the September 11 attacks.

Graphic

Photo: MEMBERS OF the US House of Representatives are sworn in on Capitol Hill yesterday. (Credit: AP)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

It's a miracle Golani soldier is still alive, doctor says. Wounded arrive at Soroka Hospital as anxious families await their recovery

The Jerusalem Post
January 5, 2009 Monday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 5

Length: 553 words

Byline: ABE SELIG

Body

The corridors of Beersheba's Soroka Hospital were bustling on Sunday as dozens of soldiers wounded in the Gaza fighting began arriving for treatment and their families, friends and brothers-in-arms poured in to offer support.

Two of the most seriously wounded - an infantryman and an officer - were being treated in the same ward on an upper floor of the sprawling complex.

While the officer was reportedly unconscious - heavily medicated and between surgeries - the infantryman, head and body swathed in bandages and gauze, told The Jerusalem Post from his hospital bed that he had been in the middle of a bad round of fighting just after his unit crossed the border into the strip.

"It wasn't fun," he said before turning away. "I don't want to talk about it right now."

The officer's family paced around a waiting area as his brother answered phone call after phone call, repeating the same information.

"Yes, he was badly wounded," the brother would say. "In the head. We don't know. We're praying."

Other soldiers and civilians milled around, coming and going as their phones rang incessantly.

"I've been doing this all day," said a **female** soldier from a paratrooper battalion, her eyes weary from lack of sleep. "My job is to check on the wounded and keep track of their status. I've been here since five o'clock this morning."

Another group of soldiers - members of a platoon of Golani infantry that had been hit nearly dead-on by a mortar round - was scattered throughout the hospital, undergoing various types of treatment, including surgery.

Standing near the entrance to the thoracic surgical wing, a young man who identified himself as Haim said he had been there to greet his brother Nathan, a member of the platoon, when he arrived in a medevac helicopter a few hours before.

"I spoke to him," Haim said. "He was talking, slowly, but he was talking. He said they had just entered into Gaza, through a fence, and they crouched down, I guess to take a minute and get their bearings. The next thing they knew, a 120 mm. mortar round landed within meters and they were all wounded by shrapnel."

It's a miracle Golani soldier is still alive, doctor says. Wounded arrive at Soroka Hospital as anxious families await their recovery

"We saw the shrapnel they took out of his chest," said Nathan's sister, who stood nearby and showed an imaginary metal fragment with her fingers. "They said it was over 2 cm. long."

"They also said it was 1 mm. away from hitting his windpipe," Haim added. "One millimeter over and, well...the doctor said it was a miracle."

But Nathan's wasn't the only miracle at Soroka on Sunday. All but one of the soldiers who had been hit by the mortar round were being treated for various shrapnel wounds listed as "light" and were expected to make full recoveries.

In a smoking area outside the hospital, a Golani private, visibly shaken, said he was a member of the platoon whose men were hit by the mortar shell and that in the aftermath, his mother had revoked her permission for him to go into combat. He was an only son and army protocol required a parent's signature. His mother, he explained, had had a change of heart.

"But I'm dying to go back in there," the private said, sucking down the cigarette he had just lit with shaky hands. "I'm not going to tell you that it wasn't frightening. We went in, it was all quiet, and then boom, the mortar hit and Hamas fighters started coming out. We repelled them, but it was a real balagan."

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

End of Document

Violence in the Middle East must be dealt with even-handedly

Cape Argus (South Africa)

January 10, 2009 Saturday

e1 Edition

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Section: LIFE; Pg. 15

Length: 612 words

Body

Little evidence is required of mankind's talent for mindless |cruelty.

It is a trait not only of mass political, racial and religious bigotry. Its pervasiveness at a mundane and personal level can be seen in the abusive nastiness of much of the anonymous reader comment elicited on internet sites.

But for pernicious hatefulness, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict takes the cake. With the recent military action by Israel in Gaza, the world is experiencing one of its ritual flurries of hand-wringing, blame and counter-accusation.

The international community's search for a solution is futile. Both protagonists have a vested interest in continued crisis.

In a way, the Jewish-Arab conflict is the perfect political equivalent of a sado-masochistic relationship. Despite appearances of the contrary to befuddled outsiders, there actually is neither monster nor victim.

The militarily puny Palestinians prod and provoke Israel with a drip-feed of suicide bombers and rocket attacks. When Israel, predictably, is goaded into thumping them, they go crying to the large anti-Israeli - and often anti-Semitic - bloc of nations.

Israel, for its part, is so confident of the support of the United States that its arrogance knows no bounds. It is the school bully bludgeoning a first-grader about the head with a cricket bat for having the temerity to trip it in the corridor.

Both sides derive emotional sustenance from ritualised roles. The Palestinians have made a study of helpless victimhood; the Israelis have created an entire mythology around being the plucky David standing up to a Goliath-like alliance of hostile neighbours.

Neither side could get away with it were it not for the complicity of their friends. **Hamas** is supported and armed by militant Islamists, fighting a proxy war against forces that have dominated, tormented and humiliated them for centuries. Israel relies on the influence in Western nations of the immensely influential Jewish Diaspora.

However intractable this pathology might be, there may be hope. It is no coincidence that the Israeli strike against Gaza happened when it did.

Violence in the Middle East must be dealt with even-handedly

Israel would have been aware that it would not help its cause in the West to be blowing women and children to smithereens during the Christmas period. The carnage among innocents during this festival of familial love and reconciliation might make queasy the stomachs of some of its strongest supporters.

Israel nevertheless took the risk of blowing up school kids because it had only a small window in which to unleash a big strike. It is skittish about whether the incoming administration of Barack Obama will continue the tradition of unflinching, unconditional support for Israel.

It is not yet clear which way Obama will go on the issue. He appears to find merit in the Palestinian cause but at the same time much of his support base is pro-Israel and he will have to tread lightly.

If he can break the template of US policy in the Middle East, use both carrot and stick with the two sides, he might achieve a great foreign policy triumph. Certainly the self-righteous, hypocritical condemnations of only Israel, upon which many governments rely in the absence of any desire to confront the culpability of both sides, will not change an iota.

Destructive behaviour has to be dealt with even-handedly, both in the Middle East and closer to home.

It is risible of South Africa's foreign ministry to threaten sanctions against Israel when it is an article of faith of the ANC, when dealing with Zimbabwe, that sanctions are futile and counter-productive. It is risible to condemn Ehud Olmert's killing of civilians in Gaza but not Robert Mugabe's killing of civilians in Zimbabwe.

Load-Date: January 10, 2009

End of Document

Gazans fear their nightmare is just going to get worse

The Gazette (Montreal)
January 6, 2009 Tuesday
Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A4

Length: 602 words

Byline: ADEL ZAANOUN, AFP

Dateline: GAZA CITY

Body

The shelling is incessant, hospitals are overwhelmed, children are shell-shocked, the Gaza nights are miserably cold in the windowless homes. And residents fear their nightmare could worsen.

After days of intense bombardment from the air, artillery shells are now pounding the Gaza Strip as rocket-propelled grenades are fired at Israeli tanks.

Children, who make up more than half of the 1.5 million population, are traumatized, living in fear of the next explosion that will shake their home.

"Many kids have stopped eating. They are inactive, they barely talk, they cling to their parents all the time," said Sajy Elmaghinni, who works for the UN Children's Fund Unicef in Gaza.

"Children are now scared of the dark, which is a major problem because there's no electricity," said Elmaghinni, whose own home has been without power for five days.

He has no way of heating his home, where all the windows were blown out by a blast, but like others in the besieged Palestinian enclave he has become used to dealing with the cold. "We just wear a lot of clothes." But with most homes and hospitals lacking heating and with temperatures near freezing, the risk of hypothermia is particularly high for newborn babies who need higher temperatures to survive, Save the Children said.

The humanitarian group said that even before the Israeli offensive, about 50,000 children were suffering from malnutrition in Gaza, which has been under a crippling Israeli blockade for 18 months.

For Elmaghinni, a key concern is how he'll get his nine-month pregnant wife to the hospital when she is due to deliver.

"This is a major concern. At the beginning of the bombing she experienced some trauma when a neighbouring building was hit.

"Everybody evacuated our building. We had to stay. I didn't know what to do. I prayed to God my wife would not deliver in these conditions." A number of pregnant women have moved in with friends or relatives who live near a clinic, so as to have a doctor nearby, aware that ambulances are busy collecting the victims of the Israeli attacks.

Gazans fear their nightmare is just going to get worse

At night it is impossible even to walk to a clinic, "because drones pick up anything that moves," Elmaghinni said.

Some of the missiles fired on Gaza are launched from unmanned aircraft that can be heard flying overhead.

Virtually everyone has a tragic story to tell in this shell-shocked coastal strip.

Of the 90 people killed since Israel expanded its offensive last Saturday night by sending in troops and tanks, 27 were children and another 17 were women, according to Palestinian medics.

Hospitals are overwhelmed.

They used to have five surgeons to operate on a severely wounded patient. Now a surgeon might have to operate on as many as 10 patients in a day, doctors said.

Amputations are increasingly frequent as doctors do not have time to try to save limbs. Many wounded people have died because they could not be treated in time, according to health authorities.

In Gaza City, the nightmare is compounded by uncertainty as Israel's troops move closer. "The scariest part is not knowing when they will move into the city. When they do, there could be many civilians killed," Elmaghinni said.

Residents live in fear, and the streets of the city are deserted. In any case, there's nowhere to go. Supermarkets are virtually empty. There is no cooking gas and UN food aid distribution has been suspended.

When civilians do venture out into the streets it is usually to move to slightly safer locations, from high-rise buildings that rattle when there's a blast or from homes too close to potential targets - mosques, government offices or the homes of Hamas officials.

Load-Date: January 6, 2009

Put An End To The Bloodshed

Evening Chronicle (Newcastle, UK)

December 31, 2008 Wednesday

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Section: MAIN; Pg. 6

Length: 641 words

Byline: David Old

Body

A humanitarian disaster is unfolding in Gaza as Israel continues its strongarm tactics to wipe out militants. In only days the air assault has claimed the lives of 360 people and the death toll continues to rise. Student Mahmood Shatat, right, from Durham University, is caught up in the carnage. He has sent a first-hand account of the bloodshed as others worldwide make calls for a stop to the violence

MAHMOOD Shatat had returned to his homeland to see his wife and baby son.

It was meant to be a happy reunion but it has turned into a nightmare.

On Saturday, Israel began retaliating against **Hamas** rocket attacks that had claimed the lives of three civilians and a soldier.

Since then hundreds of Palestinians have been killed in the air strikes and Israel has vowed to continue the onslaught to stamp out the militant threat to its people.

In e-mails to Prof Bill Williamson from Durham University, Mahmood describes how the university buildings, mosques and homes have been destroyed in the air strikes.

And he tells how the residents fear an imminent ground invasion.

He said: "The Islamic University of Gaza buildings were completely destroyed by the Israeli missiles. About five heavy missiles were dropped on the university building.

"Many Mosques in residential areas were also destroyed by the strikes.

"Israeli ships, tanks, and aircraft are attacking Gaza now. Forty tunnels were destroyed on the border by Israeli missiles.

"I visited Elshifa Hospital in Gaza, which is considered the main and biggest hospital in the city. You can not imagine the pictures there. Hundreds and hundreds of wounded and injured people, you can see bodies without legs, arms, heads.

"The latest number of victims has reached more than 300 including innocent children, old people, youths and **women**.

Put An End To The Bloodshed

"All the security buildings were destroyed by heavy weapons from F16 and F18 aircraft. Now Israeli aircraft have started to attack the border between Egypt and Gaza to destroy all tunnels."

Prof Williamson, the chair of County Durham Solidarity Campaign, has been moved by his student's plight and from speaking to other Palestinian students at the university.

He said: "Mahmood went back to see his young son, wife and elderly parents, but it all erupted and Israel started to attack. He is in a desperate state.

"What should have been a joyful occasion has become a nightmare.

"His family have not slept for days. They lack nappies for their baby. Their cousin's house has been destroyed. His brother is a doctor in the hospital in Gaza City and is completely overwhelmed by the number of cases of injury coming in.

"There should be an immediate recall of Parliament to debate Israel's military strikes against Gaza.

"This is no local affair. It is a conflict that could escalate with serious consequences for the whole Middle East and the world. Israeli action is illegal, disproportionate and completely counter-productive.

"The starved, humiliated people of Gaza are suffering constant aerial bombardment that has resulted in deaths, thousands of injuries and major destruction of buildings.

"Each attack strengthens Palestinian resistance. Ordinary Palestinians cannot control resistance fighters.

"But they are being asked to pay the price. It is collective punishment reminiscent of the worst crimes of the 20th Century. Jewish people should know more than most.

"Palestinians demand justice and respect for their human rights. They have been an occupied people for 60 years.

"Israel is using the period between Bush and Obama to carve out a stronger military position in any future peace discussions and to appease right-wing opinion as part of the run up to its elections in February.

"The international community and the Government cannot collude with this.

"They must exert pressure to stop this action. Parliament must be recalled immediately."

Load-Date: December 31, 2008

Just servitude?

The Jerusalem Post

October 24, 2008 Friday

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 18

Length: 2751 words

Byline: CARL HOFFMAN

Highlight: New Profile believes Israel is an overly militarized society, and the group will help anyone, no matter what the reason, to avoid the draft. Box at end of text.

Body

You are either going to love this group or hate it, depending on where you stand in Israel's contemporary political spectrum. Chances are you're familiar with the group already and have already made up your mind.

The organization is called New Profile - A Movement for the Civil-ization of Israeli Society. Founded as a feminist organization 10 years ago to combat what it sees as the "over-militarization" of Israel, New Profile's primary objectives are to end compulsory military service, provide aid and support to imprisoned refusers and conscientious objectors, offer counseling on "all forms of draft resistance and conscientious objection" to high-school graduates prior to their enlistment, advocate resistance to Israel's "occupation" of the West Bank, and conduct educational programs aimed toward raising public awareness of what the group believes is the over-emphasis of military themes in Israeli society and culture.

The group's charter states: "We, a group of feminist women and men, are convinced that we need not live in a soldiers' state. Today, Israel is capable of a determined peace politics. It need not be a militarized society. We are convinced that we ourselves, our children, our partners, need not go on being endlessly mobilized, need not go on living as warriors. We will not go on being mobilized, raising children for mobilization, supporting mobilized partners, brothers, fathers, while those in charge of the country go on deploying the army easily, rather than building other solutions... We oppose the use of military means to enforce Israeli sovereignty beyond the Green Line. We oppose the use of the army, police, security forces in the ongoing oppression and discrimination of the Palestinian citizens of Israel, while demolishing their homes, denying them building and development rights, using violence to disperse their demonstrations."

Unlike most other Israeli non-profit organizations, New Profile receives little of its income from private donations. New Profile's funding comes principally from international Christian organizations like the Quakers (United Kingdom) and Bread for the World (United States).

New Profile has worked in tandem with groups like Women in Black, and in conjunction with the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions to rebuild houses of West Bank Palestinians demolished by the IDF.

But it is such programs as "Think Before Enlisting" and other draft resistance campaigns that have placed the group at the opposite end of the spectrum from such organizations as Shivyon - The Israeli Forum for the Promotion of an Equal Share of the [military] Burden, with whom New Profile is often at bitter odds.

Just servitude?

The latest flashpoint was the recent imprisonment of Udi Nir, 18, of Herzliya, who was ordered jailed last August 21 for refusing to serve in the IDF. Nir is one of a group of high-school seniors who recently signed a collective declaration of refusal to serve.

The group, which calls itself "12th Graders' Letter 2008 - Refusing the Occupation," has a page on Facebook and is featured as a hero of conscience on New Profile's Web site.

In September, the Justice Ministry announced that the police would investigate whether the New Profile Web site was violating Article 109 of the Penal Code, which forbids incitement to evasion of duty - an allegation which the organization swiftly denied.

Claiming some 2,000 supporters and run by "40-60" active volunteers, New Profile operates with a "feminist, non-hierarchical" system of organization. Accordingly, the group prides itself on having no leaders, no one occupying any official positions, no fixed division of labor, or even an office. New Profile members run the group from their own homes.

The organization also lacks an official spokesperson, but Dr. Diana Dolev, a founder and prominent figure within the group, agreed to speak about New Profile's general ideology and activities.

Dolev, a fifth-generation Israeli, holds a PhD in the history and theory of architecture and teaches at the Holon Institute of Technology. She is involved primarily with New Profile's outreach educational programs.

If I understand you correctly, New Profile's basic position is that Israel is an "over-militarized society." I have lived in some highly militarized countries, like Indonesia under General Suharto, when the army ran the country and anyone of any importance was an actively- serving army general. Few people look at Israel and see anything like that here.

If people don't see it, it's because they don't want to see it. There's this trick here of melting down the border between what is civil and what is military. So you don't see soldiers marching in formation. We don't have all that. We ridicule this kind of militarism. Our soldiers aren't tidy soldiers. They're very schlumperich [unkempt], which creates this image of a soldier that is half civilian, one of the hevre, not a "soldierly" soldier. But I think this is a sort of cover. I think that actually, in a more concealed way, this image contributes to militaristic ideas filtering into civil society without our noticing it.

Such as?

Such as lots of advertising, based on [images] of a soldier and his mother, or a soldier and his girlfriend. We show examples of this in our exhibitions. Or, for instance, show business people posing on the covers of magazines, saluting. They're civilians - why should they be saluting? What's the idea there?

And you can see today with all the political crises [about] how [Foreign Minister] Tzipi Livni is being attacked as unsuitable to be prime minister because she hasn't got experience leading the nation into war. People don't even question this idea. If you're not a general or an ex-general, you're not suitable to become prime minister.

But isn't the military's cultural importance due to the obvious fact that we're in a bad neighborhood, with dangerous enemies, under threat?

That's a very common idea. But we quote a book by Motti Golani, a professor at the University of Haifa, called Wars Do Not Just Happen. Although he comes from a very militaristic family, he has analyzed all our wars and says it's not true that the wars were all caused by our neighbors. We [took] an active part. We don't have to automatically believe everything we are told by our leaders. We have to look into things a bit deeper, and we will find out that, for different reasons, our leaders wanted the war, or they were never able to think about conflicts other than war and the force of our army.

Are you saying, then, that some of our wars were unnecessary?

Just servitude?

The last wars, of course. This is without any question. Both of the wars against Lebanon should have been avoided. But we can go back even to other wars - wars that there's a positive consensus about, and Dr. Golani says that they could have been avoided as well. But from reading the newspapers, including yours I suppose, you can see that the discourse is always in militaristic terms. We think that if we change people's mind-sets, the discourse will change also. And then people will be searching for other solutions.

Do you really believe that whether we have war or peace is up to us?

People keep saying, "Well, it's not up to us. We have bad neighbors." But we have peace with Egypt, we have peace with Jordan. Lebanon never started a war against Israel, and Syria is [doing] its best not to attack Israel. So what are we talking about? Iran? [Laughs].

In your opinion, what is our best alternative?

The alternative is diplomacy, of course, but the problem is very complicated because the militarism here is so deeply rooted. It would take a new way of looking at our neighbors. If one of our leaders failed to speak of Arab leaders in a degrading way, he would not be considered the kind of strong leader that we want for Israel. People would think that he was weak. It's all about being strong. But in my opinion it's not about showing your muscle. Being strong is also being polite, compassionate, talking about another leader as your equal or someone you can learn from and have a dialogue with. Israeli leaders have not done that at all.

Why do you think our leaders have not tried your approach?

I think it's a combination... of always seeing ourselves as the victim, thinking that the whole world is against us and that we are under constant threats to our existence. All that has been overused and has been one part of creating our militarization.

But what about the threats to our existence? What about Hizbullah or Hamas?

Well, Hamas is a difficult question because we've probably gone too far in undermining Palestinian society in the territories. Israel created Hamas. We created Hamas because of this idea that if we get the Palestinians to fight each other, we win. If they destroy each other, we win. This strategy has failed completely. It failed in Lebanon, and we've paid a high cost for this. Same with the Palestinians. I think Israel should simply leave them alone. We should leave them alone, pay them compensation for what we owe them for so many years of occupation and let them go on with their lives.

We can leave the Palestinians alone, but will the Palestinians leave us alone?

It's worth trying. Up to now, the military force that we've been using against them hasn't brought us any peace and quiet, any end of danger. So maybe we should try. Maybe they will be so busy organizing their lives, maybe they'll be so overwhelmed [by] children going freely to school, being able to do business, to travel around freely without the humiliation and suffering of going through checkpoints - who knows?

So, in your opinion, how large an army does Israel actually need?

I don't often quote Ehud Barak, but I will now. He has said that Israel needs a small and smart army. When we call ourselves "New Profile for Israel," we are referring both to the centrality of the military induction "profile" that every kid gets when he goes into the army, and to changing Israel's civil profile. We think that this has to change so that the military profile will not be central at all, but will instead be marginalized in Israeli society, in our civil profile.

What is New Profile's attitude toward Israel's non- military compulsory national service?

We don't have a unanimous opinion about this, or anything we could declare as New Profile's "position" on the subject. It's a complex issue for us. Some of our members did do civil service, some did service with political organizations like Physicians for Human Rights, and that seemed right to them. On the whole, we think people ought to be educated to contribute to society for many years - not just one or two or three.

Just servitude?

Also, we feel that [in the case of] national service, the state interferes with people's lives. And in a state where people have so much difficulty finding jobs, it's not right for the state to fund "volunteer" work that isn't volunteer at all by young people just out of school taking the place of someone who really needs the job.

And also, we feel that [national service also] becomes a tool to separate people into first- and second-class citizens, depending on whether they did their service or not. We resent that.

Are there any circumstances under which you think that war is justified or necessary?

Oh, yes. I'm not a pacifist. A lot of people in New Profile are not. I guess there are such circumstances. I recall meeting a delegate to an international conference of Women in Black. I think she came from the United States. We told her how we use a tank as a visual image of war to show how militarized we are. But she said, "You know, my image of a tank is one of rescue." She was a child in Germany during WWII and hid in a cellar until she realized she was surrounded by US army tanks. So for her, the tank was an image of rescue, of life. So yes, I'm sure there are - there must be - circumstances in which war is justified. But what we're trying to say is that our leaders do not explore all of the other possibilities before deciding to go to war.

What kind of Israel are you trying to create?

Paradise. A country with friendlier relations with its neighbors. A more just state for all its citizens. A genuinely pluralistic society. A country that knows you don't have to be strong all the time, where real "strength" is about defending people who have been weakened. We are a very violent society. New Profile is about looking at society critically - not through nationalist lenses, but about ourselves as people in a highly militarized society to find out how our mind-sets have been influenced. We want to open people's eyes.

(BOX) Starting young

Although a lot of New Profile's energy and resources are directed toward "educational programs" like training workshops and traveling exhibitions, the group's major focus is helping young people avoid service in the IDF.

New Profile goes about this in two ways: by organizing youth groups where options and alternatives to army service are presented and discussed, and by maintaining a network of counselors who assist individual boys and girls who have decided not to serve.

Lotahn Raz, 27, is a co-founder and co-coordinator of New Profile's youth groups program. Raz was himself a conscientious objector and was imprisoned for two months in 1999 for refusing to enlist.

What happens in a New Profile youth group?

The goal is to create a space for young people to openly think, talk and discuss issues related to military service. It's about creating a space to ask questions and think thoughts that don't have space to be thought or discussed otherwise.

Our principle is that in Israeli society there is no space for young people to talk about military service - it's considered to be a non-question. But in our perspective, it's a political issue, a political question. And the fact that military service is shoved down people's throats without having the space to ask questions is undemocratic and very problematic. Space needs to be made for people to ask questions and think. And that's the idea. It's not our perspective to say what people should do; it's just to create the space to talk about things.

Do these people come to you or do you go to them?

Mostly people come to us. We get a lot of emails from young people from around the country, asking for a place to talk. When we open a youth group, we go around and look for young people that we know are interested in these questions. Like any other youth group would do, we look for places where people would be interested in what we have to offer. At this point, we have groups in Jerusalem, Beersheba, Haifa, Tel Aviv. We're opening one in the Sharon, we had one last year in Rehovot and another in Pardess Hanna. And we're looking to open one in Galilee.

Just servitude?

Do you provide draft counseling at these youth group meetings?

No. That's done within our counseling network. Our youth groups are there to provide young people with space to think, ask questions and make decisions. The purpose of the counseling networks is to follow individuals through the process of draft resistance. We give people information that does not exist elsewhere - what are the different possibilities, how does one go about refusing.

So what are the different possibilities?

The main one, the political one, is to go the conscientious objector route, to go before the government's Conscientious Objectors Committee and end up imprisoned like I was, and then eventually receive "unfit for military service" status. And then there are the exemptions for medical reasons, mental health reasons, or other issues.

How far does New Profile actually go in counseling people about, say, medical exemptions? Would you advise a sane person to act "crazy" or a healthy person to pretend to be sick?

We would never tell anybody to lie. That would be immoral and wrong. What we do is give information about how the system works - about how a psychiatric release from the army is decided upon, for example.

So are you saying that you inform people about how the army decides that someone is psychologically unfit for service and then tell them to take it from there?

Well, yeah. Our job is to give people information and help them through the process. People need to do the work and basically it's their decision. But remember, the one who decides to release people from the military is the military itself. New Profile has no impact on that. It's the military's decision to decide who they want and who they don't want.

Further information about New Profile is available at their Web site, www.newprofile.org

Graphic

5 photos: Working the system. New Profile does not counsel youth to seek medical exemptions - it merely 'informs' them about the process. New Profile's funding comes principally from international Christian organizations. A new recruit says good-bye to her mother before leaving for her first day in the army. (Credit: IDF Spokesman; Illustrative photo/IDF Spokesman)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

Few places to relax in battle-scarred Gaza; From historic bathhouse to nightclubs and hotels everything is closed in this impoverished territory

The Toronto Star

November 16, 2008 Sunday

Copyright 2008 Toronto Star Newspapers, Ltd.

Section: NEWS; Pg. A19

Length: 537 words

Byline: Oakland Ross, Toronto Star

Dateline: GAZA CITY

Body

When the subject under discussion is Gaza, nightlife is not the first thought that springs to most people's minds.

For good reason.

This impoverished and battle-scarred territory - no stranger to war and now obliged to endure a partial economic embargo imposed by Israel - is more than a little bit short on nocturnal recreation. It comes up short in the area of daytime recreation, too.

But Gaza's 1.5 million long-suffering souls are no different from people anywhere else on this wobbly blue rock. They need to unwind.

In the summertime, most people here stream to the beach every chance they get, to lounge upon the broad beige strand that stretches the full 40-kilometre extent of Gaza's Mediterranean seafront.

But it is autumn now, and the beach is mostly empty.

So what do the people do?

In a just world, they could crowd into sports stadiums and watch soccer matches - the sport is as popular here as anywhere else in the Middle East - but no formal soccer league now exists in Gaza, and there are no other organized sports, either.

A large indoor sports palace is under construction north of Gaza City, adjacent to the intelligence headquarters run by Hamas, which rules Gaza. Unfortunately, work on the building has been suspended.

Gaza does possess at least two public swimming pools and even an equestrian centre. But the pools are open only in summer, and the equestrian operation seems to be closed all the time.

The same is sadly true of Hammam Al-Samara, a Gaza City bathhouse that dates back to the time of Mamluk in the 14th century.

Few places to relax in battle-scarred Gaza From historic bathhouse to nightclubs and hotels everything is closed in this impoverished territory

Until recently, the bathhouse remained in operation. Wood fires heated the water which flowed through a network of aqueducts beneath vaulted ceilings and above marble floors.

Men patronized the facility in the morning, and women in the afternoons. But, like much else in Gaza, the bathhouse is closed now.

Still, this being the Middle East, at least two predictions can be stated with confidence concerning the local entertainment options - there will be coffee shops, and there will be water pipes.

Gaza City has many small rooms where men retreat to chat among themselves over Turkish coffee, while inhaling fragrant smoke from ornate nargeelahs.

Among the liveliest eateries in Gaza City, and also among the best, is the Palmeera Shawarma Restaurant on Abdu Khadr Al-Huseili St.

Groups of men gather at the Formica tables downstairs, while women and family groups assemble upstairs. Packed all day long and well into the night, the place is also popular for takeout meals.

The Gaza Strip has no cinemas, although in the past movies were occasionally screened at the Shawa Cultural Centre, but not anymore.

Other recreational options include a French cultural centre and a German cultural centre, both located in the affluent Rimal neighbourhood of Gaza City.

Along the coastal road, just a few kilometres north of Gaza City, a nine-storey palace of limestone and glass rises high into the blue Middle Eastern sky.

This is Gaza's brand-new Movenpick Hotel, a five-star celebration of international luxury that faces one big problem. There are no tourists in Gaza. As a result, the hotel has never opened its doors.

Like so much else in this unfortunate territory, it just stands there.

Closed.

Graphic

Abid Katib Getty Images Palestinians smoke a water pipe during sunset at a Gaza City beach.

Load-Date: November 16, 2008

Debate didn't become battle of the sexes

Chicago Daily Herald

October 6, 2008 Monday

L2 Edition

Copyright 2008 Paddock Publications, Inc.

Section: NEWS; Pg. 10

Length: 570 words

Body

So this is what they mean by the soft bigotry of low expectations. The long drumbeat that led to the vice presidential debate suggested it would be a matchup between an airhead and a gaffe machine.

If you added up the two cents from every adviser, you could pay off the national debt. For a week we'd seen the air of confidence come out of the balloon of Sarah Palin. She flunked the interview with Katie Couric. What Palin "needed to do," in the language of the cablemeisters, was to complete a sentence and come up with a fact.

On the other hand, Joe Biden had been given advice that sounded like an inversion of the 1950s. Back then it was the smart woman who was told to play dumb. Now the smart man was told to keep his IQ under control.

Well, blessedly this turned out not to be Bobby Riggs versus Billie Jean King. Biden and Palin were more surrogates for their candidates than their gender. The idea that Biden would pat her pretty little head in public was laid to rest. The idea that Palin would ratchet up a female sympathy vote died with it.

Sarah was Positively Sarah, as they used to say when she ran for mayor of Wasilla. Folksy, full of anecdotes, sidestepping questions and staying on message. If this is what cramming looks like, she'd pulled the all-nighters and learned what Hamas was and to keep her sentences (mostly) in order. If every question didn't lead to an answer, it led to an anecdote. She quickly linked herself to mavericks.

Joe was positively Joe. A few statistics too many, a rush of words against the 90-second deadline, but he kept his tongue pointing in the right direction. He even kept it under control. McCain's not a maverick on "virtually anything that genuinely affects the things people really talk about around their kitchen table." And when Sarah suggested that being a "mom" was one of the qualifications she brought to the office, this one-time single father fought the implication that because he's a man he wouldn't understand how to raise children.

In the end, Biden was able to run against McCain, while Palin had to run against her own image. In the psychodrama that is this election, the big question was whether she could wipe out the data that had been put in the voters' hard drive over the last week. In fact, the governor of Alaska has looked woefully unready for the job. She was like the perky, self-confident valedictorian of her small high school who got into MIT before she realized her school had never taught physics. Mom, mayor, governor, she'd be given a social promotion all the way to the vice presidential nomination. Politically brunette? It was if she were playing Elle Woods, but wasn't going to make law review.

Debate didn't become battle of the sexes

As for those women, especially the Hillary voters that McCain was wooing when he picked Sarah Barracuda? Sen. Clinton had broken through stereotypes, especially the tenacious idea that a woman wasn't up to the job of commander in chief. Increasingly, women who cheered Palin's initial appearance have drifted away. How many of these independents cringing at Palin's performance were dismayed to see her single-handedly revive the old prejudices. Still, not even the most committed Obama fan looked forward to watching the first woman on the Republican national ticket fall on her face.

So, Palinphobes and Palinphiles alike can breath a sigh of relief. This wasn't the battle of the sexes. It's just that Tina Fey still looks more qualified.

Load-Date: December 22, 2008

End of Document

In Beersheba, rockets bring Arab, Jewish neighbors together. Sharing a shelter underscores close ties

The Jerusalem Post

January 1, 2009 Thursday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 2

Length: 581 words

Byline: ABE SELIG

Body

Beersheba looked like a ghost town Wednesday afternoon, as the sporadic wail of sirens and rattling booms of Grad rockets prompted many to stay within the relative safety of their homes, glued to their TVs and radios.

But in the city's Gimmel neighborhood - a heavily- Sephardi, working class bloc near the city center - people stood outside the entrance to a bomb shelter, passing the time with jokes and gossip while waiting anxiously for the next siren or boom.

"We didn't hear it this morning," Riki Yitzhak said. "The siren hasn't been working in this part of town at all, so we left our houses and came to the shelter. I'd rather stay here all day than go home."

Yitzhak explained that she and the others crowded around the shelter's entrance and just stepped outside to get a breath of fresh air.

"There are many more people downstairs," said a man who stood with the small crowd, his Hebrew peppered with an Arabic twang. "I'd say there are at least 50 people down there."

Down the flight of stairs and into the shelter's main room, it became apparent he had left out at least one unusual detail.

Sitting around the room, Jewish women poured over books of Psalms and other religious texts, while Arab women, dressed in traditional head coverings and long, modest dresses, sat next to them, knitting scarfs and caps for their young children who waited nearby.

"Look at this," Yitzhak said as she followed the crowd back down the stairs. "This is a mixed neighborhood - Jews and Arabs live here together, and we're all suffering from the rockets together. These women are scared just like we are, and they're our neighbors - we decided that we should all stay down here together."

Indeed, the Arab families, mostly Beduin, said they were happy to be with their Jewish neighbors in the shelter, and that they abhorred the rocket fire coming in from Gaza.

"What do I care about Hamas?" one of the Arab men asked, his anger visible. "This is my home right here, and they're firing rockets at it. Do you think they would stop if they knew there were Arabs living here?"

Others expressed their satisfaction with life in the neighborhood, until it was disrupted by the rocket fire.

In Beersheba, rockets bring Arab, Jewish neighbors together. Sharing a shelter underscores close ties

"I've been living in this neighborhood for over 10 years," said Daoud Khaled, whose kids hung onto his pant legs as he spoke.

"I love it here, I want to keep living here forever. I have fantastic neighbors, and I'll tell you, in the Gimmel neighborhood, we're all in this together. There's no Arab and Jew here, we're all like one."

Miriam, who was standing nearby, chimed in: "We're like one big family, we get along," Then, switching to Arabic, she asked the woman sitting next to her, "How long have you been here? Eight years?"

The woman nodded, "Yes, eight years in the neighborhood."

"You see," Miriam continued, "we all get along just fine."

But aside from their stories of coexistence, nearly everyone in the shelter said they were scared, tired, and anxious to get back to their regular lives.

"Have you heard anything about when this is going to be over?" asked Muriel, a younger girl who said she had been in the shelter all day. "It's stuffy down here, and we want to go back up. But, how can we leave if more rockets are going to come down?"

Others tried to keep the mood light.

"Listen," one of the Arab men, Hamed, said. "We don't have to go to work today, the kids aren't in school, so we'll just enjoy each others' company. My wife just went to the house to bring candy; everything is going to be just fine."

Graphic

Photo: BEERSHEBA RESIDENTS gather in a bomb shelter yesterday. (Credit: Daniel Ben-Nun)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

Not all Jews are supporting Israel - Correction Appended

The Toronto Star
January 11, 2009 Sunday

Correction Appended

Copyright 2009 Toronto Star Newspapers, Ltd.

Section: OPINION; Pg. A19

Length: 613 words

Byline: Haroon Siddiqui, Toronto Star

Body

Judith Weisman, 78, is a Toronto psychotherapist. She grew up in "a very Zionist family" in Baltimore but "began to change when Israel supported the Vietnam War."

She and her husband came to Canada in 1969. She worked at the Jewish Family and Children's Services.

Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon estranged her from the Jewish state. "It took me a while to grasp what was being done to the Palestinians." She was critical of Israel through the two intifadas and the 2006 invasion of Lebanon.

She helped found Jews for a Just Peace; Jewish Women to End the Occupation (since renamed Women in Solidarity with Palestine); Not in Our Name; and an umbrella group, Independent Jewish Voices.

She helped host a stream of visiting Israeli scholars and human rights activists. She's awaiting the arrival of Jeff Halper of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (7.30 p.m., Jan. 23, Trinity St. Paul's United Church).

Hers has been a long struggle, ignored by the media and shunned by "the organized Jewish community" that is solidly pro-Israel.

But in recent years, she and other dissidents have been garnering support. In recent days, they've had much company.

On Wednesday, a dozen Jewish women "occupied" the Israeli consulate on Bloor St., demanding an end to the Israeli siege of Gaza.

The group included Judy Rebick and Judith Deutsch, president of Science for Peace (whose former presidents include George Ignatieff, the late father of Liberal leader, Michael, who has just joined the Stephen Harper Tories in giving blanket immunity to Israel).

The women expressed "outrage at Ottawa's refusal to condemn the massacres," said spokesperson Miriam Garfinkle. They urged the media to report that "many Jewish-Canadians do not support Israel's violence and apartheid policies."

On Thursday, four prominent Jewish Canadians held a news conference.

Not all Jews are supporting Israel

Anton Kuerti, internationally acclaimed concert pianist, said:

"I am not an expert on what is a war crime but I can recognize one when I see one ...

"What if almost a thousand Israelis had been killed by F-16s and helicopters and 1,000-pound bombs? There'd be immense outrage throughout the world ...

"Israel's behaviour makes me ashamed of being a Jew, and Canada's servile support of the United States position - 'it's all Hamas' fault' - makes me ashamed of being a Canadian."

Deutsch read from a prepared statement: "The words 'never again,' so fraught with memories of the Holocaust, means 'never again' for all peoples."

Others who spoke were Weisman; Michael Mandel, professor of international law at Osgoode Hall, once a visiting professor at Hebrew University of Jerusalem; and the venerable Ursula Franklin, retired U of T research physicist, Companion of the Order of Canada and a Pearson Medal of Peace recipient.

Later that evening, two dozen dissenting Jews turned up at a pro-Israel rally at Beth Tzedec Synagogue.

Smadar Carmon, a dual Israeli-Canadian citizen, said the group was harassed by another - "a mob of thugs, full of hate, shouting 'IDF,' 'We love Israel,' and 'Terrorist supporters,' 'Traitors,' 'You are not real Jews.'"

On the other side of town, there was a candlelight vigil for Gaza at the Mississauga Civic Square, organized by Palestine House.

And yesterday, there was a demonstration in front of the Israeli consulate, organized by an array of groups, including the Canadian Arab Federation, Canadian Peace Alliance, Coalition to Stop the War, Canadian Union of Public Employees (Ontario), Canadian Union of Postal Workers, and all the groups that Weisman is associated with.

She had planned to be there, as she had been the Saturday before.

Haroon Siddiqui's column appears Thursday and Sunday. [hsiddiq @ thestar.ca](mailto:hsiddiq@thestar.ca)

Correction

The venue for a Jan. 23, 7: 30 p.m. public talk by Israeli humanitarian and author Jeff Halper has been changed to Bloor Street United Church (300 Bloor St. W.). Incorrect information about the location was provided to the Star and published in a Jan. 11 column about Halper's cross-Canada tour to discuss his work and views relating to Israel.

Correction-Date: January 13, 2009

Load-Date: January 14, 2009

Excessive rhetoric marks anti-Israel protests

The Vancouver Sun (British Columbia)

January 9, 2009 Friday

Final Edition

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Section: CANADA & WORLD; Pg. B5; Barbara Yaffe

Length: 726 words

Byline: Barbara Yaffe, vancouver sun

Body

National Jewish organizations sounded alarm bells this week about what they consider hateful or discriminatory action carried out in Canada by those sympathetic to the Palestinian cause.

The Canadian Jewish Congress on Monday condemned "heinous slogans, placards and chants calling for the murder of Jews" at a pro-Palestinian rally in Montreal last weekend.

According to the Congress, Quebec MNA Amir Khadir attended the rally but did not speak out against the excessive rhetoric.

Meanwhile, B'nai Brith Canada issued a security alert on Thursday to synagogues, community institutions and Jewish individuals, warning "possible hostile attacks . . . demand your attention as a matter of top priority."

The group says it has documented a spike in incidents against Jews in Canada, including harassment and death threats.

B'nai Brith also called on the Canadian Union of Public Employees to denounce its Ontario chapter for efforts to invoke a boycott against Israeli academics. The boycott call came in response to the Israeli bombing of Gaza, specifically an attack on what Israel claims was a weapons lab at the Islamic University of Gaza.

The initiative follows a Jan. 2 letter from CUPE's national president, Paul Moist, to Canada's political leaders, demanding the government "condemn the serious violations of humanitarian and international law by the state of Israel . . ."

In 2005, both CUPE BC and the B.C. Federation of Labour took a similar stand against Israeli policies. And CUPE BC currently has posted on its website a pamphlet denouncing Israel's security barrier surrounding the West Bank.

Frank Dimant, a B'nai Brith vice-president, argues that "public unions should not be used as a breeding ground for negatively singling out one group of people and denying them their basic rights and freedoms."

Canadian Jewish Congress co-president Sylvain Abitol added Thursday, "The irony of a labour organization calling for the establishment of a discriminatory employment policy should not be lost on anyone."

Bernie Farber, CEO of the Canadian Jewish Congress, notes CUPE has not asked for a boycott of Palestinian intellectuals in reaction to ***Hamas***'s longstanding practice of launching rockets into southern Israel.

Excessive rhetoric marks anti- Israel protests

It's important to note here that CUPE represents teaching assistants and college instructors who work on university campuses already plagued by student conflict over the Middle East.

In fact, a group of academics known as the Canadian Academic Friends of Israel is sponsoring a conference in March at the University of Toronto based on the theme, "Emerging Trends in Anti Semitism and Campus Discourse."

It's perfectly legal for Canadian unions to spend union dues on political causes. But the current agitation in Ontario could usefully inspire a debate as to whether it's appropriate.

Should union organizations, normally assumed to be working for better wages and working conditions for their membership, be delving into foreign policy matters and launching political action?

And why has CUPE been so focused on the Israeli issue?

Why hasn't the union spoken out about the extreme trauma being suffered by the population in Zimbabwe at the hands of the Mugabe regime or the systematic rape of women at the hands of Congolese government and rogue troops? (CUPE Ontario, on its website, features no more than a message of support for Turkish leather workers and a petition for at-risk trade unionists in Columbia.)

And really, how effective are unions at influencing goings-on in other nations?

It's difficult even for the Canadian government to have its voice heard when it comes to influencing foreign regimes.

Nonetheless, it's surely best left to politicians and government -- not civil servants -- to develop direct responses to the actions of other governments.

Grassroots agitation, such as that undertaken by CUPE, probably has its greatest impact in disrupting Canada's civil society and introducing turmoil in the workplace -- surely counterproductive in a country accommodating more than 224 different ethnic groups.

Arabs and Jews hopefully relate differently to one another in this country than they do in the Middle East. Efforts to bring the Israel-Gaza conflict closer to home will only increase domestic hostility and feelings of defensiveness.

As the world grows smaller, people's tolerance needs to grow greater, voices more moderate.

Load-Date: January 9, 2009

Our role is that of fair reporting

Pretoria News (South Africa)

January 13, 2009 Tuesday

e1 Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 7

Length: 629 words

Body

The Middle East conflict continues to draw much anger and emotion. In this column last week, I expressed my personal view on the attacks, stressing that the killing of innocent civilians can never be condoned. It's sad and heartbreaking to see men, women and children being slaughtered.

There have been protests all over the world and more are planned. Locally, there is also tension among both Israeli and Palestinian supporters. The Jewish and Muslim communities in South Africa are both vocal. You find one condemning the other and some continue to try and justify the use of violence.

Violence cannot solve political problems. Bloodshed leads to more bloodshed. Israel attacked Gaza because of rocket attacks which claimed nine lives.

The death toll from Israel's war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip passed 900 yesterday.

The local media has reported on the attacks, trying to bring both sides of the story to the fore. For most, the reporting has been balanced and fair.

But, as with any emotional issue, tempers flare and accusations are then levelled at journalists. At a protest march in Johannesburg recently, a photographer was attacked after he refused to name the publication he was working for. I am told that some protesters at a march on the Egyptian embassy in Pretoria also levelled abuse at some reporters, claiming their media organisations were pro-Israeli.

The media has repeatedly argued that they report on developments as they unfold. It's unfortunate that some individuals have little understanding of how the media works.

Obviously, if one is either pro-Israeli or pro-Palestinian, you want to read or hear what favours your camp. You cannot accuse the media of being biased simply because it doesn't favour your personal viewpoint.

There was a lot of reaction to the column I wrote last week.

Let me repeat a point I made: "The world cannot sit back and see the madness continuing. Those countries that condone the attack on Gaza have blood on their hands. Israel cannot be above international law ... "

A caller to Talk Radio 702, obviously a supporter of Israel, claims my comment condones terrorism. Again, he is reading what he wants to read into this sentence. He fails to consider the point I made a few lines later where I said "the killing of innocent Israeli's can also not be condoned".

Our role is that of fair reporting

Another caller, this time a Muslim, said he was "delighted" by what I wrote and that I should have lashed out at Palestinian President, Mahmoud Abbas. Again, he wants to push his own agenda. These are some of many examples of what the media faces on a daily basis. We have kept open discussion on the attacks.

Talk show host Redi Direko invited Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein and Moulana Ebrahim Bham of the Council of Muslim Theologians into the 702 studio to discuss the issue. The Pretoria News and other Independent Newspapers titles carried a detailed report of the debate. Some supporters from either camp claim that Goldstein and Bham were not the right people to have had on the show.

One or two went as far as to disagree with their own religious leaders on specific issues. Also, what many people fail to understand is that when a caller makes a point on a radio station or in a letter to the editor, it is not necessarily the view of the host, the station or the newspaper.

Soon after presenting a pro-Israeli or pro-Palestinian opinion, we in the media are accused of pushing a certain agenda. This is far from the truth. The media has to listen to all parties and give everyone a fair opportunity to express their opinion. Don't condemn the messenger!

n Yusuf Abramjee is Group Head of News and Current Affairs for Primedia Broadcasting, owners of Talk Radio 702, 94.7 Highveld Stereo, 567 Cape Talk and 94.5 Kfm. He writes this column in his personal capacity.

Load-Date: January 12, 2009

End of Document

Sound of artillery fire may herald peace after relentless years of raining rockets

The Australian

January 5, 2009 Monday

3 - All-round Metro Edition

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Section: WORLD; Pg. 9

Length: 654 words

Byline: Abraham Rabinovich, Sderot, Israel

Body

TO Israelis living along the Gaza border, the sound of artillery pummelling the Palestinian enclave is a hopeful sign that the rocket fire may stop at last. But then a missile slams into a house.

The rocket fired by Gaza militants demolishes part of the single-storey home in a working class neighbourhood of the southern Israeli city of Sderot that has borne the brunt of such attacks over the past eight years.

Neighbours rush to the scene as soon as the ``red flag" alert ends.

Some weep, an old man just shakes his head and a couple of women, seemingly undisturbed by the commotion, resume hanging their laundry as the sound of Israel's big guns echo from the Gaza Strip a few kilometres away.

All are optimistic that Operation Cast Lead can bring an end to eight years of rocket attacks by the Islamists of Hamas and other militant groups based inside the impoverished territory.

``That's the whole point of this operation," said Sderot Mayor David Muskila, as he comforted neighbours still in shock from the rocket attack.

``We hope this will bring peace and silence to this area, not only Sderot, but also Ashkelon, Beersheba and others," he added in reference to communities within rocket range of the besieged Palestinian enclave.

Many residents have fled to relatives in safer areas, while others who stay barely venture from their homes. Inez Madmon, an Israeli housewife, sits on the front step of her apartment building in Sderot, a drab town of 20,000, looking up at two silver observation aircraft, watching the Gaza Strip for rockets or tracking targets.

``We used to go to Gaza for shopping," she said. ``I bought my living room set there and Gaza workmen did the tiling on my floor. I don't think we'll have such relations again.

``The older generation there that wanted peace is gone. The younger generation has been poisoned against us."

Sderot is the closest Israeli town to the Gaza Strip, just over 1km away. Residents had close ties for decades after the Strip was captured by Israel in 1967.

Sound of artillery fire may herald peace after relentless years of raining rockets

A few residents still communicate with friends on the other side by telephone or email.

However, when the second Palestinian intifada broke out at the end of 2000, Sderot's proximity made it the main target for Gaza's rockets. Thousands have fallen on Sderot since and Ms Madmon has heard them all, especially in the past week.

"One rocket exploded just outside my kitchen window at the rear of the building on Tuesday," Ms Madmon said.

"The blast knocked me down and I hurt my knee. They took me to hospital. Another rocket hit in front of our building. Another one down the street."

She does not look particularly upset and even smiles at the suggestion that she lives at ground zero. "It pains me what is happening to their children now," she said, referring to the youth of the Gaza Strip.

"But they've been shooting at us indiscriminately for eight years. It's got to end."

The round concrete structures on the footpaths around Sderot look like kiosks. A young couple sits on a stone wall a few metres from one.

"It's a shelter," said the woman, Tehila Abergil, 27. "When we hear the siren, we're supposed to get into one if we're on the street."

Even bus stops have these shelters. In some parts of town, concrete slabs have been placed in a roofless Stonehenge-like circle.

Sderot residents have only 15 seconds to find a protected space after the siren signals a rocket rising from Gaza.

Ms Abergil and her boyfriend are not next to a shelter by accident. He is from the neighbouring town of Netivot, which has only recently found itself within range of rockets.

"They're used to it in Sderot," he said. "We're not."

This is the first day in a week that Ms Abergil has left home, except for short walks to the supermarket. She was born in Sderot and has "sort of" adjusted to the incessant rocketing.

"Between rocket and rocket, people function," she said.

"But it takes a toll, especially on children."

Load-Date: January 4, 2009

Comment - There is something rotten in the state of Mubarak's Egypt

Sunday Tribune (Ireland)

January 4, 2009

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Section: NEWS; Pg. N21

Length: 670 words

Byline: Robert Fisk

Body

There was a day when we worried about the 'Arab masses' - the millions of 'ordinary' Arabs on the streets of Cairo, Kuwait, Amman, Beirut - and their reaction to the constant bloodbaths in the Middle East. Could Anwar Sadat restrain the anger of his people?

And now - after three decades of Hosni Mubarak - can Mubarak (or 'La Vache Qui Rit', as he is still called in Cairo) restrain the anger of his people? The answer, of course, is that Egyptians and Kuwaitis and Jordanians will be allowed to shout in the streets of their capitals - but then they will be shut down.

Egyptians demand that Mubarak open the Rafah crossing point into Gaza, break off diplomatic relations with Israel, even send weapons to Hamas. And there is a kind of perverse beauty in listening to the response of the Egyptian government: why not complain about the three gates which the Israelis refuse to open? And anyway, the Rafah crossing point is politically controlled by the four powers that produced the 'road map' for peace, including Britain and the US. Why blame Mubarak?

To admit that Egypt can't even open its sovereign border without permission from Washington tells you all you need to know about the powerlessness of the satraps that run the Middle East for us.

Open the Rafah gate - or break off relations with Israel - and Egypt's economic foundations crumble. Any Arab leader taking that kind of step will find that the west's economic and military support is withdrawn. Without subventions, Egypt is bankrupt.

Of course, it works both ways. Individual Arab leaders are no longer going to make emotional gestures for anyone. When Sadat flew to Jerusalem - "I am tired of the dwarves," he said of his fellow Arab leaders - he paid the price with his own blood at the Cairo reviewing stand where one of his own soldiers called him a 'Pharaoh' before shooting him dead.

The true disgrace of Egypt, however, is not in its response to the slaughter in Gaza. It is the corruption that has become embedded in an Egyptian society where the idea of service - health, education, genuine security for ordinary people - has simply ceased to exist. It's a land where the first duty of the police is to protect the regime, where protesters are beaten up by the security police, where young women objecting to Mubarak's endless regime are sexually molested by plain-clothes agents, where prisoners in the Tora-Tora complex are forced to rape each other by their guards.

Comment - There is something rotten in the state of Mubarak's Egypt

There has developed in Egypt a kind of religious facade in which the meaning of Islam has become effaced by its physical representation. Egyptian civil 'servants' and government officials are often scrupulous in their religious observances - yet they tolerate and connive in rigged elections, violations of the law and prison torture. In November, Egyptian newspaper Al-Masry al-Youm reported how doctors abandoned their patients to attend prayers during Ramadan.

And amid all this, Egyptians have to live amid daily slaughter by their own shabby infrastructure. Alaa al-Aswani wrote eloquently in the Cairo paper Al-Dastour that the regime's 'martyrs' outnumber all the dead of Egypt's wars against Israel - victims of railway accidents, ferry sinkings, the collapse of city buildings, sickness, cancers and pesticide poisonings - all victims, as Aswani says, "of the corruption and abuse of power".

Opening the Rafah border crossing is not going to change the midden in which Egyptians themselves live.

Sayed Hassan Nasrallah, the Hizbollah secretary general in Lebanon, felt able to call on Egyptians to "rise in their millions" to open the border with Gaza, but they will not do so. Ahmed Aboul Gheit, the feeble Egyptian foreign minister, could only taunt the Hizbollah leaders by accusing them of trying to provoke "an anarchy similar to the one they created in their own country".

But he is well-protected. So is Mubarak.

Egypt's malaise is in many ways as dark as that of the Palestinians. Its impotence in the face of Gaza's suffering is a symbol of its own political sickness.

Load-Date: January 7, 2009

'We cannot be quiet': East Carolina U. area locals gather to protest conflict in Gaza Strip

University Wire

January 13, 2009 Tuesday

Copyright 2009 East Carolinian via U-Wire

Length: 614 words

Byline: By Elise Phillips, East Carolinian; **SOURCE:** East Carolina U.

Dateline: GREENVILLE, N.C.

Body

Following the ongoing **Hamas**-Israeli conflict in the Gaza Strip last week, the Islamic Association of Eastern North Carolina decided to do what they could, thousands of miles away from the conflict, in Greenville.

A crowd of about 100 gathered at the Pitt Co. courthouse in downtown Greenville on Friday to protest the conflict between Israel and Palestinians and to promote peace between the two entities. Saeed Dar, a professor in the Brody School of Medicine and chair for the administration board for the Islamic Association, was key in organizing the event, stating that the conflict in the Gaza Strip is something that affects Muslims around the world.

"The conflict in Palestine is a Muslim thing. It's a brotherhood around the world and it affects everyone who is Muslim," said Dar.

Dar says that the population in Greenville that practices Islam felt that they needed to do something to show the citizens of a town in eastern North Carolina that the serious violence in the Gaza Strip is not unimportant here in the United States.

"There was a feeling that we needed to explain our support and have other important people in the community come and raise awareness and consciousness of the gravity of what is going on over there," Dar said. "We cannot be quiet."

The rally began around 2 p.m. on Friday, and rally attendees marched from the courthouse to the Islamic Association's center on the corner of Evans and 13th Streets. Protesters raised signs indicating their desire for peace in Israel and the creation of a Palestinian state, something that Dar, although not a Palestinian himself, believes is possible.

"I think that there can be peace if Muslims, Jews and Christians can learn to respect each other's differences and live together," Dar said. "Jews and Muslims have done it before, and they can do it now."

Many Palestinians attended the rally for peace, some giving testimonials of the atrocities of warfare in that region of the world. Dar says that some of the rally members still have family over there, and engaging in a peaceful protest is the least that they could do to show their support of family members so far away.

'We cannot be quiet': East Carolina U. area locals gather to protest conflict in Gaza Strip

Mehad Odeh was one of the attendees at the rally who still has family members living in Palestinian territory. An East Carolina University junior and political science major, Odeh believes that this conflict touches everyone, not just Palestinians and Muslims.

"I mean it's about human rights," said Odeh. "It's about people not having the basic necessities to live, it's not about who's Muslim or who's not. Women and children are dying in Palestine. Death doesn't matter if you're Muslim or not, it affects everybody."

Odeh, like Dar, believes that there can be peace between Israel and Palestinians if they adopt a two-state system, something she hopes will happen after living in Palestinian territory for a year.

"I lived there for a year, and getting shot at and seeing how they [Palestinians] live, I don't see how people can live there their whole lives," Odeh explained. "I mean, I lived without water. Going there and coming back just shows me how I take the basics of life for granted."

Dar says that the rally on Friday has been long overdue.

"We haven't done anything here [in Greenville]," Dar said. "The least we can do is ask fellow citizens in Greenville to get together and speak up."

The Islamic Association of Eastern North Carolina is a center open five times daily for prayer and includes two prayer halls (one for men and one for women), a library, kitchen and a second floor facility used for prayer and other religious activities. For more information about the association, call 252-758-4411.

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Load-Date: January 13, 2009

What the commentators say today ...

Guardian.com

January 8, 2009

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theguardian

Length: 640 words

Highlight: In association with media analysis firm Editorial Intelligence

Body

In association with media analysis firm Editorial Intelligence

THE ECONOMY: In The Independent, Vincent Cable, the Lib Dem treasury spokesman, says the Bank of England should cut interest rates again today, and should keep on cutting. The Guardian's Nils Pratley agrees that M&S is not a disaster story. That said, by raising the dividend by 23% last year, Stuart Rose was making a boast about underlying strength. Labour is considering simply printing more money to deal with the worse than expected recession, Benedict Brogan warns in the Daily Mail. Stephen Glover argues that forecasters vie with each other to make our flesh creep with dire predictions. But we should not embrace Armageddon too soon, he warns, voicing profound scepticism about apocalyptic messages. The name of administrators Deloitte is fast becoming as familiar on the High Street as that of Woolworths or Wedgwood, Keith Waterhouse suggests.

The Daily Telegraph's Richard Fletcher notes that just five years after he was parachuted in to stave off a bid by Philip Green, Stuart Rose must once again demonstrate a vision to put M&S back on track. Tom Stevenson argues that the Bank of England should not cut interest rates to a 300-year-record, as expected when it meets today. Anatole Kaletsky writes in The Times that we need to borrow our way out of debt. David Wighton wonders whether a rate cut will make any difference to the economy. In the Financial Times, Kevin Rudd, Australia's prime minister, argues that the stabilisation of financial markets and stimulation of the global economy will require unprecedented policy co-ordination among the world's political leaders in 2009. Marks and Spencer may be a bellwether for the markets, but its fate hardly points to the fate of the nation, Andrew Hill argues.

GAZA: The Daily Telegraph's Mary Riddell argues that what Israel is doing in Gaza is wrong and that it is time politicians stop wringing their hands and do something. Until action or intervention is taken, innocent men, women and children will continue to die. In the Daily Mirror, Avi Shlaim, professor of international relations at Oxford University, believes the only way to make sense of Israel's senseless war in Gaza is to understand the historical context - even if the country's insane offensive seems more like an eye for an eyelash.

In The Times, Correlli Barnett says Israel imagined it could defeat Hamas through aerial bombardment but it hasn't learnt the lessons of history. The Guardian's Timothy Garton-Ash argues that the EU is weak and divided, and thus unable to effectively promote its interests in Gaza and in the Russian-Ukrainian gas dispute. Seumas Milne argues that Israel once again faces the threat of political and military failure. Whatever choices the Israelis make now, the war is already cutting the ground from beneath Israeli and western policy across the region. The Independent's Adrian Hamilton is in favour of the Arab peace initiative, which is supported by all 22 members of the Arab League.

What the commentators say today ...

It is a deal that could break the pattern of Middle East conflict and satisfy Israel's concern for security, if only someone was brave enough to pick it up.

RUSSIAN GAS DISPUTE: In the Daily Telegraph, David Blair believes the stand-off with Ukraine over gas is partly political and partly economic but he feels Russia does not hold all the cards. Irwin Stelzer thinks that it would seem that Russia is teaching the Ukraine that if it wants to be an ally to the West, it must pay a price - higher bills for natural gases. The Kremlin resented and feared the 2005 Orange Revolution, writes Mary Dejevsky in The Independent. It sees no reason why Russia should subsidise gas for Ukrainians who have oriented their country towards the West. In The Times, Bronwen Maddox says it is hard to see Vladimir Putin's gas war paying off.

Load-Date: January 8, 2009

End of Document

Tales of sex, cockatoos and murder at sea - settle back

Sydney Morning Herald (Australia)

January 9, 2009 Friday

First Edition

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Section: NEWS AND FEATURES; Pg. 13

Length: 666 words

Byline: DOUG ANDERSON

Body

THE ***FEMALE*** ORGASM EXPLAINED 10pm, SBS: Who better than a group of candid French ***women*** to relate their sexual experiences and discuss the pursuit of physical pleasure from acts of intimacy? That's not to suggest Gallic ***women*** have a monopoly on ecstasy in the boudoir or are less inhibited when discussing fairly personal matters. But they tend - on the evidence offered here - to be relatively matter-of-fact, rather than analytical, judgmental or performance-oriented in a realm where genuine mystery is necessary and tantalising - and often elusive. We've had perhaps too many programs in which American sexologists and academics clinically dissect the process by which orgasm occurs, what it means, how it can be attained, enhanced and prolonged.

It's probably only a matter of time before those giant billboards inviting men to experience eternal erections are replaced by ones extolling the virtues of amazing compounds guaranteed to sustain apocalyptic climaxes bigger than Ben Hur (or Him) on the Vaginal Richter Scale. Do we want to listen to (or read the subtitles) as a group of Parisian ladies evaluates the curious frissons that accompany their most entre nous moments? Of course we do! As the Herald's Erotic Affairs Writer, Fay Corkassim, consistently reminds readers: "In this day and age it's much easier to listen to others - preferably celebrities - talking about sex than actually getting down and doing it yourself."

BETTER HOMES AND GARDENS SUMMER 7.30pm, Seven: If you're starting to sense you've been on vacation too long and reality has begun to become irrelevant, the feeling is likely to intensify when Dr Harry fronts up with an in-depth report on the secret life of an old cockatoo named George. As Ms Corkassim - who is also our Budgerigar Affairs Correspondent - notes: "I've seen a cockatoo."

FOR THE WEEKEND LUSITANIA: MURDER ON THE ATLANTIC 8.30pm Sun, ABC1: All's fair in love and war. The lamentable military action under way in Gaza and the razing of entire residential areas to eliminate individual ***Hamas*** militants have provoked arguments about proportional response and matters of overkill. Nothing new, alas. The bombings of Dresden, London, Baghdad, Nagasaki and Hiroshima all involved targeting civilians in contravention of accepted principles of warfare. So, too, the outrage that followed the sinking of the glamorous Cunard flagship, Lusitania, on May 7, 1915, by German U-boat A20. The event was swiftly denounced by Britain's Admiralty and by Winston Churchill, who was anxious for America to engage itself in World War I. The practice of covertly using civilian shipping to transport military supplies wasn't entirely sporting so the fact the Lusitania was carrying munitions was conveniently overlooked as the Admiralty heaped blame on the liner's master, Captain Turner, for the loss of the vessel and 1200 of its 1900 passengers. At least the German embassy had the decency to place newspaper advertisements next to the Lusitania's arrival and departure notices, advising its navy would target the ship. This dramatised doco splendidly illuminates, from both sides, the events as they unfolded and the

Tales of sex, cockatoos and murder at sea - settle back

context in which they occurred. It was a Pearl Harbour/September 11, 2001, incident involving diverse personal accounts - among the liner's passengers and the U-boat crew. Better than the 1958 drama *A Night To Remember* and the equal of Ridley Scott's epic *Titanic*, this film has a dark subtext of dubious politics and unconscionable expediency.

RADIO

OVERNIGHTS ABC local radio, 10pm: Ain't it just like the night to play tricks when you're tryin' to be so quiet . . . the country music station plays soft but there's nothing, really nothing to turn off? So why not try local radio to ripple the still of the night? There's nothing static in Annette Shun Wah's studio and nothing as engaging as ideas in flux when she talks back to the night. Call up and ask her to play *Misty* for you. Speed has its attractions but time passed slowly is more rewarding.

Load-Date: January 8, 2009

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YOUR LETTERS

Dayton Daily News (Ohio)

January 10, 2009 Saturday

Copyright 2009 Dayton Newspapers, Inc.

Section: OPINIONS; Pg. A11

Length: 696 words

Body

Don't turn back on city of Dayton now

Re "Proposal for Austin Pike arena runs out of time in 2008," Dec. 19:

I am disappointed about the decision to pour tens of millions of our tax dollars into more sprawl. The "Austin Road Interchange Project" will drive development even further from Dayton. If this were strictly about adding an interchange to alleviate traffic, I'd have no issue. But instead, the project has morphed into an "economic development" initiative, one that ironically will add even more traffic congestion to a heavily trafficked area.

The rationalization has been that Montgomery County is losing taxes and jobs to Warren County, and that this development is necessary to attract more businesses and employees to Montgomery County.

But it seems as though our political leaders have not been paying attention to the world outside of the Dayton region. Other regions have figured out that, to compete, they must have strong urban cores. Columbus, Cleveland, Indianapolis and Louisville continue to make strong investments in their urban cores. And Chattanooga (a city the size of Dayton) remains the case study for an entire region that rallied around a dying urban core and completely transformed it.

Yet, despite the city's popular performing arts theaters, arts and restaurant district, well-attended summer festivals and hugely successful minor league baseball stadium, here we have state Sen. Jon Husted claiming, "We have been trying to make downtown a destination site my whole life ... and it gets worse and worse and worse, because people don't want to go there."

This is whom we elected to represent us?

Young people flee this region for more vibrant cities. Building more uninspired development along I-75 is not going to convince them to stay, no matter how many hockey arenas, big-box retailers or chain restaurants are built.

Our regional leaders have stepped up in the past to support major projects in downtown, but there is still more to be done. They cannot turn their backs on it now.

The south suburbs will do fine without additional subsidized development, so I urge our regional leaders to show some real leadership and finish what they started downtown. Give us something the entire region can be proud of.

Bill Pote

Dayton

YOUR LETTERS

Winners should do what is right

Many were happy to see 15 people win in a recent lottery, instead of one person. Now four others have sued for their share, contending that there was a mutual understanding that anyone absent from work would automatically be included in each drawing.

How would you have felt if on that day you had an emergency and couldn't go to work, and they left you out after many weeks and years of participating?

It looks like the winners would rather lose the friendship of their fellow workers and the respect of the general public than share a small fraction of millions of dollars. I cannot believe that several of the winners would not, in the spirit of fairness, convince the others to do what is right.

Now the lawyers are involved, and the "winning" 15 are the losers in our eyes. Shame on you.

Ellen Brewer

Tipp City

Israel's atrocities just keep coming

Israel, with the full support of the U.S. government, is murdering innocent civilians in its so-called war against Hamas. Israel, with full the support of the United States, is bombing female dormitories at Gaza University, and fishing boats that civilians need to feed themselves.

Israel is using powerful American-supplied weapons against civilian refugees in one of the most densely populated areas of the world.

Israel is no better than Saddam Hussein, and Americans need to be repulsed by the atrocities being committed by Israel with full American support and even praise. Americans would be terribly offended if they knew that Saddam Hussein had withheld insulin to diabetics or chemotherapy to cancer patients; yet, that is exactly what Israel has been doing to Palestinians in Gaza for the past two years. Why are we not upset?

How many Palestinian mothers, grandmothers and children need to be murdered by Israel before we are outraged?

America needs to stand up for the innocent people in Gaza and stop the Israeli attacks.

Paul McHone

Beavercreek

Load-Date: January 14, 2009

With a Grain of Salt: Where the egg is...

Daily News Egypt

January 9, 2009 Friday

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Length: 650 words

Body

CAIRO: As the Ahly-Ismaili football game ended last week in a shameful confrontation between the fans of both clubs, the situation among the Arabs, was no less shameful, at a time when Israel is forging ahead with its barbaric scheme of Gaza's "glorious" destruction, according to an Israeli military spokesman, "gloriously" destroying the hope of the Arab masses in any unified Arab stance.

Football fans and Arab governments aside, global public opinion has been engaged in protests everywhere against Israel's bloody massacre of defenseless Palestinian civilians, children, women and the elderly in Gaza. TV channels worldwide have been broadcasting the atrocities committed there every day. People have taken to the streets in demonstrations and newspapers have carried headlines harshly criticizing Israel, yet the Arabs have still not reached a unified stance.

Paradoxically, the game between Ahly and Ismaili kicked off with a heartwarming scene in solidarity with the Palestinians. All the players in both clubs wore the same t-shirt embossed with the phrase "Gaza is in Our Hearts." But at some point during the match, the pro-Palestine slogans gave way to an assortment of insults and verbal abuse.

Such insults are no less vulgar than what we've been seeing in Arab newspapers and satellite channels since the beginning of the Gaza massacre. Just as the football fans had forgotten their solidarity with Palestine and began exchanging insults, Arab countries also forgot the bloodshed in the Gaza Strip and started hurling their media grenades at other countries.

This was the Arab world's best exit strategy from the complete paralysis that has afflicted it: whoever fails to face Israel must now face the rest of the Arabs, accusing them of their inability to end the Israeli massacre at a time when the world is preoccupied with the global economic crisis and the Christmas holidays.

Disregarding its own religious teachings, Israel launched its brutal attack on the Sabbath and continued doing so without Arab intervention for a whole week from Saturday to Saturday. As it continues its aggression throughout the third Saturday, benefiting from the shedding of warm Palestinian blood drops and the cold blood of the US, whose President George W. Bush is content with watching Israel "exercise its right to defend itself" refusing to lift a finger except to impede an imminent UN Security Council ceasefire resolution last week.

With a Grain of Salt: Where the egg is...

The brutal operation in Gaza coincided with an incident which turned France upside down, when a hospital failed to give one patient the necessary attention in time, leading to his death in the ambulance. The French Minister of Health was quick to address public opinion about what appeared to be a case of negligence - not a brutal assault that left over 700 dead and over 3,000 injured. She immediately launched an inquiry and announced the result the following day on public television.

Between the time the French patient died in the ambulance and the time the French Health Minister appeared on TV the next day to announce the outcome of its ministry's probe, dozens of children were killed in the Gaza Strip with no access to an ambulance, let alone a building we can call a hospital in the true sense of the word.

Meanwhile we are busy attacking each other. The Palestinian Authority accuses Hamas, which accuses Egypt, which accuses Hassan Nasrallah, who accuses Saudi Arabia, which accuses Syria, and so on. All of them are entangled in a vicious circle, like children singing the song of the horse in the cupboard, but the cupboard needs a ladder and the ladder is at the carpenter's and the carpenter wants a nail and the nail is at the blacksmith's but the blacksmith wants an egg ... until all of us, football fans and Arab governments, ended up where the egg is!

Mohamed Salmawiyis President of the Arab Writers' Union and Editor-in-Chief of Al-Ahram Hebdo.

Load-Date: January 11, 2009

End of Document

UNRWA '99.9% certain' gunmen didn't fire from shelled school. Arab press compares incident to '96 Kafr Qana shelling in Lebanon

The Jerusalem Post

January 8, 2009 Thursday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 4

Length: 652 words

Byline: BRENDA GAZZAR, AP contributed to this report

Body

United Nations Relief and Works Agency representatives said Wednesday they are fairly certain that gunmen did not fire from a UN school in the Gaza Strip that was shelled by the IDF on Tuesday and called for an independent investigation.

"We are 99.9 percent certain that there were no militants or militant activity in the school or in the school compound," said Christopher Gunness, spokesman of the UN Relief and Works Agency, following a preliminary investigation conducted by the international relief organization.

The shelling killed 40 people who had taken shelter from Israel's military operation and wounded dozens more, Gunness said.

"We've spoken to eyewitnesses, we've spoken to some of the 1,300 people who took refuge there, we have a very experienced investigator who went up there, he talked to everyone we can get a hold of," he said.

IDF officials maintained Wednesday that a number of mortar shells were fired at IDF units "from within the Jabalya school. In response to the incoming enemy fire, the forces returned mortar fire to the source."

An IDF statement said that two ***Hamas*** operatives, Imad Abu Ashkar and Hassan Abu Ashkar, were among the bodies found at the school. A spokeswoman decline to explain, however, how the operatives were identified.

She said that the IDF did not have any video of this particular incident.

Two residents of the area reached by phone told the Associated Press that they saw a small group of gunmen firing mortar rounds from a street near the school, where 350 people had gathered to get away from the shelling. They spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisal.

In addition, Palestinian residents said that several gunmen ran toward the crowd, trying to use it as cover, when the first Israeli mortar shell missed them.

Meanwhile, strong condemnations were renewed throughout the Arab world and mass protests took place in countries like Sudan, Lebanon and Jordan as photos of dead children were broadcast by satellite television stations.

UNRWA '99.9% certain' gunmen didn't fire from shelled school. Arab press compares incident to '96 Kafr Qana shelling in Lebanon

Much of the Arab press condemned Israel for the Jabalya incident, with some comparing it to the incident in the Lebanese village of Qana in 1996, in which the IDF fired an artillery shell that hit a UN outpost in the village that was serving as a shelter for residents, killing more than 100 Lebanese civilians.

The Kuwaiti newspaper al-Qabas called Tuesday's incident near Jabalya "one of the worst massacres against defenseless Palestinian civilians" committed by "the Israeli war machine."

"This massacre reminds us of a similar bloody massacre committed by Israel in Lebanon during the Operation Grapes of Wrath in April 1996, when the UN headquarters, which sheltered people in the village of Qana, was targeted and 105 people, mostly women and children, were killed," it added.

The Syrian News Agency Sanna said Wednesday that "Israeli aggression does not differentiate between humans and stones" in its attacks. These initial reports about the incident did not include the Israeli claim that gunmen had fired from the school.

Lebanese Prime Minister Fuad Siniora was quoted in the Lebanese newspaper el-Mustaqbal as saying: "The Israeli targeting and killing of innocent women and children civilians is described as a war crime in front of the eyes of the world" but without serving as a "deterrent" for Israel.

He added: "This massacre takes us back to the painful memories of the massacres committed by Israel more than once in Lebanon. and specifically in the village of Qana and other Lebanese villages."

But at least some Israeli analysts say they don't think the attack will have an impact on Israel's operation.

The incident "happened towards the end of the operation. Everyone is finalizing a cease-fire," said Eyal Zisser, director of Tel Aviv University's Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern Studies. "I think those who supported it before are OK with it. Those who didn't support it are still opposing Israel."

Graphic

Photo: PALESTINIANS CARRY some of the 39 bodies of people killed near a UNRWA school Tuesday during their funeral in the Jabalya refugee camp in Gaza yesterday. (Credit: Hatem Moussa/AP)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

Chatroom

Townsville Bulletin (Australia)

January 3, 2009 Saturday

1 - Edition

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 63

Length: 610 words

Body

RE sunlander accident. why is qr being blamed? it was the garbo that didnt stop at the stop sign! mindless people dont about the toll about train drivers and their families have 2 bear because of others that dont obey the rules. wife of qr train driver

I see a crossing take a other life i f sorry but when i come to a crossing if light are not on i slow right down and look both ways some of these accident mite not of happing if people slow right down and look jo jo heatley

Qld & Federal Govt: level crossings on national highways = accidents & deaths. YOU ARE CULPABLE. No buts. No more enquiries. It's obvious. Build overpasses NOW. Chris. Sth TSV

Re train/vehicle accs: vehicle drivers need to be more aware of xings! D. Gver.

UN secretary general calls for ceasefire by Israel saying violence is unacceptable! He was silent during the last ceasefire when hamas fired rockets + It is a simple fact of life or death, stop at stop signs! Abbie we

How hot does shari look on the side of the bus? Lucky dine partner! But how can she sneak into restaurants now we know how gorgeous she is? Very impressed west end

the drowning of infants in swimming is a complete NIGHTMARE!!! It is driving families to the point where they get paranoid and i am 2 its horrible. So parents out there be AWARE! At all times. Katrina ravenwood

Did anybody see a bright round orange light drifting off into the sky looked like hot air balloon at 8.50pm new years night ova mount louisa? Sandy mt louisa

If the rude & stuck up women we encountered sitting at the bar at cactus jacks sun nite r anything 2 go by then the decent guys in this town r in serious trouble! Shocked guy Douglas.

Im a nice young guy not the prettiest but honest livein cowboy lookin 2 meet mature lady. Young women set standards high and always up themself. Cowboy Stuart

How ashamed are the fellows who stood by while Barrasi was bashed defending a woman? Not at all! Barassi has out lived the era of chivalry and a victim of the new world order. Eric. West End

Two thumbs up to cranky pants who rocked the house out at riverway on new years eve. You guys were simply SENSATIONAL. new fan in a'vale

Chatroom

Maggie island NYE. video walls, kandi girls. Didn't see either. XBase what a joke. Won't be back again. Anyone else agree. Peter kirwan

With friends new to Townsville in tow, we headed to the Strand on NYE to witness the 8-00pm fireworks display i'd been talking up for for a week. Not sure who was the more embarrassed, them or me. Most people had to move to the waterline in an attempt to view the short, sad show.

Im 18 years old and i went to maggie island for NYE on wednesday. I was disgusted & horrified to see the amount of teenagers too drunk to walk or even know where they were. I saw around 10 fights. Alot of them involving girls. I watched 5 dark girls attack one white girl because `she was talking too loud' kicking her on the ground in the face & stomach she was bleeding everywhere.

Very, very disappointed TCC. What happened 2 the NYE strand park fireworks? Waited over 2hrs with 100's of other people only 2 find @ 8pm TCC had changed the venue & didnt tell us. We only heard the fireworks, could have done that @ home! Thanks 4 nothing!! Jan 4811

Re. text about hit and run dog R R Road 1st I would like to thank the lady who retrieved Scooters body from the road 2nd I would like to let the rotten scoundrel know that not only did those two young kids loose their beloved pet but they lost their young dad to cancer only 10 weeks ago how much more pain do they have to go through. Good Friend kelso

Congrats to Jaimie and Mark on your engagement! The best looking couple in town. All the best. J, Kirwan

Load-Date: January 3, 2009

End of Document

Activists protest blogger's detention

Daily News Egypt

December 3, 2008 Wednesday

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Length: 660 words

Body

CAIRO: Members of the April 6 Movement are protesting the detention of a blogger who activists say was kidnapped by state security forces last month.

According to the Free Mait website, members of the April 6 Movement have announced their intention to launch an open-ended sit-in outside the public prosecution office, Cairo, until 22-year-old Mohamed Adel is released.

Adel, an information technology student and political activist who runs the Mait blog, disappeared on Nov. 20, 2008.

Adel's cousin told the Abnaa Masr website that one of Adel's friends had a phone conversation with the blogger on the morning of his disappearance at around 11 am.

Adel said that he was on his way to meet a foreign journalist. His mobile phone was subsequently switched off.

The Abnaa Masr report also states that an acquaintance of the foreign journalist, referred to as "Henry," confirmed that he had an appointment with Adel in a downtown café but that Adel never showed up. There was reportedly a heavy security presence at the café.

A **female** eyewitness is quoted on the Free Mait website as saying that at 1:30 pm on Nov. 20, she saw Adel sitting alone in the Borsa café.

"He was then surrounded by three groups of men wearing civilian clothing, each group composed of about 10 men," the eyewitness is quoted as saying.

"One of these men slapped Adel across the face before he was carried away to a white car waiting nearby."

A formal arrest warrant was issued on Nov. 24 - four days after Adel's disappearance.

The Arabic Network for Human Rights Information (ANHRI) said in a statement issued on Nov. 25 that it, and Adel's friends, "have been informed that the blogger is being held at the state security headquarters known as 'Lazoghli' in Cairo, a notorious place where torture has been carried out on the infamous fourth floor."

Activists protest blogger's detention

According to the ANHRI statement, Adel's father has filed two complaints demanding that his son's whereabouts be revealed. The prosecutor general reportedly confirmed, unofficially, that Adel is wanted for questioning.

The statement also says that "40 soldiers and members of the special police forces" searched Adel's house and confiscated books and CDs prior to his arrest.

ANRHI suggests that the police had tapped Adel's mobile phone and took him on his way to the meeting with the foreign journalist.

Adel, a member of the Kefaya movement for change, began blogging in 2005 and has also been an editor of ikhwanweb, the English-language website of the Muslim Brotherhood.

The Free Mait website says that Adel was previously detained during a demonstration by security forces who took him, writer Abdel Wahab Messeiry and journalist Mohamed Abdel Qodoos and left them in the desert of New Cairo's Fifth District.

The website also says that Adel, a supporter of the Palestinian cause, traveled to Gaza in January of this year with a relief convoy when the Rafah crossing was breached, and has been active in the campaign for the release of Hammas members imprisoned in Israeli jails.

Another activist, lawyer Ahmed Nassar, was also briefly detained this week by security forces who prevented him from attending a conference in the United States.

"At around 9:30 am on Dec. 2, I was taken to the state security headquarters in Cairo Airport while I was waiting for my flight to New York," Nassar told Daily News Egypt.

"The conference was organized by the US foreign ministry and was on the use of media and the internet in political activism. Seventeen international political movements were invited.

"The conference was covered in the Egyptian press, and the fact that I planned to attend had been reported," Nassar continued.

Nassar was held for an hour at the Cairo Airport's state security headquarters before being released.

He spoke to Daily News Egypt from central Cairo's Passports and Immigration Authority where he was trying to establish the reason why he was prevented from traveling.

"Nobody so far has been willing to speak to me," Nassar said.

Load-Date: December 4, 2008

World Journal

The Telegraph-Journal (New Brunswick)

November 25, 2008 Tuesday

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Section: NEWS;NEWS; Pg. A8

Length: 693 words

Body

Congolese soldiers go on looting rampage

Government soldiers went on an overnight looting and shooting spree in a sprawling Congolese refugee camp, stealing from hungry and traumatized people who have fled fighting with rebels in the country's east, witnesses said Monday. They said one woman was killed by a stray bullet Sunday night in Kibati, a village north of the eastern provincial capital of Goma that has been overrun by about 70,000 refugees. Years of sporadic violence in eastern Congo intensified in August, and some 250,000 people have fled their homes to escape combat between the army and fighters loyal to rebel leader Laurent Nkunda.

Space

Astronauts finish final spacewalk

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. - Two astronauts are safely back inside the International Space Station after finishing a spacewalk to clean and lube a jammed solar-wing rotatry joint. Spacewalkers Stephen Bowen and Shane Kimbrough ended their six-hour, seven-minute spacewalk by climbing back inside a space station airlock. It was the fourth and final spacewalk during space shuttle Endeavour's nearly two-week visit to the space station. Just before the spacewalk began, NASA added a 16th day to space shuttle Endeavour's mission.

Politics

Bush pardons 14 individuals

WASHINGTON - President George W. Bush has granted pardons to 14 individuals and commuted the prison sentences of two others convicted of misdeeds including drug offences, tax evasion, wildlife violations and bank embezzlement. The new round of White House pardons announced Monday are Bush's first since March and come less than two months before he will end his presidency. The crimes committed by those on the list also include offences involving hazardous waste, food stamps, and the theft of government property. Former media mogul Conrad Black has requested Bush commute his 6½-year prison sentence. But his name is not on the list.

Justice

Texas jury convicts Muslim charity

DALLAS - Jurors in Texas have convicted a Muslim charity and five of its former leaders of all 108 charges in the largest terrorism-financing trial since the Sept. 11 attacks. The verdict was announced in Dallas this afternoon, on

the eighth day of deliberations in the retrial of the Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development. It was once the largest Muslim charity in the United States. Holy Land is accused of giving more than US\$12 million to support the Palestinian militant group **Hamas**. The group was designated by the U. S. government as a terrorist organization in 1995.

Politics

Carter says situation dire in Zimbabwe

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa - Former U.S. president Jimmy Carter said Monday the crisis in Zimbabwe appears "much worse than anything we ever imagined" after the government there blocked his weekend humanitarian visit. Carter, former UN secretary general Kofi Annan and child advocate Graca Machel called for southern African leaders to halt the "deep suffering" in Zimbabwe, where the UN says more than five million people face imminent starvation. The president of neighbouring South Africa, meanwhile, warned that Zimbabwe "may implode and collapse," as he announced a new round of talks to try to resolve the political impasse. His comments, some of the strongest yet by South Africa, came as a cholera epidemic has killed hundreds of Zimbabweans and spilled across the border into South Africa.

Iraq

Suicide bomber targets Green Zone

BAGHDAD - A woman hiding a bomb under her long robe blew herself up Monday among Iraqis waiting to enter the U.S.-protected Green Zone, where legislators plan to vote this week on a pact that would let American forces stay in Iraq for up to three more years. The morning attack in central Baghdad killed seven people, by an Iraqi count. It came about 45 minutes after a bomb destroyed a minibus carrying Trade Ministry employees in the eastern part of the capital. At least 13 people died in that blast, most of them **women**. U.S. troops have been instrumental in weakening insurgents, and the latest attacks appeared to bolster the Iraqi government's claim that a hasty American departure could undermine the relative stability that many parts of Iraq have enjoyed since 2007.

Load-Date: December 11, 2008

World datelines

Deseret Morning News (Salt Lake City)

November 11, 2008 Tuesday

Copyright 2008 The Deseret News Publishing Co.

Length: 649 words

Byline: Compiled from Deseret News wire services

Body

Afghanistan: U.S. troops kill 14

KABUL -- American soldiers shot and killed 14 security guards after an encounter in eastern Afghanistan, and the Afghan president said Monday he feared the deaths would only discredit his own government in the eyes of its people.

The U.S. coalition said its troops shot at three vehicles carrying armed men in the eastern Khost province Sunday only after its occupants opened fire on their forces.

"There were secondary explosions in the vehicles, and 14 armed men were killed. Numerous ammunition belts and small-arms weapons were recovered from the vehicles," a statement from the U.S. military said Monday.

Cuba: Thousands head home

SANTA CRUZ DEL SUR -- Thousands of Cubans returned to homes demolished by Hurricane Paloma even as the once-powerful storm dissipated off the coast on Monday.

The hurricane washed out fishing villages, ripped the roofs off factories and ravaged roads, but the government reported that no one was killed.

Coastal Santa Cruz del Sur took a direct hit when Paloma struck as a Category 4 hurricane Saturday night. Ten-foot-high waves carried away wooden houses, leaving a tangled mess of smashed furniture and strewn belongings bobbing in the surf.

Guatemala: Carnage on bus

GUATEMALA CITY -- Prosecutors said Monday that 15 charred bodies found in a burned-out bus were shot before they were set on fire.

At least 14 of the dead were Nicaraguan, including the driver, said Attorney General Amilcar Velazquez.

The bus left Nicaragua with 16 passengers, but only 15 bodies were found after the bus burned on Saturday on an unpaved road in a mountain valley.

Police spokesman Donald Gonzalez said the killings may have been drug related.

Israel: Fuel shipments resume

World datelines

JERUSALEM -- Israel reversed course Monday and decided to resume fuel shipments to Gaza's electricity plant despite continued rocket fire. Gaza authorities already had shut down the facility, cutting power to much of Gaza City.

Israel stopped the shipments last week and closed Gaza's border crossings in response to a wave of Palestinian rocket attacks, which followed an Israeli incursion into Gaza and a fierce gunbattle between army troops and Hamas forces. The clashes have tested an Egyptian-mediated truce that has held for five months.

Mexico: 7 killed in attacks

CIUDAD JUAREZ -- Seven people are dead after a string of gruesome attacks in the Mexican border city of Juarez.

State police say a man's burned and headless body was found dumped in front of a police station. His severed hands lay next to his body, each holding kitchen lighters. A note left behind was directed to the Aztecas drug gang.

Police later found two men and two women executed in a sport utility vehicle parked outside a Social Security clinic. And a woman's body was found stuffed in a black trash bag.

Somalia: 2 nuns kidnapped

MOGADISHU -- Gunmen firing automatic weapons dragged two Italian Roman Catholic nuns from their home in rural Kenya on Monday and drove them into lawless Somalia in a rare cross-border kidnapping, officials said.

The nuns -- Maria Teresa Olivero, 60, and Caterina Giraudo, 67 -- were working on hunger and health programs in the northeastern town of El Wak, about six miles from the Somali border. The kidnapping highlights concerns among regional security officials that chaos in Somalia could lead to troubles in neighboring Kenya, which is struggling to patrol the long and porous border.

Venezuela: U.S. tourist killed

CARACAS -- An American tourist was shot and killed and a friend wounded in an apparent robbery attempt aboard a sailboat on Venezuela's Caribbean coast, police said Monday.

Kenneth Dale Peters, 55, was shot by armed men who boarded his sailboat to rob him and his passengers Saturday night, authorities said.

Peters apparently tried to defend himself with a gun and wounded one of the attackers, who got away, regional police chief Gustavo Palacios said.

Load-Date: November 11, 2008

News in brief

The Jerusalem Post

October 6, 2008 Monday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 6

Length: 686 words

Byline: Jerusalem Post staff, Dan Izenberg, Tovah Lazaroff, Judy Siegel

Body

Secondary teachers to be tardy today

The Secondary School Teachers Association plans to hold a one-hour "warning strike" on Monday morning. Classes will begin at 9 a.m. The move follows the dismissal of a significant number of teachers as well as cuts to many educators' salaries. * Jerusalem Post staff

Man dies in fall from City Tower

A man died on Sunday when he fell from the City Tower on King George Street in downtown Jerusalem.

* Jerusalem Post staff

Courier incriminates Hirschson

Shlomo Aruas, a delivery man for the National Federation of Workers, told the Tel Aviv District Court Sunday that he was given envelopes to deliver to Avraham Hirschson. He also said he had cashed checks and deposited the money into two bank accounts belonging to Hirschson, the former head of the NFW.

Former finance minister Hirschson is on trial for having allegedly stolen NIS 2.5 million from the union.

Aruas said he was given the checks by the treasurer, Ovadia Cohen, who was convicted in a plea bargain last week of stealing NIS 10 million.

Aruas said he deposited the money in Hirschson's accounts in Bank Discount and Bank Yahav. He also said he delivered envelopes to Hirschson's home and left them with a migrant worker in Hirschson's employ.

Sunday marked the second day of testimony in Hirschson's trial. * Dan Izenberg

Aberjil extradition requests said closer

US justice officials are assembling evidence, including affidavits from witnesses in various parts of the country, to draft the official request to extradite Yitzhak and Meir Aberjil and three other suspects the US wants to put on trial, Attorney-General Menahem Mazuz told the Jerusalem Magistrate's Court.

News in brief

The court met last week to consider Mazuz's request to extend the remand in custody of the Aberjil brothers, Sasson Barashi, Moshe Malul and Yisrael Uzifa by another 18 days. On Sunday, Judge Yitzhak Milinov approved the request. The remand will expire on October 22. * Dan Izenberg

Asking forgiveness from Gilad

Hundreds of protesters plan to demonstrate in Tel Aviv's Rabin Square on Monday evening to demand the release of captive soldier Gilad Schalit, who has been held by Hamas since June 2006.

In keeping with the sentiment of Yom Kippur, which is on Thursday, they will ask forgiveness from Gilad. They will be joined by high school students from around the country as well as by Gilad's father Noam, who is expected to address the protesters.

* Tovah Lazaroff

Pilot hurt in emergency landing

A 19-year-old was lightly injured on Sunday morning when a light aircraft performed an emergency landing at an airport in Herzliya. Magen David Adom medics treated the victim at the scene. * Jerusalem Post staff

Would-be bomber caught near Nablus

A Palestinian was caught with two pipe bombs at the Hawara checkpoint south of Nablus on Sunday. An IDF sapper safely detonated the bombs and the Palestinian was taken for questioning. * Jerusalem Post staff

Rehovot residents lose water supply

Thousands of apartment dwellers in southern Rehovot had their water supply suddenly cut off on Sunday. Municipal workers were trying to fix the problem. * Jerusalem Post staff

Jaffa man shot on his porch

A Jaffa resident suffered light to moderate wounds on Sunday when he was shot while he was sitting on the porch of his house. He taken to Wolfson Medical Center in Holon. Police are investigating.

* Jerusalem Post staff

MDA to give women hormone shots

Women undergoing fertility treatments will be able to get daily hormone injections during the upcoming holidays from doctors and paramedics at Magen David Adom stations around the country.

MDA director-general Eli Bin said Sunday that since health fund clinics have short hours or no reception during the intermediate days of Succot, such women can get injections by calling 101 to coordinate a time and place near their home.

They need to bring a doctor's referral and the hormone with them, and they must have already received at least one such injection before. Bin noted that fertility treatment is stressful enough without women having to worry that they will miss daily injections critical to their becoming pregnant. * Judy Siegel

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

Welcome to My World, Barack

The New York Times
November 16, 2008 Sunday
Late Edition - Final

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Length: 3944 words

Byline: Interviews by HELENE COOPER and SCOTT L. MALCOMSON

Helene Cooper is diplomatic correspondent for The Times and author of "The House on Sugar Beach." Scott L. Malcomson is an editor of the magazine and author, most recently, of "One Drop of Blood: The American Misadventure of Race." Interviews with Christopher Hill and Daniel Fried were done by Helene Cooper; the interviews with Condoleezza Rice and James L. Jones were done by Cooper and Malcomson. All the interviews took place in late October in Washington.

Body

On Jan. 20, Barack Obama will inherit a world very different from the one his predecessor found in January 2001. Over the past eight years, the Bush administration has faced great challenges and nurtured grand ambitions; it has tried hard to remake the world. Condoleezza Rice has been a central player in that effort since becoming the candidate Bush's chief foreign-policy adviser in 2000, so we arranged to interview her at the State Department late last month. The interview turned into a wide-ranging discussion of where this government has taken the United States and what sort of world it will leave for the next president. The editors have culled the highlights of her remarks in the text that follows. We also spoke with other administration foreign-policy makers -- Christopher Hill and Daniel Fried of the State Department and Gen. James L. Jones, former supreme allied commander, Europe -- whose remarks supplement and illuminate those of Rice.

I. OUR ELECTION, AND THEIRS

WHAT THE ELECTION THAT HE WON MEANS. Electing a black president says around the world that you can overcome old wounds. I've said in our case, We have a birth defect, but it can be overcome.

WHAT THE ELECTION THAT HE WON MEANS. I've heard people commenting on how in this election, in far places, people talk about what is a caucus and how does that differ from a primary. I think that links up with the fact that the United States under this president has been more active and more insistent that democracy is not just something for a few. People are watching, and I think they're trying to learn from democratic experience.

WHAT ALL THOSE ELECTIONS IN IRAQ AND UKRAINE AND LEBANON MEANT. It's not that you deliver on it tomorrow. Maybe 2005 was a bit deceptive in that way because you had the Iraqi elections, the Cedar Revolution, the Orange Revolution, the Rose Revolution and the Palestinian election. (1) So maybe people came to expect too much too soon.

Welcome to My World, Barack

WHAT ELECTIONS COULD MEAN FOR PEOPLE WHO DON'T TEND TO HAVE THEM. I've seen too many peoples dismissed as not ready for self-government. First it was Asians, and then Latin Americans and Africans were there for a while. I know for a while black Americans were, too.

I've seen it said, well, you know: They're illiterate; how could they vote? And then you see in Afghanistan people line up for long, long lines. Because somehow they know that making a choice matters.

WHAT AMERICAN PROMOTION OF DEMOCRACY CAN DO. I think that over the last several years, because of a more assertive American voice on this, there have been some real gains -- like women in Kuwait voting or like Iraq, which is an imperfect and fragile and still-emerging democracy but one that is multiconfessional, multiethnic and in the center of the Arab world.

AND WHY AMERICA SHOULD NOT STOP PROMOTING IT. If the U.S. doesn't remain that lodestar, then I think democracy moves off the international agenda at a time when you're beginning to see, for instance, the Europeans unafraid to give their award to a Chinese dissident,(2) despite the blowback from Beijing. The Egyptians know that their next election is going to be an important transitional election. I think they're going to insist on a different kind of election.

WHAT AMERICA DOESN'T UNDERSTAND ABOUT DEMOCRACY. It's not easy for a country to embrace the chaos of democracy. It's especially not easy because people who try to introduce democratic reforms are often people who have to bear the responsibilities but also the consequences when sometimes things don't go well. So one should be careful about giving advice and not having to deal with the consequences of that advice. . . . I have no doubt that democracy is the best form of government. I'm very optimistic that it is one whose reach is increasing throughout the world. I would just urge all Americans to understand how our advice is taken. And to be careful how we offer advice. For many people in the world, they look at America, and they see an enormous country with an extraordinary amount of power. Pure power. And so they feel that asymmetry immediately as soon as they meet us. So we have to understand how people look at us sometimes. So advice coming from a country with enormous power can be taken wrongly. CHRISTOPHER HILL Christopher Hill is the assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs. Since February 2005, he has been lead negotiator on talks with North Korea aimed at ending its nuclear program.

II. SUPERPOWERS PAST, SUPERPOWERS FUTURE

THE PROBLEM RUSSIA HAS. They've got problems, and the basis of this is that the legitimacy of the Russian government is not ideology; it is not a pretension to a different route for human development as Communism was. It is the ability of Russians to, if they can't afford those Cartier shops near Tverskaya, to be able instead to go to the Ikea store that now completely dominates the Tank Trap Monument that celebrates the repulsion of the final push of the Germans into Moscow.(3)

THE BIGGER PROBLEM RUSSIA HAS. Russia has an aging population that's not being replaced and unfortunately a sickly population, and an economy that did not take advantage of higher oil prices to diversify. It's still an infrastructural nightmare if you get outside of major cities and certainly if you start going toward the Far East. So I think we should be calm.

RUSSIA AND US -- THE MORAL DIFFERENCE. The West does not go out and conquer countries by using force, try to deprive countries of a choice. It didn't insist that Poland join NATO. Poland wanted to join NATO. It didn't impose NATO membership or E.U. membership on Estonia; Estonia chose it. That's a difference, and it's a moral difference as well. . . . If you validate the assumptions of Russians who believe that the only proper relationship between Russia and its neighbors is one of subordination and intimidation, then how do you expect a more cooperative Russia to emerge in the future? The United States has learned that it is in our interest that our neighbors, Mexico for example, be prosperous, successful and free. And Russia needs to develop a normal set of relations with its neighbors. The notions of privileged relations or its sphere of influence . . . which the Russians demand is not the formula for greater stability; it's the formula for greater tension. I'm not stating these things as a fiat; I'm suggesting that the next administration will have to think this through. DANIEL FRIED Daniel Fried is the assistant secretary of state for European and Eurasian affairs.

Welcome to My World, Barack

SOMETIMES EUROPEANS ALSO COME FROM MARS. I remember telling my European colleagues that I know they always think that America is going to be more aggressive on fighting extremism than they. But you know, we could never, within our context, have passed the law like the basic incitement laws that the British have passed.(4)

The first amendment would have prohibited it.

HOW WE CAN HOLD THE WEST TOGETHER. I remember when I went to Europe, I said -- you know, this is in the wake of 2003-4, which was tough on the alliance -- and I said: "Can we take the trans-Atlantic relationship off the sofa? And stop analyzing it and analyzing whether it's healthy, and actually put it to work in common causes?" Because we all share the same interests and, by that time, we even shared an interest in a stable Iraq. There is only one process in the Middle East; it's the Annapolis process, (5)and it's got Arab support and international support from all of our European friends.

HOW BUSH DID HOLD THE WEST TOGETHER. It's a myth that we have poor relations with the Europeans. We have excellent relations with all European states at this point. Now, it may be that we still have some disagreements, but even on something like how to fight terrorists, I think there's a growing recognition that this isn't just law enforcement and that it puts difficult questions on the agenda about the relationship of gathering information to civil liberties and so forth.

WHY THE EUROPEANS WILL MISS BUSH. An Obama presidency will be greeted in Europe with enthusiasm, but as some Europeans have put it to me, "We realize that we won't have the excuse of George Bush." Obama made it clear during his trip to Europe that he wants to work with Europe, but any American president is going to think globally, and Obama, from what I know of his team, is a freedom Democrat. He believes in a values-based foreign policy. He's going to want Europe to stand up and do more. . . . And Europeans will have a problem, in that they will embrace him, and they will not be able to say: "Well, this is the Bush administration. We have to resist." DANIEL FRIED

III. HOW WE USE POWER

WHERE "NEVER AGAIN" NEVER QUITE GOT DONE. I have regrets about Darfur, real regrets. I don't know that there were other answers. The president considered trying to do something unilaterally -- very difficult to do.

THERE WILL ALWAYS BE DICTATORS. The United States is not an N.G.O., so it's not as if we throw out every other interest or every other concern with a country because it's authoritarian. And sometimes we aren't able to effect change as completely as we like. It has to be indigenous change.

TO WARD OFF NEW DICTATORS, YOU NEED TO WORK. We've gone a long way to make foreign assistance a partnership. We've gone a long way to make foreign assistance have accountability on both sides. Developed countries deliver, but developing countries have to deliver for their people, and you can't ask new democratic states or fragile democratic states to be democratic and to be accountable to their people and not help them have the resources to do it.

WHAT WE ASK OF OTHER STATES. The innovation in Latin America that I think has gone largely unnoticed is when the president went to Brazil and he said: We have no litmus test for our friendship. The only question is, Do you govern democratically, do you invest in your people, do you fight corruption? And so our best friends in Latin America include Colombia from the right and Brazil from the left. Chile from the left; Uruguay from the left.

WHY WE MAY BE LOSING IN AFGHANISTAN. I think the first thing the next president will have to do is understand that Afghanistan is now part of a regional problem. Maybe four or five years ago it was about Afghanistan, but now it's about Afghanistan and Pakistan, and you can't deal with one without dealing with the other. So there is a regional aspect to this that I think we have to deal with. Secondly, I think it's important for people to understand that Afghanistan is an international problem. It's not a U.S. problem alone, as opposed to Iraq. . . . The U.N. is there; NATO is there; the E.U. is there; the World Bank is there; all the N.G.O.'s in the world; around 50 countries. So the question is with all of this capability there, why do we have the sense that we're backsliding?

Welcome to My World, Barack

The top of my list is the drugs and narcotics, which are, without question, the economic engine that fuels the resurgent Taliban, and the crime and corruption in the country. . . . We couldn't even talk about that in 2006 when I was there. That was not a topic that anybody wanted to talk about, including the U.S. JAMES L. JONES Gen. James L. Jones has served as commandant of the Marine Corps, supreme allied commander in Europe and head of the U.S. military's European Command. He was named a special envoy for Middle East security last year by Condoleezza Rice.

WHY FREE TRADE WILL COME UNDER ATTACK. Mexico has benefited from Nafta. In the current global financial crisis, of course, a lot of people are going to be questioning free trade and international integration and all of those things. . . . Yes, the financial system clearly got out of kilter, and Treasury Secretary Hank Paulson and the president and Congress are dealing with that. But it shouldn't go to the core principles of markets, the importance of open trade, the fact of globalization -- which is not going to go backwards.

IV. THE MIDDLE EAST AND BEYOND

HOW WE CHANGED THE CONVERSATION. There have been some real gains, but there also has been a complete change in the conversation, particularly in the Middle East, where some form of popular legitimacy is being sought in almost every country. The American voice has got to stay strong in that conversation.

HOW TO MOVE THE CONVERSATION FORWARD. I really think we have the best atmosphere between Palestinians and Israelis since the mid-'90s, so I'm very gratified that that has come into place. The Palestinian leadership is avowedly in favor of negotiations, renounces violence, recognizes the right of Israel to exist. There is a robust negotiating process, and they have made a lot of progress on how to get to a two-state solution. There is now broad Israeli acceptance of the need for a Palestinian state. After all, Kadima came out of Likud (6) with that in mind. And we have a process on the ground that is beginning to make some progress in terms of making life better for people who live on the West Bank. Palestinian security forces are becoming competent enough that they're now about to move into Nablus, one of the toughest areas, with Israeli consent.

WHY SPEED IS ESSENTIAL TO DEALING WITH HAMAS. The Hamas takeover of Gaza is a problem, but thanks to good Egyptian work, at least there is calm for now. One reason to try and get an agreement done pretty quickly is that I think Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas needs to be able to take an agreement to the Palestinian people through either referendum or elections in order to sideline Hamas politically or to have Hamas buy in, which I think is unlikely, or to sideline Hamas by demonstrating that they don't have a solution for the Palestinian problem. So that's another reason to do it quickly. But I think the structure is there, I think the Annapolis structure is a very powerful structure . . . On the Palestinian-Israeli issue, we will leave this in a much, much better place, agreement or no.

HOW TO CHANGE A REGIME -- SLOWLY. We have said to Iran that this is about changing your regime's behavior, not changing your regime. That has been the message all along. Would we hope that the Iranian people . . . do they deserve to have a different regime than they've got? Absolutely. But the way that we have tried to help with democracy in Iran is to help indigenous forces there -- to bring everyone from people who do disaster relief to artists to sending our wrestlers there. You know, it's why the question of an interests section continues to be important to us.(7)

FINDING PRO-AMERICANISM IN IRAN. There's a very pro-American feeling among most Iranians not because of our policies but because of who we are and because we have stood for democracy. Iranians are sophisticated people -- that's a sophisticated and great culture -- and we need to be able to reach out to them. But in terms of dealing with the regime, I think we've made it very, very clear that we're prepared to deal with the regime; we just don't want them to use negotiations as a cover while they improve their nuclear-weapons capability.

V. TWILIGHT OF THE INSTITUTIONS?

DISCOVERING WHETHER THE "RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT" MEANS ANYTHING. I think we thought the Responsibility to Protect meant something.(8) I remember when the responsibility-to-protect language came up at the 2006 United Nations General Assembly, and I remember thinking at the time: If this turns out to be nothing but

Welcome to My World, Barack

words, the Security Council is going to have a real black eye, and in the Darfur case it has turned out to be nothing but words. I think it has been an enormous embarrassment for the Security Council and for multilateral diplomacy.

DON'T PREACH TO THE CHINESE. I think if we do find a solution to the problem of Darfur, it will be because we worked with China. If we find a solution to the problem of Iran, it will be because we worked well with China. Similarly, if we close this deal with North Korea, it will be because of our efforts with China. So I think China has emerged as a country with whom we have to work globally on security challenges. There are increasing signs that we can do that. China suffers at times to an extent, I think, from a caricature of what it is. It's a really complex society. I don't think it should be defined by one dimension, its economics, or security, or human rights. We need to look at all the issues. **CHRISTOPHER HILL**

WHY THE SECURITY COUNCIL NEGLECTED DARFUR. We worked day in and day out. Almost not a day passes in this office that we're not trying to find some way to get more forces into Darfur. To make the Sudanese government live up to the multiple agreements that it has made and then walked away from. We go to the Security Council, and nobody wants there to be consequences, well, not nobody, sorry, some don't wish there to be consequences. And so we end up sanctioning again, unilaterally. The Europeans do some things but other interests seem to then trump the responsibility to protect.

HOW NATO REALLY WORKS. First of all, the NATO alliance took on this mission in Afghanistan by consensus. It only operates by consensus. And I think what you see is steadily increasing alliance participation. The French have increased their numbers; most of the small states have increased their numbers over time.

AN ALLIANCE OF DEMOCRACIES IS NEVER SIMPLE. There's this past image of NATO as in total, complete unity with exactly the same views during the cold war. Simply fiction. Fiction. Do you remember that in 1989 the big NATO 40th-anniversary summit was going to see a breakdown around short-range nuclear forces being deployed? So, NATO has always been an alliance of democracies. . . . Yes, I'd like to see NATO do more. Yes, we push hard for NATO to do more. Yes, we don't like the caveats,(9) and some of them have come off in time. But you look at what this alliance is doing; it's impressive.

WHAT NATO IS STILL GOOD FOR. I think if NATO members draw the conclusion that they shouldn't have been here in Afghanistan, and we're not going to do this again, then I think the purpose of NATO in the 21st century will very quickly be called into question. I think that most of them do understand that for NATO to survive as an institution in the 21st century, they need to start thinking about a new strategic concept. . . . Unfortunately NATO's mission is still rooted in the 20th-century, cold-war model of a defensive, static, reactive alliance instead of agile, flexible and proactive 21st-century reality. **JAMES L. JONES**

HOW NATO MIGHT HAVE WORKED AFTER 9/11, BUT DIDN'T. If there is one thing that was unfortunate about 9/11, about the aftermath, I remember when the alliance invoked Article 5, first time it had ever happened, and we simply couldn't wait for the alliance to mobilize.(10) And, had you had the ability to mobilize the alliance the way we have now, there probably would have been more buy-in. But that's one of those -- it was impossible to do. Capabilities just weren't there. Later on we got the rapid reaction force and all the things that we needed.

VI. THE PAST AND FUTURE OF THE BUSH AGENDA

WHY BUSH SET THE FREEDOM AGENDA. George W. Bush deserves credit for recognizing that the terms were now going to be set for the next big historical evolution. The president recognized that freedom was something that was not just desirable but essential for the United States; that it meant not just freedom from tyranny but also freedom from disease, from poverty. And that if you were going to have democratic leaders, they had to be able to deliver for their people. Thus the president supported the millennium challenge and the H.I.V. AIDS and Malaria project.(11) And linking up the great compassion of the United States with our security interests. Making it about democracy, defense and development. We're at the beginning of that historical transformation, and yes, sometimes it's lonelier at the beginning than at the end.

It's really recognizing that this is about a single answer to what is the right form of government, and that's democracy. It takes different forms: there is Japanese democracy, and there's American democracy, and there are

Welcome to My World, Barack

fragile democracies, and there are emerging democracies, and there are states that are trying to find some form of popular legitimacy.

IMMIGRATION POLICY IS FOREIGN POLICY. We didn't get comprehensive immigration reform. . . . I think everybody knows that this president tried. I remember the first foreign-policy meeting that I went to with the then-governor, before he was inaugurated, was with the then-governor, soon to be president of Mexico, Vicente Fox, and they talked about the need to fix this problem. I am a firm believer in defending our laws and defending our borders. . . . But it's also true that there are a lot of hardworking people in this country who live in the shadows.

IMMIGRANTS ARE CENTRAL TO AMERICAN IDENTITY. I was a major proponent of the temporary-worker program and finding some way to normalize the status for these people. I think that it goes to the core of who we are. I hear some people talking about, well, maybe there should be a timeout on legal immigration, check your last name and see whether or not it came over on the Mayflower.

WHY SOME IMMIGRANTS SHOULD STAY -- AND SOME SHOULD STAY HOME. Improving the economic conditions that would allow people who are clearly ambitious -- if they're going to walk across the desert to get here, they're ambitious people -- improving the capability of those people to stay home and contribute is the last piece of that puzzle. Comprehensive immigration reform is the one thing I wish we'd been able to do, and it's going to have to be done, and I hope it's done soon.

WHAT SHOULD NOT BE ABANDONED. The other thing that I'm worried about out of this current global financial crisis and whatever economic fallout there may be is, I really hope we don't sacrifice foreign assistance. The Millennium Challenge and programs like it say: invest in your people, fight corruption, be democratic, and we'll help you. If you can't fulfill that promise, then good governments around the world that have staked their futures on that argument are going to be in very deep trouble. And so I hope that foreign assistance, if anything, continues to increase. We found it flat. The president doubled it in Latin America, quadrupled it in Africa, tripled it worldwide. The president authorized 300 new U.S. AID officers and 1,100 new Foreign Service officers, because we believe that transformational diplomacy is a word for not thinking that your job as a diplomat is to sit in the capital and talk to other governments. It's to get out and help those governments. Without the tools of foreign assistance, we won't be able to do it.

WHAT THE MOST POWERFUL MAN IN THE WORLD CAN'T ACCOMPLISH. Do you think Bush expected 9/11? No. Did Clinton expect Bosnia? No. Man makes his plans; God has his own. . . . Remember Bush's second debate with Gore where he campaigned against nation building? Oh, well. . . . The tension between the modesty of knowing what's possible and what isn't, and the desire and ability to do good because you're president of the United States, that challenge is one of the most profound things. . . . Don't shortchange the opportunity to make a difference, but understand how hard it is. . . . You've got to keep both notions in your head at the same time. And that's hard. That's the description for the man in the Oval Office. DANIEL FRIED

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

DRAWINGS (DRAWING BY NATHAN FOX) (pg.MM45 and 51)

Load-Date: November 16, 2008

British MPs suggest Global justice, human rights to ensure global democracy

The Balochistan Times (AsiaNet)

January 9, 2009 Friday

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Length: 788 words

Body

ISLAMABAD: The Members of British Parliament were unanimous here Friday at a seminar that only global justice and delivery of basic human rights could ensure democratic process across the globe.

The moot, organised by Ambassador at large Javed Malik here at Prime Minister Secretariat, was titled "Democracy in Pakistan: New Challenges and Opportunities".

Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani was Chief Guest while Pakistan's Ambassador at Large, Javed Malik, British MPs James Devine, Mark Fisher, James McGovern, and MP Mohammad Sarwar addressed the distinguished gathering of Federal Ministers, politicians, businessmen, and people from all walks of life. Minister for Commerce Makhdoom Amin Fahim, Minister for Defence Ahmad Mukhtar, Secretary General PPP Jahangir Badr, Secretary General PML-N Iqbal Zafar Jhagra, Akram Zaki and others were also present. Addressing the gathering, Javed Malik said the advent of democratic process in the country was distinguished as Prime Minister was elected unanimously. He said the government had introduced a policy of reconciliation with all the political forces to strengthen the democratic process.

He said the government was helping the free press under a policy of tolerance and progressive approach. Malik said the government was making all out efforts to make the country a welfare state according to the vision of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. "We have struggled through to defeat the dictatorship and achieve democracy. In this struggle Zulfikar Ali Bhutto laid down his life while Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto embraced martyrdom but no compromise was made on democracy," he said.

Mentioning the contribution of PML-N Chief Mian Nawaz Sharif, the ambassador at large said Mian Nawaz Sharif also joined the struggle for the cause of democracy which finally led to the triumph of democratic forces.

MP James Devine said Pakistan was a beautiful country and so were its people. We support Friends of Pakistan initiative, he added.

"Since it was my first visit to this beautiful land, it was an eye-opener for me. Now I would go back and tell my nation that Pakistanis are pro-democracy and they should be supported," he said.

Voicing against the brutalities and atrocities being committed by Israeli forces in Gaza, Devine said he supported the rights of self-determination of the Palestinian people.

"Israel should withdraw from Gaza and a justified solution is a must for long-term peace in Middle East (ME)," he asserted.

British MPs suggest Global justice, human rights to ensure global democracy

MP Mark Fisher termed MP Mohammad Sarwar as a credit for Pakistan and a jewel for Britain.

"Since I have been visiting Pakistan for past 26 years to support the Kashmir cause, I think Pakistan is in the eye of an international storm. Pakistan needs to adopt a prudent policy to deal with the issue," he said.

Fisher said Britain was a friend of Pakistan as Pakistan was key to peace in Afghanistan and ME. MP James McGovern said the visit of Pakistan brought new vista for him as he had visited the country for the first time. He said poverty and illiteracy were main causes of terrorism and Britain had assisted Pakistan to eradicate poverty and illiteracy. MP Mohammad Sarwar, the first Muslim to become a British MP, said the credit of democratic process in Pakistan went to people who went to vote despite terror threats.

"Let me confess that had this case been in Britain, people would have stayed away. He said the Britain was yet to achieve ideal democracy as despite having a 250-year democratic process, we are yet to ensure adequate representation of women and minorities in the British Parliament," he said. He said that Palestinian people voted for Hamas in last polls, but the US administration rejected the democratic process which did not suite it.

Terming the Iraq War illegal and immoral, Sarwar said Bush administration had endangered the global peace. "Today, women, children and elderly civilians are being butchered in Palestine. The world should know that Muslim blood is not cheaper than Jewish blood," he remarked.

"We have to acknowledge that war on terror could never succeed without ensuring global justice. I think we should negotiate with those militants who are willing to lay down arms and talk," he said.

Iqbal Zafar Jhagra said the use of force in war on terror had totally failed and only dialogue process could resolve the situation.

"Dialogue with genuine stakeholders should be conducted as this process would discourage the non-state actors," he added.

Jahangir Badr called for unanimous efforts by all political forces to consolidate democratic process. He said the rich and elites had captured the power while the middle classes and the poor were ignored who had rendered sacrifices for the democratic process.

Load-Date: January 14, 2009

Let's not forget to have fun; Messageboard: What are your hopes for 2009?

London Lite

January 5, 2009 Monday

1ST Edition

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Section: Pg. 10

Length: 625 words

Body

WE HAVE to make sure we have more fun. I find that doing this ensures I have a good time wherever I am. When our lives are filled with so much responsibility and the world with so much hate, the easiest way to cheer yourselves up is to have fun. And, it doesn't even have to involve expense. Just make someone smile or buy some cakes for your office. People feeling better is the way forward for this melancholy society we have created.

Let's all smile more, everyone! Happy New Year!

Lily, Greenford

I NEVER make resolutions for the year ahead. What's the point? Rack up a whole new list of things I'm not going to do plus all the other things I have to get done around the house or for other people. It's best to just carry on as you are and modify as you go. Why wait for the new year to creep up on you? All this "start as you mean to go on" business is silly and just makes people more annoyed with themselves because they set impossible targets, thus remaining miserable for the next year. Just be. And then you'll just be happy.

Mark N, Chelsea

I HOPE that Barack Obama comes good on his promises and is the force for change that I believe he can be. Though without a gaffe-prone comedy US President the world will be a less amusing place, I think.

Kimberly G, Richmond

EAT a bit less, move a bit more, the usual really. I'd like to still have a job by the end of it, but with recent cutbacks sorry, restructuring at my company that's not looking likely. My hopes and dreams are a bit more down-to-earth this year.

Peter, Wimbledon

I MADE a resolution at the start of 2008 not to make any more resolutions, so I can't make any without breaking last year's...

Let's not forget to have fun Messageboard: What are your hopes for 2009?

C Kelly, Upton Park

SOMEONE told me that women are happier if they are a size 14.

Well, that's my new year's resolution out the window then. No point trying to lose weight if it is going to make me unhappy. This curvy woman is here to stay and happy not to lose weight.

M Lane, Swiss Cottage

I RESOLVE to smoke more. I'm currently on 10-15 a day, I want to get up to at least 20 per day. Oh and to exercise less.

G Sage, London

MY HOPE for 2009 is that people will stop fooling themselves by making empty promises about what to do for the next 12 months.

Let's face it, how many of us actually stuck to the resolutions we made last year?

Mia, Catford

I HAVE done the ciggies and the weight loss, so I think this year it's going to have to be giving up celibacy again!
AF, Aldgate

I WOULD love to write a book. It has been a long-term dream of mine and as soon as I buy a laptop in the sales my potential bestseller will be a few clicks away. Now all I have to do is remember to shop around for the best bargain price on that computer.

Rebecca, Hornsey

I HAVE to lose weight in the new year, or else I won't fit into my wedding dress! Hopefully I can lose 15lbs before March my new diet should work a treat. My fiancé will be so proud of me if I do and so will my family. Looking forward to a year of skinny bliss and hopefully being able to buy smaller clothes. Here's hoping everybody has a brilliant new year!

Shannon Totridge, Fulham

I THINK we are currently living in dangerous times. The recent military campaign by Israel against Hamas in Gaza is only deepening the divide between the Middle East and the West. The best that I think we can hope for is to make it through the year without a major armed conflict kicking off.

Terry, Limehouse

LET'S hope that the people in Zimbabwe see an end to their awful plight and that Robert Mugabe will soon no longer be in power. I know that it may seem like a hopeless wish but you never know what the new year will bring and where would we be without a little hope?

Teri, Seven Sisters

I RESOLVE to stop meddling with powers I don't understand. Well, until next year.

JU, London

Graphic

Let's not forget to have fun Messageboard: What are your hopes for 2009?

Ring in the new: revellers celebrate start of the year

Load-Date: January 5, 2009

End of Document

The game has started?

The Nation (AsiaNet)

January 5, 2009 Monday

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Length: 730 words

Byline: SAJID ZIA

Body

LAHORE - At the public and the intellectual level of the City, Israeli atrocities against the innocent Palestinians are being perceived as a part of the forward movement of the anti-Muslim policies to make their existence meaningless. People from various sections of the society are tremendously perturbed by the brutalities they are witnessing through media against the Palestinians, particularly on children and women, and a lukewarm response by the Muslim states and see it a clarion call for others after Israel, India and America have joined hands for their collective interests.

A senior professor and a political analyst shared a common view that India, which has renewed its hostility against Pakistan, must be taking a lead from Israeli aggression on Palestinians to study its strategy on establishing its hegemony in the region. India is getting more encouraged by what Israel has done in Gaza and would not miss this opportunity to put more pressure on Pakistan and go more threatening against it.

The professor says Israel and India with combined interests now are sailing in same boat being pushed by America which standing at a supra position has its own global interests which it believes, would be largely facilitated by their activity. He says both the countries are in a hurry to level ground against their 'common enemy' before the new US president would assume charge of the office. And before that, Israel has taken initiative to assess reaction that who comes to the help of the bleeding Palestinians while India is warming up to show to the new US administration Pakistan's face besmeared by terrorism just to remain in the good books of America and continue to have an upper hand on the thorny issues like Kashmir, for the solution of which Barrack Obama has also given a call. The Palestinian Hamas was declared terrorist by the United Nations, but look at the innocent faces of the kids and the women being killed by the Israeli aggression to know if they look terrorists by any way, he says, adding in the modern day international politics, self interests precede every value and human feelings but the Muslims rulers are short of understanding them.

The situation is not that could be ignored by Pakistan in view of the fact, when India has already passed the threats of surgical strikes and had still maintained a very harsh tone to seek custody of the persons it has listed a terrorists operation in India from Pakistan. The analyst says India in fact is out to enlarge its stature at international level the same way America has done.

This, he adds, would yield it the benefits of putting its own problems in the dark at the international level. He says going by this design, a strong and stable Pakistan possessing nuclear capability in its neighbour is not only affordable to India but also to Israel and America who reckon any politically and militarily powerful Muslim country a threat to their designs particularly to capture resources of the Arabs and those in other parts. In case of Pakistan,

The game has started?

America and Israel get more worried when they see Iran in its neighbouring emerging as another powerful Muslim country with a hostile agenda against the both and Pakistan cementing ties with China.

Most of the interacting people estimate the situation serious find unity of the Muslim countries a big stride to put weight against what has been planned against them. The need of the unity, they believe, is only viable solution especially when they have already wasted away much of their resources and time on other things instead of using them on the common benefit of the Muslim community.

Secretary Lahore High Court Bar Association Rana Asadullah Khan giving his input says, now the Muslims must open their eyes when even the OIC and European Union cannot advance more than passing lip service against the aggression on Muslims. He says time is fast slipping out of hand and whatever has to be done must be done immediately. The Muslims, he said, are in a deep slumber the reason being their rulers, who he added, are monarch or are in aristocratic pattern raised or installed by the Western World after World War II to safeguard its vested interests. He believes the Muslim as community cannot get their problems solved unless they are able to get rid of these type of rulers otherwise sitting ducks are available to be killed on their turn.

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End of Document

Clinton aims for pragmatic diplomacy

Financial Times (London, England)

January 14, 2009 Wednesday

USA Edition 1

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Section: OBAMA TEAM; Pg. 4

Length: 782 words

Byline: Daniel Dombey in Washington

Highlight: Closer ties with Russia and China

Pledge on making fewer adversaries

Body

Hillary Clinton yesterday vowed to strengthen US alliances and international institutions while working closely with the Middle East, China and Russia, in the most detailed account of the incoming administration's foreign policy plans.

Mrs Clinton used her Senate hearing for confirmation as secretary of state - in which she received strong support from legislators - to strike a less ideological and confrontational line than the Bush administration.

She also promised a policy review on Afghanistan, a new approach to Iran and multilateral engagement rather than confrontation with Arab regimes.

She said: "We must build a world with more partners and fewer adversaries. Foreign policy must be based on a marriage of principles and pragmatism, not rigid ideology." She called for the use of "smart power" rather than just "hard" or "soft" power, and said: "Diplomacy will be at the vanguard of our foreign policy."

When Condoleezza Rice had her confirmation hearing four years ago for the same post she described Cuba and Iran as "outposts of tyranny". Mrs Clinton highlighted a more pragmatic prospectus.

She said her top international priorities were to keep the US and its allies secure, "promote economic growth and shared prosperity at home and abroad", and "strengthen America's position of global leadership". She said the new administration would seek to persuade Iran and Syria "to abandon their dangerous behaviour and become constructive regional actors", while strengthening relations with countries such as Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia.

In the wake of a presidential campaign in which her most memorable foreign policy comments were a threat to "obliterate" Iran and the faulty memory of coming under Bosnian sniper fire, an assured Mrs Clinton was happy to discuss topics ranging from Arctic policy to Gazprom's acquisition policies, much to the satisfaction of the Senators who number such issues among their favourite causes.

The only pressure focused not on her past or prospects, but on the activities of her husband, former president Bill Clinton, who has agreed to greater transparency about donations to his charitable activities, a subject on which some senators remain unconvinced.

Clinton aims for pragmatic diplomacy

"Foreign governments and entities may perceive the Clinton foundation as a means to gain favour with the secretary of state," said Richard Lugar, the ranking Republican on the panel. "The only certain way to eliminate this risk going forward is for the Clinton foundation to forswear new foreign contributions when Senator Clinton becomes secretary of state."

Mrs Clinton avoided clear commitments in a committee session presided over by John Kerry, a senator who had hoped to become secretary of state, and watched by Congressional aides, foreign ambassadors and her daughter, Chelsea.

She described the policy review on Afghanistan as the "highest priority" for Barack Obama, the president-elect, and described his stance on the war against the Taliban and al-Qaeda as "more for more" - meaning more US troops and more support from other countries. She said Mr Obama believed in "an attitude towards engagement [with Iran] that might bear fruit".

In her opening statement, Mrs Clinton avoided specifics about the fighting in Gaza but said the ArabIsraeli conflict continued "to inflame tensions from Asia to Africa". She described a final peace deal as "critical not only to the parties involved but to our profound interests in undermining the forces of alienation and violent extremism across our world". She ruled out diplomatic contacts with Hamas, the Islamist organisation, as long as it refused to rule out violence and denied Israel's right to exist.

The secretary of state-designate said the Obama administration would seek ratification of the comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty and renewed talks on a fissile material cut-off treaty for nuclear materials, as well as further arms reduction deals with Russia.

She added that the new team wanted to "deepen and strengthen" ties with China but relations would depend on Beijing's policies at home and abroad.

In comments about human rights, she focused on economic marginalisation and the role of women, rather than free elections. "If half of the world's population remains vulnerable to economic, political, legal and social marginalisation, our hope of advancing democracy and prosperity will remain in serious jeopardy," said Mrs Clinton.

"We should use the United Nations and other international institutions whenever appropriate and possible. We should work with like-minded friends to make sure these institutions reflect the values that motivated their creation in the first place."

Editorial Comment, Page 8 www.ft.com/obamacabinet

Load-Date: January 13, 2009

PGA Tour suspends Daly for 6 months

Pittsburgh Tribune Review

January 1, 2009 Thursday

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Length: 734 words

Byline: wire reports

Body

John Daly smashed one tee shot off the top of a beer can during a pro-am. At another tournament, he returned from a rain delay with Tampa Bay Buccaneers coach Jon Gruden as his caddie. And his most memorable photo this year came in an orange jail suit, eyes half-closed.

Daly said Wednesday that such unwelcome publicity is why the PGA Tour suspended him for six months.

The two-time major champion confirmed his suspension to The Associated Press, calling this the low point of an 18-year career during which he has made as much news off the course as he has with his prodigious game.

"Is it fair that I got suspended?" he said. "It's not fair in reality, but it's probably fair in perception."

Baseball

- The Cleveland Indians acquired versatile infielder Mark DeRosa in a trade that sent three minor leaguers to the Chicago Cubs. The Indians traded pitchers Jeff Stevens, Chris Archer and John Gaub for DeRosa, who will likely slide into Cleveland's opening at third base.
- Reliever Brian Fuentes and the Los Angeles Angels reached agreement on a two-year deal, perhaps giving the AL West champions a replacement for record-setting closer Francisco Rodriguez. Fuentes gets \$17.5 million over the two seasons. There's a club option for \$9 million in 2011.
- The Chicago Cubs and infielder Aaron Miles agreed to a two-year, \$4.9 million contract. The switch-hitting Miles batted .317 with four homers and 31 RBI in 134 games for the St. Louis Cardinals last season.
- Left-hander Mark Hendrickson signed a one-year contract with the pitching-depleted Baltimore Orioles on Wednesday.

College basketball

- Former Duquesne coach Scott Edgar was fired by Southeast Missouri State. Edgar had been on administrative leave while an investigation was under way for alleged major violations involving the men's basketball program. Edgar, who coached Duquesne for three seasons (1996-99) to a combined record of 29-55, had been on leave since the fall.
- North Carolina State women's basketball coach Kay Yow, 66, missed her third straight game as she battles a recurrence of breast cancer.

PGA Tour suspends Daly for 6 months

Pro basketball

- Orlando Magic guard Mickael Pietrus will be out indefinitely after breaking his right wrist on a dunk against Detroit on Monday. Pietrus was injured when he banged into the Pistons' Jason Maxiell and landed awkwardly on his back and arm.
- Longtime NBA assistant Ron Adams has been hired to complete Oklahoma City Thunder interim coach Scott Brooks' staff.

Boxing

- Denkaosan Kaovichit of Thailand knocked out Takefumi Sakata of Japan in the second round to win the WBA flyweight title during the New Year's Eve fight in Hiroshima.

College football

- DeWayne Walker was introduced as New Mexico State's new football coach, promising to reassert the Aggies in the conference and region. Walker, who spent three seasons as UCLA's defensive coordinator, is the seventh black head coach among the 119 major college football schools.
- Alabama coach Nick Saban hasn't ruled out the possibility of All-America left tackle Andre Smith returning for his senior season. Saban suspended the Outland Trophy winner for Friday night's Sugar Bowl against No. 7 Utah after alleged dealings with a sports agent.

Motor sports

- Speedway Motorsports has completed its purchase of Kentucky Speedway, clearing the way for SMI owner Bruton Smith to try a NASCAR Sprint Cup race to the 1.5-mile tri-oval in northern Kentucky.

Soccer

- Israel postponed all soccer games yesterday, two days after a missile fired by Hamas militants hit a team's field just before practice. Minutes before the players of the third-division team were about to begin training at Hapoel Ashkelon's stadium Monday a rocket exploded in the penalty area. The postponement was made by Israel's Football Association.
- Liverpool captain Steven Gerrard returned to training and received the full support of manager Rafa Benitez, who spoke to the midfielder about his assault charges following a bar brawl. Gerrard is to appear in court in three weeks and faces a potential five-year prison sentence.

Off the field

- Charles Barkley was arrested on suspicion of driving under the influence of alcohol early Wednesday in Scottsdale, Ariz. The 45-year-old Barkley, now an NBA television commentator, failed field sobriety tests after the officer smelled alcohol on him, and he was arrested. Barkley declined to submit to a breath test but was given a blood test.

Load-Date: January 1, 2009

Trade union leaders join call for ceasefire; Demonstrators jam Ste. Catherine St.

The Gazette (Montreal)
January 11, 2009 Sunday
Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A4

Length: 722 words

Byline: CATHERINE SOLYOM, The Gazette

Body

Thousands of people marched down Ste. Catherine St. yesterday to speak with one voice:

"Stop the madness. ... We are all Palestinians."

As the Israeli offensive on Gaza enters its third week, the groundswell of indignation in Montreal has grown along with the casualties.

Jews, Christians, Muslims, anglos, francos, grandmothers and children walked together yesterday in the bitter cold to call for an immediate ceasefire in the occupied territory.

"This is not an Arab cause," said Nina Amrov, who has family in the West Bank. "This is not a Muslim cause. It is a humanitarian cause. The siege of Gaza has gone on for 21/2 years now. It's unfortunate that we had to wait for a huge massacre to raise our voices."

Adding their voices to the cause yesterday were leaders of Quebec's major trade unions, the Confédération des syndicats nationaux, the Centrale des syndicats du Québec and the Quebec Federation of Labour.

While others chanted "Israel Assassin" and "Viva Viva Intifada," union leaders and lay folk alike turned their attention to Prime Minister Stephen Harper.

"Harper has to seize the opportunity of the change of guard in Washington to convince the American government to play a less partisan role and contribute to a just, durable peace," said Claudette Carbonneau, president of the CSN, addressing the crowd that had turned onto René Lévesque Blvd.

"Ceasefire means stopping all violence, including the rockets into Israel and the invasion of Gaza. But Israeli aggression is blind and disproportionate in territory that is not theirs. Their right to self-defence cannot degenerate into a war on people literally locked in."

Harper has said his government "would like to see a ceasefire but an efficient and durable ceasefire."

Some demonstrators yesterday threw their shoes at an effigy of Harper, while others chanted that he was an "accomplice."

Trade union leaders join call for ceasefire; Demonstrators jam Ste. Catherine St.

"Canada used to have its own voice," said Denis Chouinard, who carried his 11-month-old son in a backpack. "Harper should dissociate himself from American policies - not just plagiarize them."

Elaine Deslauriers said she can't understand the silence of leaders - from Harper to the leaders of Arab countries.

"It's as if the people of Gaza are all criminals and it's somehow normal for Israel to bomb them," Deslauriers said. "I am here to do my part. It is not normal to kill women and children."

As a matter of policy, Montreal police normally do not provide official crowd numbers. Estimates being reported in the media yesterday varied from 1,000 to 10,000 marchers, with the latter figure provided by organizers. A Montreal police spokesperson called The Gazette last night to set the record straight: The number was closer to 5,000, he said.

Luciano del Negro, executive director of the Quebec-

Israel Committee, took issue with the characterization of the march by police as essentially peaceful.

"What you had today was the mobilization of extreme fringes of Quebec society responding to the call of some trade unions and Québec solidaire," he said. "The slogans and types of speeches we witnessed and the hateful nature of these activities could not be the work of ordinary, hard working union members."

Del Negro said he felt threatened when he and a handful of people carrying Israeli flags approached. Police were forced to move them for their protection.

The Israeli flag was burned. And there was some chanting in Arabic that Del Negro said called for the genocide of Jews.

There was no empathy at the march for Israelis who have been the targets of Hamas rocket fire. Three Israeli civilians have been killed since Dec. 27.

"If you tell me this was a demonstration calling for peace, I say we were not at the same demonstration," Del Negro said.

Glenn Rubinstein, one of several people holding up signs indicating they were Jewish, said he didn't feel threatened.

"It's important that the public at large sees there is also a Jewish opposition to Israel's war-making.

"It's very hard for Jews to publicly express their concerns about Israel and engage in a public demonstration where they will feel uncomfortable about the more extreme manifestations of support of violence on the other side.

"But if one believes Israel has the power to make peace and needs to make peace it's better to speak out. ... This is a broad movement that needs to be a tolerant movement, and it is."

Load-Date: January 11, 2009

Three weeks or three years; give Abhisit a chance

The Nation (Thailand)

January 6, 2009 Tuesday

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Length: 754 words

Byline: The Nation

Body

A few months ago, Suthep Thaugsuban and the Democrat Party called for the Somchai government to bring Thaksin Shinawatra back to serve his jail term. Now, once the Democrat-led government is formed, Suthep shows his eagerness to befriend Thaksin - purportedly for fear of the former leader

PM Abhisit Vejjajiva must be steadfast in his determination to make a difference for the country. It doesn't matter if his government lasts a week or three years. This is the golden opportunity for him to use his ability and leadership.

Three issues need Abhisit's immediate attention: economic problems; unfair attacks on the Monarchy on the Internet must somehow be stopped, so that national harmony will be revived; and education reforms must be initiated for the sake of future generations.

Time is of the essence here.

Chavalit Van

Chiang Mai

Western powers allow Israel to go too far

The Israeli defence minister has previously said that bombing and invasion of Gaza is necessary to teach the Palestinians how to behave and quit their violent struggle for their rights. Israeli propaganda has gone to great lengths to make Israel a pathetic victim of so-called Palestinian terror. But remember the founding of Israel was made upon Jewish terrorism that drove 750,000 Palestinians from their homes into refugee camps, and then when the state of Israel was declared these homes were confiscated within weeks.

Therefore, after 60 years of terrorism who will teach the Israelis how to behave or stop them stealing even more land from the Palestinians in the West Bank? Or who will teach the Israelis how to stop their apartheid-like behaviour that now keeps the Palestinians in what are large ghetto-like prisons? Also, if the far rightist Likud party gets into power in coming Israeli election, who will make Likud behave if it introduces further harsh racist policies?

The important questions not asked by the media and the international community are: When is Israel going to end its colonial ambition to form a "Greater Israel"; end its illegal occupation and siege of Palestinian land in the West Bank and Gaza; and let the Palestinians found their own sovereign state?

Three weeks or three years; give Abhisit a chance

Following this long, futile peace process, will the penny finally drop that Israel never really wanted peace with the Palestinians, but from the very start it has wanted to fulfil its goal to make the occupation of the West Bank permanent while bringing the Gazans to their knees.

The media here should forget US/Israeli/Western propaganda for a while and get real view for once!

GWFARROW

Bangkok

In Gaza, land is more important than lives

Re: "Hamas supporters turning blind eye to its provocation", Letters, January 5.

There is absolutely no atrocity that Israel can commit that Muslim-hater Dean Barrett will not defend. Killing over 500 Palestinian civilians because three Israeli civilians were killed is acceptable to him. Just as killing a thousand Lebanese civilians because two Israeli soldiers had been kidnapped is fine with him. If Mr Barrett is honest, he'll admit that the lives of Palestinian women and children mean absolutely nothing to him.

While it is true that some Palestinian cheered on 9/11, other Palestinians condemned the attack. In any case, saying it's fine to kill women and children who might have cheered is not "karma" (as Mr Barrett wrote in a letter to another newspaper), it's murder!

If Israel didn't steal their land in the first place, we wouldn't be having these problems. But Israel cares more about land than the lives of women and children.

Eric Bahrt

Pattaya

Former dictator did more than just instil law and order

Re: "Missing Field Marshal Sarit and Professor Sanya, I am", Opinion, January 5.

I'd like to clarify some of what the writer has said. M.R. Pridiyathorn was ambiguous when he told us how Sarit dealt with arsonists and hooligans. He simply said "Sarit ... brought the disorder to a standstill." It seemed the writer wanted to cover up something.

In the late 1950s and early 60s when Sarit was in power, the Constitution gave him exclusive power as prime minister to jail and execute anyone at will. Hooligans who terrorised communities were jailed without trial. If a fire destroyed a shophouse community, the owner of the shop where the blaze started was automatically considered an arsonist. A few were executed. No trials.

I'd also like to add that when Sarit died in 1963, he left assets worth about Bt3 billion, conservatively estimated at Bt30 billion today.

Meechai Burapa

Chiang Mai

Three weeks or three years; give Abhisit a chance

Load-Date: January 6, 2009

End of Document

Divisions inside pro-Gaza protests

Daily News Egypt

December 29, 2008 Monday

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Length: 804 words

Body

CAIRO: Thousands of activists and members of opposition groups and parties protested across Egypt in the past three days against the Israeli raids on the Gaza Strip.

Rallies, estimated to have attracted about 55,000 demonstrators in total, swept Egypt's cities.

The largest protest saw around 8,000 people demonstrate on the streets of Assiut, a city in southern Egypt of 400,000, a security official said, with another 3,000 gathering in Minya, south of Cairo.

A security official said 4,000 people took part in another anti-Israel and pro-Gaza demonstration in Alexandria.

Eight thousand people demonstrated at Cairo University, with another 5,000 involved in another demonstration at Ain Shams University.

In Cairo protesters split into two groups. The larger group mostly consisted of members of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB), Egypt's largest opposition group from which Hamas, the major target of Israel's air strikes, evolved.

The second gathering included members and leaders of opposition parties, the Egyptian Movement for Change (Kefaya), 6th of April Movement and human rights activists.

A few hours after the first airstrike on Gaza Saturday, more than 2,000 protesters gathered outside the Journalists' and Lawyers' Syndicates, denouncing the attack while carrying Palestinian flags.

"We are protesting for the sake of our fellows in Palestine who are now being killed by the Jews. We would sacrifice ourselves to restore the holy land," a female protester affiliated with the Brotherhood said on condition of anonymity.

A division of opinion appeared clearly from the very beginning during almost all protests. While MB members were against insulting President Hosni Mubarak in public, other activists and opposition groups shouted anti-Mubarak statements.

"It was rather a confusing situation. To maintain unity, protesters had to get back to the MB leaders all the time before shouting any statements," 6th of April movement co-founder Mohamed Abdel-Aziz told Daily News Egypt.

Divisions inside pro-Gaza protests

Though being a Muslim Brotherhood member himself, journalist and Kefaya activist Mohamed Abdel-Quddous is known for his outspoken criticism of Mubarak. He described the regime's stance toward the assault on Gaza as being "dreadful".

"Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni had already threatened to strike Gaza during her meeting with Mubarak and senior officials two days before the attack," Abdel-Quddous told Daily News Egypt.

Two hours after the very first Cairo protest kicked off, MB members withdrew once statements against Mubarak prevailed. One protester said as he was getting ready to leave with his fellows: "We finished with what we came here for."

The rest of the protesters, barely a few hundred, remained for two more hours, turning the protest into an anti-regime gathering.

"Our stand is clear. We reject offences during any protests we take part in. Yet we hold Mubarak and the state's foreign policy responsible for the attacks on Gaza," MP Hussein Ibrahim, deputy head of the MB parliamentary bloc, told Daily News Egypt. "I announced it clearly during a parliament session that the strike was declared from Egypt."

Several other demonstrations broke out Sunday afternoon. More than 3,000 people gathered outside the Parliament; most of them were MB members, holding the holy Quran high and chanting Islamic slogans. They called for jihad (holy war) to free the occupied Palestinian territories.

The rally was supposed to move toward the Abdeen Presidential palace. Yet the security officials banned it, agreeing with the MB leaders and parliamentarians that a small delegation of MPs would be allowed to go to the palace to present a petition.

The protesters then were divided into two groups. The largest group of MB members rallied to Dar El-Hekma (the Doctors' Syndicate), while less than 100 opposition and human rights activists finally settled outside the Shoura Council.

Like the case in almost all protests about the Gaza cause, after MB members left, the rest of the demonstrators slammed Mubarak and the deteriorating economic and political situation in Egypt.

Kefaya co-founder Kamal Khalil noted that "what happened in Gaza was part of the accumulation of the vices of a corrupt regime in Egypt." In a statement released following the protest, 6th of April movement accused Mubarak of conspiring against the Palestinian people.

However, all protesters, regardless of their ideologies, unanimously called on Egyptian and Arab leaders to react against the assault as well as call off peace treaties with Israel. They further urged the Egyptian officials to open the Rafah border crossing, to recall the Egyptian ambassador to Israel, to expel the Israeli one and to stop exporting natural gas to Israel.

"And we will go on protesting every day till our demands are met," Abdel-Aziz firmly said. - Additional reporting by AFP

Load-Date: December 30, 2008

Egypt providing help to wounded Palestinians

Deseret Morning News (Salt Lake City)

December 31, 2008 Wednesday

Copyright 2008 The Deseret News Publishing Co.

Length: 677 words

Byline: Steven Erlanger New York Times News Service

Body

EL ARISH, Egypt -- Egyptian ambulances have already brought 43 wounded Palestinians from Gaza to this southern city's general hospital, with 15 of them needing respirators to keep them alive, said Dr. Muhammad al-Gabr, who has been trying to get them to more sophisticated surgical hospitals in Cairo.

The nine who remain here, including a young boy, are all in critical condition with blast and fracture wounds, and Gabr hoped to medevac them out on Tuesday night. All the patients sent here were civilians, as far as he knew, he said.

"Gaza was part of Egypt if you go back in history, so there is a special feeling," he said. "But we don't look at borders this way; we are helping the people."

That is easily said for a doctor. But the crisis across the border has confronted Egypt's longtime president, Hosni Mubarak, with a difficult political dilemma -- needing to show solidarity with the Palestinians under attack even as he refuses to open the border between Egypt and Gaza to anything but carefully monitored humanitarian missions, like the 30 ambulances seen going toward Gaza on Tuesday.

Egypt is facing condemnation from elsewhere in the Arab world, and there is even criticism here, where people are normally very careful about what they say publicly about their president: Egypt, they say, must do more while Gaza is under such heavy attack from Israeli warplanes.

"Egypt is helping the wounded and sending supplies for the people," said Hishmat Abu Bakr, 63, who fought in the Arab-Israeli wars of 1967 and 1973. "But we'd prefer bigger help. We'd like to break the border and go die there with our brothers."

Harsher criticism of Mubarak was rare on Tuesday in southern Egypt, where the landscape and the architecture are nearly identical to that in Gaza, and where the economy is linked to smuggling food, supplies, arms and explosives there.

Near the border -- closed to visitors, including journalists, both ways -- there is a heavy presence of police, military and secret police, the Mukhabarat, and numerous checkpoints along the roads on the way to the split border town of Rafah, which has been declared a military zone.

The Syrian president, Bashar al-Assad, and his ally, the Hezbollah leader Sheik Hassan Nasrallah in Lebanon, have called on Egypt to open the border and the Egyptian people to break down the barriers. But Egyptian forces have clashed with Palestinians trying to leave Gaza, and Mubarak has said firmly that the border will remain closed.

Egypt providing help to wounded Palestinians

Egypt would reopen the Rafah crossing only if the Palestinian faction **Hamas** reconciled with the Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas of Fatah, and allowed him to reassert his authority over all Palestinian territory, including Gaza, Mubarak said Tuesday in a nationally televised speech.

Mubarak condemned Israel's "savage aggression." But in a riposte to Arab critics who live at a distance, Mubarak said, "We say to those who are trying to make political capital out of the plight of the Palestinian people that Palestinian blood has a price."

Bakr, the 63-year-old war veteran, refused to believe it when told of Mubarak's speech. "Mubarak could not say something so wrong," Bakr said. "The Palestinians are his brothers."

Muhammad Ahmad, 25, who owns a dress shop called Farha, or Happiness, said Egypt was doing what it could. "If they open the border just like that, it will be chaos like last year," he said. "That's why we need an agreement. Here in El Arish, we're so close to Gaza and yet there's nothing we can do. It's sad, but we're powerless."

Two young men from Rafah had come to this seaside city, some 20 miles away, "to look at young **women** and to rest my head," said Hassan Salem, 22. When the Israelis were bombing near Rafah to try to destroy the many smuggling tunnels that run between the Egyptian and Gazan side of the once-unified city, "we were almost knocked out by the noise," said his friend, Khaled Kamal, 25, a postman.

Everyone in Rafah has family on both sides of the border, Salem said, "so there's a lot of worry -- everyone on both sides of Rafah is worried."

Load-Date: December 31, 2008

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Column: The United States' democracy shows how liberalism liberates

University Wire

October 28, 2008 Tuesday

Copyright 2008 Yale Daily News via U-Wire

Length: 778 words

Byline: By Jason Pearlman, Yale Daily News; **SOURCE:** Yale U.

Dateline: NEW HAVEN, Conn.

Body

Peter Johnston's recent column ("Liberalism, sovereignty," October 24) raises provocative points about the relationship of liberalism and democracy. Although "liberal democracy" is often held as a panacea to be imitated by the developing world, there is indeed a potential for tension and conflict between the "liberal" and "democratic" elements of that creed.

Most obviously, yet often overlooked by those obsessed with spreading democracy throughout the Middle East or with creating a "League of Democracies," democracy is no guarantee of liberalism. A democratic election can produce a government, like that of Hamas in Palestine, which represents the will of the majority while utterly disregarding what liberals regard as the essential rights and freedoms of the people.

But Johnston also claims "liberalism" pursues absolute goals at the expense of the sovereignty of the people and that liberals believe any violation of the sovereign law of nature is "sufficient justification for a revolution." This is absurd. While Communists and some radical Leftists sought to overthrow democracies in the name of universal rights, it is patently false to ascribe such ambitions to liberals and to claim that liberals dream of an undemocratic global utopia. Liberals believe government should protect the rights of all its citizens and should only limit individual freedom when there is a substantial benefit to the common welfare. They often disagree on how these principles should be applied, but they have no desire to impose their interpretation against the will of the people.

True liberalism, in fact, cannot exist when the people are not sovereign. The people are the only legitimate basis of government, and the right to vote is a fundamental liberal right. The liberal principle of the sovereignty of the people is the only way further liberal rights can be secured. Thus liberals have always worked by democratic means, whether by legislation or by court rulings to uphold the Constitution. Armed struggle is only justified to establish or preserve popular sovereignty against external or internal threat, never to force an already sovereign people to adopt a particular course of action. That would be inherently illiberal.

This is why the claim that the expansion of freedom in the United States "represents the triumph of liberalism over democracy" is problematic. Many of the liberal reforms Johnston cites, such as civil rights and the abolition of slavery, along with the enfranchisement of women, were dedicated to broadening the sovereignty of the people. On what grounds can he claim that "a majority of Americans have rejected" these initiatives, when only through these initiatives were the majority of Americans included in the democratic process and given the right to express their acceptance or rejection?

The history of the United States has been, to a large extent, the triumph of democracy through liberalism.

Column: The United States ' democracy shows how liberalism liberates

Johnston comes to the following disturbing conclusion: "If liberalism, by a conspiracy of those educated into the prejudices of modern philosophy, manages to maintain control of the ballot box, the people will turn to the cartridge box," and by implication these "men of spirit" will be justified in doing so because "man is more than freedom." Because he claims liberalism threatens the sovereignty of the people, he refuses to accept that the people themselves may hold liberal views. If the people back liberal initiatives, it is not truly the will of the people but rather the result of a liberal "conspiracy." Therefore, he argues, a reactionary rump claiming to represent "the people" should kill those who oppose it.

We have already seen the result of this worldview when, fearing that the majority of the people would use the democratic system to pass the liberal reform of ending slavery and granting rights to black Americans, a conservative minority took up arms against American democracy. They, too, blamed a "liberal conspiracy" of abolitionists for poisoning the will of the majority. They proved all too well that when he seeks to deny freedom to others, "man is more than freedom." Indeed, they were men of hatred, men of bigotry, men of injustice. They shrouded these truths in rhetoric about tradition, religion and the danger of sudden change - justifications beloved by such violent minorities as the Ku Klux Klan, the vicious defenders of segregation and the bombers of abortion clinics.

These tactics are rejected by all those who cherish democracy, by liberals and reasonable conservatives alike. They are practiced only by the "men of spirit" who share Johnston's disdain of freedom.

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Load-Date: October 30, 2008

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The rotten state of Egypt is too powerless to do anything in Gaza crisis

Irish Independent

January 2, 2009 Friday

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Independent.ie 

Section: NATIONAL NEWS

Length: 793 words

Body

'The true disgrace of Egypt is not in its response to the slaughter in Gaza. It is the corruption embedded in an Egyptian society'

There was a day when we worried about the "Arab masses" -- the millions of "ordinary" Arabs on the streets of Cairo, Kuwait, Amman, Beirut -- and their reaction to the constant bloodbaths in the Middle East. Could Anwar Sadat restrain the anger of his people? And now -- after three decades of Hosni Mubarak -- can Mubarak (or "La Vache Qui Rit", as he is still called in Cairo) restrain the anger of his people? The answer, of course, is that Egyptians and Kuwaitis and Jordanians will be allowed to shout in the streets of their capitals -- but then they will be shut down, with the help of the tens of thousands of secret policemen and government militiamen who serve the princes and kings and elderly rulers of the Arab world.

Egyptians demand that Mubarak open the Rafah crossing-point into Gaza, break off diplomatic relations with Israel, even send weapons to ***Hamas***. And there is a kind of perverse beauty in listening to the response of the Egyptian government: why not complain about the three gates which the Israelis refuse to open? And anyway, the Rafah crossing-point is politically controlled by the four powers that produced the "road map" for peace, including Britain and the US. Why blame Mubarak?

To admit that Egypt can't even open its sovereign border without permission from Washington tells you all you need to know about the powerlessness of the satraps that run the Middle East for us.

Open the Rafah gate -- or break off relations with Israel -- and Egypt's economic foundations crumble. Any Arab leader who took that kind of step will find that the West's economic and military support is withdrawn. Without subventions, Egypt is bankrupt. Of course, it works both ways. Individual Arab leaders are no longer going to make emotional gestures for anyone. When Sadat flew to Jerusalem -- "I am tired of the dwarves," he said of his fellow Arab leaders -- he paid the price with his own blood at the Cairo reviewing-stand where one of his own soldiers called him a "Pharaoh" before shooting him dead.

The true disgrace of Egypt, however, is not in its response to the slaughter in Gaza. It is the corruption that has become embedded in an Egyptian society where the idea of service -- health, education, genuine security for ordinary people -- has simply ceased to exist. It's a land where the first duty of the police is to protect the regime, where protesters are beaten up by the security police, where young ***women*** objecting to Mubarak's endless regime

The rotten state of Egypt is too powerless to do anything in Gaza crisis

-- likely to be passed on caliph-like to his son Gamal, whatever we may be told -- are sexually molested by plain-clothes agents, where prisoners in the Tora-Tora complex are forced to rape each other by guards.

There has developed in Egypt a kind of religious facade in which the meaning of Islam has become effaced by its physical representation. Egyptian civil "servants" and government officials are often scrupulous in their religious observances -- yet they tolerate and connive in rigged elections, violations of the law and prison torture. A young American doctor described to me recently how in a Cairo hospital busy doctors merely blocked doors with plastic chairs to prevent access to patients. In November, the Egyptian newspaper 'Al-Masry al-Youm' reported how doctors abandoned their patients to attend prayers during Ramadan.

And amid all this, Egyptians have to live amid daily slaughter by their own shabby infrastructure. Alaa al-Aswani wrote eloquently in the Cairo paper 'Al-Dastour' that the regime's "martyrs" outnumber all the dead of Egypt's wars against Israel -- victims of railway accidents, ferry sinkings, the collapse of city buildings, sickness, cancers and pesticide poisonings -- all victims, as Aswani says, "of the corruption and abuse of power". Opening the Rafah border-crossing for wounded Palestinians -- the Palestinian medical staff being pushed back into their Gaza prison once the bloodied survivors of air raids have been dumped on Egyptian territory -- is not going to change the midden in which Egyptians live.

Sayed Hassan Nasrallah, the Hizbollah secretary general in Lebanon, felt able to call on Egyptians to "rise in their millions" to open the border with Gaza, but they will not do so. Ahmed Aboul Gheit, the feeble Egyptian Foreign Minister, could only taunt the Hizbollah leaders by accusing them of trying to provoke "an anarchy similar to the one they created in their own country".

But he is well-protected. So is President Mubarak.

Egypt's malaise is in many ways as dark as that of the Palestinians. Its impotence in the face of Gaza's suffering is a symbol of its own political sickness.

Load-Date: January 2, 2009

OPINION: Democrats once again proving Rogers correct

News-Topic (Lenoir, North Carolina)

January 10, 2009 Saturday

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Distributed by McClatchy-Tribune Business News

Section: COMMENTARY

Length: 807 words

Byline: Paul Teague, News-Topic, Lenoir, N.C.

Body

Jan. 10--More than 70 years ago, the late entertainer and commentator Will Rogers said, "I don't belong to any organized party. I'm a Democrat."

Wherever you are these days, Will, the Donkey Party no doubt is making you proud.

Barely a month after basking in the afterglow of the party's greatest triumph in more than 40 years, Democratic Illinois Gov. Rod "I never met a man I didn't spite" Blagojevich allegedly tried to sell President-elect Barack Obama's U.S. Senate seat to the highest bidder. Already one of the most unpopular governors, Blago the Audacious quickly found himself under arrest, and the taint of scandal tempered what otherwise had been a fairly seamless transition for Team Obama.

As the saying goes, with "friends" like these, who needs enemies.

Of course, Blago the Audacious failed to abdicate his appointive power, despite calls to do so, and brazenly selected Roland Burris. And in classic Democratic tradition, the party threatened not to seat Burris, then caved. As Shakespeare once wrote, "Oh cream-filled éclair, thy backbone is thee."

Not to be outdone, Democrats in New York stirred the pot of nepotism, advancing Caroline Kennedy, daughter of JFK and niece of the tragically-ill Edward, as the replacement for Secretary-of-State-in-waiting Hillary Clinton. Now Kennedy possesses a law degree from Columbia, though in a recent interview she made the gaffe-tastic Sarah Palin seem more like famed Greek orator Demosthenes.

Speaking to the New York Times, Kennedy spouted this bit of wisdom:

"Then there was a vacancy here, you know, just like everybody else, you know: who's going to fill it, isn't that interesting, there's a lot of great candidates, you know, obviously I have become much more politically involved than I have in the past, so you know, I figure, why not try, I really think I have something to offer."

Egads.

Meanwhile, in a sign that the level of pettiness tends to increase exponentially relative to an individual's perceived self-importance, California Sen. Diane Feinstein reportedly pitched a fit and threatened to throw up a roadblock

OPINION: Democrats once again proving Rogers correct

after Obama nominated former Clinton White House Chief of Staff and Congressman Leon Panetta to head up the CIA. Obama's crime? He didn't call Feinstein in advance.

Perhaps it is for the best then that Senate Democrats go ahead and try to seat former "Saturday Night Live" comedian Al Franken, following his disputed victory over Norm Coleman in Minnesota. Franken, declared the winner after a controversial statewide recount in which he made up a 215-vote deficit, should fit right in.

The shame of all of these sideshow antics rests in the fact that the country finds itself in the midst of its worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. Throw in two overseas wars, sabre-rattling between Pakistan and India, and the Israeli advance against Hamas in Gaza, and we are in dire need of statesmanship rather than stupidity.

It makes one long for individuals such as former Democratic Rhode Island Sen. Claiborne Pell, who died New Year's Day at the age of 90. The bluest of blue bloods and the WASPiest of WASPs, Pell spoke like Thurston Howell III in "Gilligan's Island" and maintained an unflappable, gentlemanly decorum worthy of our highest legislative body. Pell's legacy is the federal Pell Grant, which has provided financial assistance to millions of college students over the years.

Here's hoping the Ivy League Pell and the cowboy Rogers are sharing a few laughs while lounging in their chairs in the Pantheon of Greatness.

Finally on an unrelated note, here is one of the best corrections you'll likely ever see, courtesy of the Stranger, a Seattle-based online news and entertainment site, and via www.andrewsullivan.com:

"Dominic Holden, news reporter at The Stranger, regrets that in an attempt to spell out the word 'brassiere' ... he mistakenly spelled it 'brazier,' which actually means 'barbecue.' He further regrets that upon trying to amend his error, he spelled it 'brassier,' which, if anything, means 'more brassy.' Holden recognizes that ... he should avoid subjects related to women's undergarments."

In the face of unyielding doom and gloom, sometimes you just have to take the time to laugh.

Paul Teague is the local news editor for the News-Topic. He currently is reading "American Lion," a biographical account of the presidency of Andrew Jackson, who is credited with laying the groundwork for the modern Democratic Party.

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Load-Date: January 12, 2009

And finally, Bush admits: Regrets, I've quite a few...

Daily Mail (London)

January 13, 2009 Tuesday

3RD Edition

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Section: Pg. 4

Length: 808 words

Byline: DAVID GARDNER

Body

FOR eight years his verbal slip-ups have appalled and amused in equal measure.

Yesterday, with an eloquent successor waiting in the wings, George Bush couldn't resist one last 'Bushism'.

At his final White House press conference, the outgoing U.S. President told journalists: 'Sometimes you misuderestimated me.'

He was poking fun at himself, his words recalling a celebrated slip from his first years in office.

But the mood turned more serious as an unusually-candid Mr Bush listed the mistakes and major disappointments of his presidency.

In what he called his 'ultimate exit interview', a week before he leaves office, he conceded that the failure to find any weapons of mass destruction in Iraq was a 'significant disappointment'.

The accusation that Saddam Hussein had WMDs was the main justification offered by Mr Bush and Tony Blair for invading Iraq in 2003.

The President also admitted another miscalculation over the war, which has caused the deaths of more than 4,000 American troops.

Less than two months after it started he claimed that the allies had prevailed, a boast made under a 'Mission Clearly, putting Mission Accomplished' banner that turned out Accomplished on an to be wildly optimistic. 'Clearly, putting "Mission Accomplished" said the question for Iraq in on an aircraft carrier the long run was: 'Will this was a mistake,' he said.

democracy survive? And that's Mr Bush admitted 'some of going to be the challenge for my rhetoric' had been ill-advised future presidents.'

– he has been widely He angrily denied that his criticised for using the phrase presidency had bruised America's 'dead or alive' and proclaiming image abroad. 'I disagree 'Bring it on!' to terrorists.

with this assessment that, you He also regretted trying to know, that people view America overhaul the U.S. social security in a dim light,' he said.

And finally, Bush admits: Regrets, I've quite a few...

system and spoke of his Suggestions that the treatment 'disappointment' at the abuse of terrorist suspects at of Iraqi prisoners at the Abu Guantanamo had damaged Ghraib detention camp. America's moral standing But recent security gains in were also dismissed. Iraq were touted as a vindication Mr Bush hit back at critics for the U.S. troop 'surge'

who said he bungled the he ordered there at a time of response to Hurricane Katrina. rampant violence in 2007. He 'Don't tell me the federal response was slow when there were 30,000 people pulled off the roofs right after the storm passed,' he said.

He called President-elect Barack Obama 'a smart, engaging person', but warned him that a terrorist attack was still the 'most urgent threat' he and future presidents will face.

'I wish I could report that is not the case but there's still an enemy out there that would like to inflict damage on Americans,' he said.

The outgoing president pointed an accusing finger at Iran – 'still dangerous' – and said North Korea could pose a nuclear threat.

He insisted his failed bid to broker peace between Israel and the Palestinians in his final year in office had not been completely in vain, despite the crisis in Gaza, which he blamed squarely on the Islamist group Hamas.

The interview was the first time he had taken questions from reporters since an Iraqi journalist hurled shoes at him in Baghdad last month.

BUSHISMS WE HAVE KNOWN AND LOVED

'Rarely is the question asked, is our children learning?' January 2000, South Carolina '

I know the human being and fish can coexist peacefully.' September 2000, Michigan

'They underestimated the compassion of our country. I think they underestimated the will and determination of the commander in chief, too.' September 2001, Virginia

'There's an old saying in Tennessee (I know it's in Texas, probably in Tennessee) that says, fool me once, shame on – shame on you. Fool me – you can't get fooled again.' September 2002, Tennessee

Our enemies are innovative and resourceful, and so are we. They never stop thinking about new ways to harm our country and our people, and neither do we.' August 2004, Washington

'Too many good docs are getting out of business. Too many OB/GYNs (obstetricians and gynaecologists) aren't able to practise their love with women all across this country.' September 2004, Montana

'I remember meeting a mother of a child who was abducted by the North Koreans right here in the Oval Office.' June 2008, the Rose Garden

THE GAFFES HE ADMITTED YESTERDAY

'I want justice. There's an old poster out west that said Wanted, Dead or Alive referring to Osama Bin Laden, September 2001 Clearly, putting Mission Accomplished on an aircraft carrier sent out the wrong message Message on USS Abraham Lincoln, May 2003

My answer is bring 'em on His quote on Iraqis attacking U.S. forces, July 2003

'There have been disappointments. Abu Ghraib... not having weapons of mass destruction... things didn't go as planned' On standing by his decisions during the Iraq war

And finally, Bush admits: Regrets, I've quite a few...

Load-Date: January 13, 2009

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Chatroom txt EDITOR (0429 334 867) please include your name & suburb

Townsville Bulletin (Australia)

January 5, 2009 Monday

1 - Edition

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 13

Length: 710 words

Body

HOW come no sunbus services on a sunday apart from city-stockland-hospital. Do bus reliant people in tsvl who do not live on this route just have to wear this & sit at home. What an outrageous situation. Disbelieving visitor from bris. Denise.

I was wondering if slazenger were going to produce pink bats used by micheal clarke in the new year test and sell them in sporting outlets and a percentage go to cancer foundation. Doug neale currajong

For what it's worth, I am 100% against Hamas, Israel has the right to defend itself, funny how the tv news always tells it from the other side, they must be biased. d.b w.end

If it is acceptable for muslims to throw shoes as an insult and measure of protest can non muslims throw pigs trotters in return? If not, why not? Abbie we

Talk about making fish of one and flesh of another! Labor has excelled itself promoting division in our community. There are NO RULES limiting black fishers re seasonal closure, method or bag limits. That sews up the ATSI vote. Eric. WEST END

Cowboy stuart right on the money mate us mature women also dont swell. dont tell. and we are grateful as hell. seriously is the naughty fourty oka? get back baby. dolly@nth bchs

My sympathy goes to the spider, Cr Hewitt. mark 4816

Congrats to the cast of nye at the civic. What talent. Trent bell for oz idol! Catherine murphy wow what a voice! S kwn.

Hey pricey. How bout you make your new years resolution to find those bunkers in mount louisa instead of worrying about your thongs. Micky b 4810

Hey tyrell u should b ashamed of yourself how much did u spend on the 8 oclock fireworks on the strand? \$1000? Wat a waste of time taking my 6 month old down there! Is that because the strand is mooneys pride and joy not yours, how much did u spend on the riverway fireworks? Wat a disgrace, brad kirwan

Re hot air balloon new years. I think it was a sky lantern much better then fireworks an scaring animals. Was a joy to witness the lantern myself. K jensen

Chatroom txt EDITOR (0429 334 867) please include your name & suburb

I would like to encourage everyone to get out and watch some local cricket 20-20 games. There are games at riverway and murray every saturday arvo for next 3 weeks. Local cricket could use more support. Will be very entertaining. KD, kelso.

ILLEGAL U-TURNS. How frustrating it is when being a following car & the car in front brakes to do a u-turn when it is not sign posted to do so. Little or no policing of this increasing ongoing problem is a concern. The new sign at Barryman St should be at many other intersections if driver's fail to obey the law no sign, no U-TURN !!!! Dave Kirwan

Get rid of the contractors reliable people doing the work slash costs. Will be interesting to see how ozzie miner fairs when relying on their people to perform. Sam 4814

To all lonely hearts want unconditional love, attention and affection? Become a wildlife carer!

W from crnbrk im a nice guy so ive been told if u want to meet ill be at the pub in cannon park tonight im new to Townsville and id like to meet some nice people brownny 4814

RB W.end beauty is in the eye of the beholder. How does a gal like me find u? Lonely 4811

Hoons! Dont be so harsh on us hoons, we keep ppl in jobs: tyre co's, servo's and the police that are lookin after us we spend more money than what you do-gooders would ever! Us hoons put on a great show. Kris kirwan

If pubs insist on encouraging patrons 2 sit at the bar and drink can they not provide a designated `service only' area 2? I thought my money and time were worth as much 2 these businesses as the bar hogs! Maybe not! Thirsty guy douglas.

NEW `offences'? Or is this Nazi germany, where you were arrested, detained. For laws unknown to you!! wake up before we have no rights left (only have a few left now!) FREEDOM!!! Berg!

To the man that hit the white persian cat on monday night on meenan st. i would like to thank you for trying your best to save him not many people stop. Thank you. CB garbut

So we're to be charged an extra 30% on elec'. Because of greenhouse gases! Yet state gov' wants to sell off farming land for coal mines!? Please Explain!

Im sick of getting heart broken by guys. Is there any chance that i could find a nice guy somewhere? Tan 4814

Re Sandy mt louisa, i saw orange light 2 about 9.15pm ova jensen. Hung around for a while and headed west. D'gun

Load-Date: January 4, 2009

Gaza crisis: a crossroads for Obama

Christian Science Monitor

December 31, 2008, Wednesday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 9

Length: 831 words

Byline: Sandy Tolan

Dateline: Los Angeles

Body

The catastrophe unfolding in Gaza has the dark force of a recurring Middle Eastern nightmare: Scattered guerrilla-like attacks from the weak lead to massive retaliation by the strong. Excessive lethal force provokes enraged recriminations. Fresh bloodshed fuels the hard-liners on both sides.

We have seen this cycle many times before: throughout Lebanon (2006), across the occupied territories during the first intifada (1987-93), in east and west Beirut (1982), and even during the founding of modern Israel and the subsequent dispossession of the Palestinians in 1948.

When the smoke finally drifts from Gaza, and the human rights investigations begin - into the death of schoolchildren in midday rocket attacks or the demolition of a women's dormitory - sober voices will ask why Israel has still not learned a fundamental lesson: By trying to crush your enemy, you only make him stronger.

Two years ago, despite killing hundreds of Lebanese fighters and civilians, and driving some 800,000 from their homes, Israel could not defeat the radical Shiite militant group Hezbollah, which emerged stronger than ever. For Israel, again, the lesson was lost - ironically, on a nation whose tragic motto is "never again."

The difference now is that from the ashes of this war, new lands can be seeded - if President-elect Obama is bold enough to do what his predecessors would not. Like the financial meltdown in the US, Israel's grave and massive blunder in Gaza provides Mr. Obama with an opportunity for sweeping changes unimaginable on Election Day.

Obama could begin by making clear that the days of Israel's impunity are over. Israel's outsized response to Qassam rocket attacks has not only killed more than 350 Palestinians in the past three days; it has further radicalized Arab populations from the Gulf to Egypt and may lead to a third intifada.

This does not mean the US should condone the rocket attacks and mortar fire, but simply recognize that their limited power to kill - about two dozen deaths in the past six years - must be seen against the massive retaliatory force of Israel, a nuclear power with one of the strongest armies in the world.

"Special relationship" or not, Obama should make clear that Israel must be held accountable for its actions - and that there are limits to US support. Obama can also use this moment to send a message that America recognizes the fundamental worth of Palestinian lives and dreams. While this may sound basic, its absence, especially over the past eight years, has made clear to the Arabs that America's "special relationship" with Israel undermines its claims to be an honest broker.

Gaza crisis: a crossroads for Obama

In 60 years of failed negotiations, one-sidedness has simply not worked. In 2000, the Clinton team undermined the Camp David negotiations by repeatedly pressing Israel's agenda while dismissing Palestinian arguments. This past year, when President Bush helped Israel celebrate its 60th anniversary, he pointedly declined to attend any similar commemoration by the Palestinians of their Nakba, or Catastrophe, when 750,000 Arabs of Palestine fled or were expelled.

An Obama administration that recognizes the inherently equal value of Palestinian aspirations will promote a new ethic and a new pragmatism. For talks to succeed, the US must tell hard truths to old friends and make a clean break with the tired road maps of the past.

Obama's team should follow the advice of former Secretary of State Colin Powell and bring Hamas into future talks. Any agreement reached only with Mahmoud Abbas, the beleaguered leader of the West Bank Palestinians, would be backed by only a fraction of his people.

Future negotiations will also be fraught with thousands of new facts on the ground. In 1993, when Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin famously shook hands, the Jewish settler population in the West Bank was 109,000; now, after 15 years of the "peace process," it's up to 275,000. East Jerusalem, the supposed future Palestinian capital, is now ringed with Jewish settlements. The hard reality of any new negotiation is that because of Israel's Judaization of the West Bank, the two state solution, long considered the only path to peace, is on life support.

Early signs suggest the Obama team is inclined to continue the Middle East status quo. But Obama is nothing if not practical and shrewd. He surely recognizes that in the aftermath of the carnage in Gaza, he will have the opportunity to make visionary change in the long-term interest of all parties. And he knows that the bleak alternatives - a new Palestinian intifada, diplomatic rifts across the Arab world, more wars without end - would undermine his desperately needed efforts to remake the image of America in the world.

* Sandy Tolan is author of "The Lemon Tree: An Arab, A Jew, and the Heart of the Middle East" and a professor at the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Southern California.

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Load-Date: December 30, 2008

Vast wreckage of a president Americans want to forget

The Australian

January 5, 2009 Monday

1 - All-round Country Edition

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 7

Length: 795 words

Byline: Frank Rich, Trevor Cook, Oliver Pritchett

Body

The New York Times columnist Frank Rich marvels at the grandeur of George W. Bush's numerous failures

THE last NBC News/Wall Street Journal poll on George W. Bush's presidency found 79 per cent of Americans will not miss him after he leaves the White House. He is being forgotten already, even if he's not yet gone. You start to pity him until you remember how vast the wreckage is. It stretches from the Middle East to Wall Street to Main Street and even into the heavens, which have been a safe haven for toxins under his passive stewardship. The discrepancy between the grandeur of the failure and the stature of the man is a puzzlement. We are still trying to compute it.

In what was intended as a farewell victory lap to show off Iraq's improved post-surge security, Bush was reduced to ducking shoes. He tried to spin the ruckus as another victory for his administration's democracy promotion. "That's what people do in a free society," he said. He made the same claim three years ago after the Palestinian elections, championed by his freedom agenda, led to a victory for Hamas. "There is something healthy about a system that does that," Bush observed.

Iraq burned, New Orleans flooded, and Bush remained oblivious to each and every pratfall on his watch. Americans essentially stopped listening to him after Hurricane Katrina hit in 2005, but he still doesn't grasp the finality of their defection. Lately he's promised not to steal the spotlight from Barack Obama once he's in retirement; as if he could do so by any act short of running naked through downtown Dallas.

The Sydney Morning Herald at the weekend headlined a front-page story "Generation lost in battle against the bottle":

A GENERATION of Australian teenagers has been lost to binge drinking and will not be reached by the federal Government's anti-drinking campaign, one of Australia's leading drug educators warns.

Paul Dillon, director of the private consultancy Drug and Alcohol Research and Training Australia, said the \$53 million binge drinking strategy was having little effect on a generation of young drinkers habitually misusing alcohol. Emergency wards remain busy. Alcohol sales have held steady.

"I really don't think we're going to see tremendous changes among young teens up to mid-20s. That group have already made their decisions," Mr Dillon said. "They're sort of like a lost generation, because of the culture they've been brought up in. Their views around alcohol have been pretty well established."

Vast wreckage of a president Americans want to forget

Writing for the Crikey website, Trevor Cook delivers a reality check:

PAUL Dillon has got himself a fortune in free media coverage today with the highly colourful statement: ``They're sort of like a lost generation, because of the culture they've been brought up in."

The evidence from the 2007 national drug strategy household survey, paid for by the commonwealth government ... presents a less lurid and more hopeful picture around alcohol consumption in Australia.

The survey found the vast majority of recent drinkers had undertaken at least some alcohol moderation behaviour ... drinkers are very open to messages about the desirability of reducing their alcohol consumption.

Women aged 14-29 who were drinking at risky or high-risk levels, long-term, were more likely to drink bottled spirits and liqueurs than other drinkers in this age group. And **females** in the 14-19 age group who were low-risk drinkers were more likely to drink alcopops [rather than] the risky and high-risk drinkers who preferred bottled spirits and liqueurs.

The survey reported that about half of the age group 14-19 drink less than weekly and about a third of males aged 20-29 drink less than weekly and nearly half of **females** 20-29 drink less than weekly.

When you put together the facts that a lot of young people seem to drink infrequently or at low-risk levels and the idea that the vast majority of Australians are trying to moderate their drinking behaviour, the situation appears nowhere near as hopeless as Dillon and many others seek to make it out to be.

In London's The Daily Telegraph, Oliver Pritchett considers the Australian flu that is spreading rapidly across Europe:

HOW do I tell the difference between Australian flu and all the other varieties? The most obvious symptom of Australian flu is the irritating sneeze associated with it. It has its own peculiar inflexion, rising from the a-tish to a higher note on the shoo, so that it sounds as if it is meant to be a question.

What is so special about the Australian strain? The ``strine strine", as it is known by virologists, is much more competitive and Australians are intensely proud of the fact that their flu is the worst in the world. Any other variety of flu is classified in their medical textbooks as the five-day whinge.

Load-Date: January 4, 2009

Israeli bomb attack in refugee camp kills five daughters in one family

The Irish Times

December 30, 2008 Tuesday

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Section: WORLD; Gaza Raids; Pg. 13

Length: 749 words

Body

DEATH IN GAZA: Mother of devastated family calls on God to take revenge, writes **Hazem Baloushain** Jabaliya and **Rory McCarthy** in Jerusalem

THE FAMILY house was small: three rooms, a tiny kitchen and bathroom, built of poor quality bricks with a corrugated asbestos roof, in block four of the Jabaliya refugee camp in northern Gaza.

There are hundreds of similar homes crammed into the narrow streets, filled with some of the poorest and most vulnerable families in the overcrowded Gaza Strip. But it was this house, where Anwar and Samira Balousha lived with their nine young children, that had the misfortune to be built next to what became late on Sunday night another target in Israel's devastating bombing campaign of Gaza.

An Israeli bomb struck the refugee camp's Imad Aqil mosque at about midnight, destroying the building and collapsing several shops and a pharmacy nearby.

The force of the blast was so massive it also brought down the Baloushas' house, which yesterday lay in ruins. The seven eldest girls were asleep together on mattresses in one bedroom and they bore the brunt of the explosion. Five were killed where they lay: Tahrir (17), Ikram (15), Samer (13), Dina (8) and Jawahar (4).

They were the latest in a growing number of civilian casualties in Israel's bombing campaign. At least 315 Palestinians have been killed and as many as 1,400 injured. On the Israeli side, two people have been killed by Palestinian rockets.

Israel's military offensive continues and may yet intensify.

Imam (16) lay in the room with her sisters but by chance survived with only injuries to her legs. She was eventually pulled free and rushed to hospital. "I was asleep. I didn't hear anything of the explosion," she said yesterday as she sat comforting her mother. "I just woke when the bricks fell on me. I saw all my sisters around me and I couldn't move. No one could see me from above. The neighbours and ambulance men couldn't see us. They were walking on the bricks above us. I started to scream and told my sisters we would die. We all screamed: 'Baba, mama. Come to help us'." Her parents had been sleeping in the room next door with their two youngest children, Muhammad, aged one, and Bara'a, a baby girl just 12 days old. Their room was damaged and all were hurt, but they survived and were taken straight to hospital even before any of the older girls were found.

Imam eventually recognised her uncle's voice among the rescuers and she shouted again for help. "He found me and started to remove the bricks and the rubble from me. They started to pull me by my hands, the bricks were still

Israeli bomb attack in refugee camp kills five daughters in one family

lying on my legs." Her mother, Samira (36) had seen the pile of bricks in the girls' bedroom and was stricken with grief, convinced they were all dead. Like all the family, she too was asleep when the bomb struck.

"I opened my eyes and saw bricks all over my body," she said. "My face was covered with the concrete blocks." She checked on her two youngest children and then looked in the room next door. "I didn't see any of my daughters, just a pile of bricks and parts of the roof. Everyone told me my daughters were alive, but I knew they were gone." She sat on a sofa surrounded by other women at a neighbour's house further along the street and struggled to speak, pausing for long moments and still overcome with shock. "I hope the Palestinian military wings retaliate and take revenge with operations inside Israel. I ask God to take revenge on them," she said.

Her husband, Anwar (40), sat in another house where a mourning tent had been set up.

He was pale and still suffering from serious injuries to his head, his shoulder and his hands. But like many other patients in Gaza he had been made to leave an overcrowded hospital to make way for the dying. Yesterday his house was a pile of rubble: collapsed walls and the occasional piece of furniture exposed to the sky. He spoke bitterly of his daughters' deaths. "We are civilians. I don't belong to any faction, I don't support Fatah or Hamas, I'm just a Palestinian. They are punishing us all, civilians and militants. What is the guilt of the civilian?" Like many men in Gaza, Anwar has no job, and like all in the refugee camp he relies on food handouts from the UN and other charity support to survive. "If the dead here were Israelis, you would see the whole world condemning and responding. We are living in our land, we didn't take it from the Israelis. We are fighting for our rights. One day we will get them back." - (Guardian service)

Load-Date: December 30, 2008

End of Document

Israel evicts settlers from disputed house; Troops drag away 200 in Hebron

The International Herald Tribune

December 5, 2008 Friday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 8

Length: 762 words

Byline: Ethan Bronner - The New York Times Media Group

Dateline: HEBRON, West Bank

Body

Israeli troops forcibly evicted about 200 hard-line Jewish settlers from a contested building in this volatile biblical city Thursday, the first serious clash in what seems to be a spiraling confrontation between the government and defiant settlers.

The operation, carried out by 600 soldiers and policemen with stealth and efficiency, took half an hour with just two dozen relatively light injuries. But events did not end there. Young settlers then rampaged through Palestinian fields and neighborhoods, setting olive trees ablaze and trashing houses.

Major Avital Leibovich, an Israeli Army spokeswoman, said the southern part of the West Bank was now designated as a closed military area - meaning only those who live here may enter, an effort to prevent outside settlers from causing further trouble. Within an hour of the order, huge car lines were backed up at new military roadblocks.

The contested building, which occupants had dubbed "The House of Peace," is on the road to the Cave of the Patriarchs, where Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and their wives are said to be buried, a site Muslims and Jews have fought over for centuries.

As the sun descended, the area around the building looked like a war zone. Evacuees were still being dragged about, four police per person, rocks were strewn on roads, plumes of black smoke were rising from the olive groves, and hundreds of helmeted troops in riot gear confronted a crowd of furious settlers.

The men in the crowd wore beards and sidecurls, women had long skirts and covered heads. Members of the religiously observant Jewish population in and around Hebron number several thousand among hundreds of thousands of Palestinians.

As Palestinians watched from rooftops and windows, some settlers shouted at the troops, calling them Nazis. A few had sewn yellow stars on their shirts, like those Jews had been obliged to wear under Hitler. On a wall near the confrontation, Hebrew graffiti declared: "There will be a war over the House of Peace."

Much is at stake for both sides in this confrontation since the government says it wants to facilitate the building of a Palestinian state in most of the West Bank, whereas the settlers and their backers say they will do all in their power to prevent such a state. They are focusing partly on increasing their numbers in Hebron, second only to Jerusalem in its historic and religious significance to them.

Israel evicts settlers from disputed house Troops drag away 200 in Hebron

The four-story building in question was built and owned by a Palestinian who agreed to sell it. He said he had not been aware the buyers were Jews, that he had been tricked and that he had backed out of the deal. The settlers said he knew very well what he was doing but threats had made him claim otherwise.

The Israeli government ordered the settlers out. They challenged the order. Three weeks ago, the Supreme Court took the government's side and gave it 30 days to make good on the order. In the past week or two, settlers had grown more rebellious, throwing rocks at soldiers and defacing Palestinian buildings and graves. It was clearly only a matter of time before the army would step in.

The official who made the call for the evacuation Thursday was Ehud Barak, the defense minister and head of the Labor Party, who said at a news conference later that "what was tested today was the ability of the state to enforce its laws and its essence upon its citizens."

Barak had met with settler leaders Thursday morning to find a way out of the confrontation. The settlers emerged from the meeting believing there was still negotiation to be done but Barak clearly thought otherwise.

Since elections are scheduled for February and Barak is his party leader, opponents of the evacuation accused him of seeking political advantage through his decision.

"Barak sent the army and police as part of the left wing's election campaign and the blood of the casualties is on his hands," declared Arie Elad of the National Religious Party.

Settler leaders were indignant, saying Barak had tricked them after talking soothingly to them in the morning. They said there was nothing more scandalous in the land of Israel than for Jews to evict Jews from their homes.

In a separate development, Israel agreed Thursday for the first time in four weeks to allow journalists and foreign aid workers to enter Gaza. The area, ruled by the militant group **Hamas**, is under a closure led by Israel that severely limits goods and people from going in and out. But only recently did the closure include foreign journalists who had appealed to the government and Supreme Court for renewed permission to enter.

Load-Date: December 16, 2008

The rotten state of Egypt is too powerless and corrupt to act; Comment

The Independent (London)

January 1, 2009 Thursday

First Edition

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The  INDEPENDENT

Section: WORLD; Pg. 20

Length: 768 words

Byline: Robert Fisk

Body

There was a day when we worried about the "Arab masses" - the millions of "ordinary" Arabs on the streets of Cairo, Kuwait, Amman, Beirut - and their reaction to the constant bloodbaths in the Middle East. Could Anwar Sadat restrain the anger of his people? And now - after three decades of Hosni Mubarak - can Mubarak (or "La Vache Qui Rit", as he is still called in Cairo) restrain the anger of his people? The answer, of course, is that Egyptians and Kuwaitis and Jordanians will be allowed to shout in the streets of their capitals - but then they will be shut down, with the help of the tens of thousands of secret policemen and government militiamen who serve the princes and kings and elderly rulers of the Arab world.

Egyptians demand that Mubarak open the Rafah crossing-point into Gaza, break off diplomatic relations with Israel, even send weapons to Hamas. And there is a kind of perverse beauty in listening to the response of the Egyptian government: why not complain about the three gates which the Israelis refuse to open? And anyway, the Rafah crossing-point is politically controlled by the four powers that produced the "road map" for peace, including Britain and the US. Why blame Mubarak?

To admit that Egypt can't even open its sovereign border without permission from Washington tells you all you need to know about the powerlessness of the satraps that run the Middle East for us.

Open the Rafah gate - or break off relations with Israel - and Egypt's economic foundations crumble. Any Arab leader who took that kind of step will find that the West's economic and military support is withdrawn. Without subventions, Egypt is bankrupt. Of course, it works both ways. Individual Arab leaders are no longer going to make emotional gestures for anyone. When Sadat flew to Jerusalem - "I am tired of the dwarves," he said of his fellow Arab leaders - he paid the price with his own blood at the Cairo reviewing-stand where one of his own soldiers called him a "Pharaoh" before shooting him dead.

The true disgrace of Egypt, however, is not in its response to the slaughter in Gaza. It is the corruption that has become embedded in an Egyptian society where the idea of service - health, education, genuine security for ordinary people - has simply ceased to exist. It's a land where the first duty of the police is to protect the regime, where protesters are beaten up by the security police, where young women objecting to Mubarak's endless regime

The rotten state of Egypt is too powerless and corrupt to act Comment

- likely to be passed on caliph-like to his son Gamal, whatever we may be told - are sexually molested by plain-clothes agents, where prisoners in the Tora-Tora complex are forced to rape each other by their guards.

There has developed in Egypt a kind of religious facade in which the meaning of Islam has become effaced by its physical representation. Egyptian civil "servants" and government officials are often scrupulous in their religious observances - yet they tolerate and connive in rigged elections, violations of the law and prison torture. A young American doctor described to me recently how in a Cairo hospital busy doctors merely blocked doors with plastic chairs to prevent access to patients. In November, the Egyptian newspaper Al-Masry al-Youm reported how doctors abandoned their patients to attend prayers during Ramadan.

And amid all this, Egyptians have to live amid daily slaughter by their own shabby infrastructure. Alaa al-Aswani wrote eloquently in the Cairo paper Al-Dastour that the regime's "martyrs" outnumber all the dead of Egypt's wars against Israel - victims of railway accidents, ferry sinkings, the collapse of city buildings, sickness, cancers and pesticide poisonings - all victims, as Aswani says, "of the corruption and abuse of power". Opening the Rafah border-crossing for wounded Palestinians - the Palestinian medical staff being pushed back into their Gaza prison once the bloodied survivors of air raids have been dumped on Egyptian territory - is not going to change the midden in which Egyptians themselves live.

Sayed Hassan Nasrallah, the Hizbollah secretary general in Lebanon, felt able to call on Egyptians to "rise in their millions" to open the border with Gaza, but they will not do so. Ahmed Aboul Gheit, the feeble Egyptian Foreign Minister, could only taunt the Hizbollah leaders by accusing them of trying to provoke "an anarchy similar to the one they created in their own country."

But he is well-protected. So is President Mubarak.

Egypt's malaise is in many ways as dark as that of the Palestinians. Its impotence in the face of Gaza's suffering is a symbol of its own political sickness.

Load-Date: December 31, 2008

Communicating with the Divine

The Jerusalem Post

October 8, 2008 Wednesday

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 4

Length: 3331 words

Byline: MATTHEW WAGNER and GIL HOFFMAN

Highlight: As a devout disciple of Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, Shas MK Ariel Atias is eager to 'bring people closer to God.' But as communications minister, he's obligated to help consumers get access to Internet porn. Atias speaks with 'The Jerusalem Post' about that quandry, and several others that Shas faces today. Interview

Body

Communications Minister Ariel Atias is Shas's wunderkind. In the 2006 elections, just five years after leaving the Torah study hall to work in Shas spiritual mentor Rabbi Ovadia Yosef's kosher supervision apparatus ("I was 30 years old and had to find a way to support my family"), Atias was parachuted into Shas's Number 2 slot. Known as "the meteor," Atias leapfrogged numerous seasoned politicians on the Shas list - such as Nissim Ze'ev, 57 - who had been with the Sephardi haredi party since its very inception.

It is not difficult to imagine the jealousy aroused among more senior Shas MKs when Atias, who was a 12-year- old student in an Ashkenazi haredi yeshiva when Shas was created in 1982, suddenly became Shas's most powerful, most influential politician after party chairman Eli Yishai.

In an interview with The Jerusalem Post before the holidays, Atias expressed Shas's position - which is essentially Yosef's position - on a diverse set of issues, from peace negotiations with the Palestinians to issues involving the relationship between state and religion, to Shas's political aspirations.

Atias is a skilled speaker. An influential haredi PR consultant called him "haredi Jewry's most eloquent spokesman" and a "master of soundbites." But, in a short telephone conversation with the Post before the interview, Atias made it clear that he was willing to talk about any subject under the sun except one: internal Shas politics and his relations with chairman Eli Yishai.

"Ever since I became an MK, reporters have been driving me crazy with the question, 'Do you want to be the leader of Shas?' Once and for all, I don't want to be Shas's leader," he said.

Notwithstanding Atias's assertion, it is logical to assume that there is tension between Yishai, Shas's nominal chairman, and Atias, who has a special relationship with the source of Shas's political strength - Rabbi Ovadia Yosef.

You joined Shas in the last shmita [Sabbatical] year, which makes this the eighth anniversary of being connected with the party, right?

I did not join Shas eight years ago. I joined the kashrut operations. It is important to separate Shas the political party from Beit Yosef, the kosher supervision apparatus.

Communicating with the Divine

I became friendly with Rabbi Ovadia's son [Moshe Yosef, the rabbi's youngest and most politically powerful son, who is intimately involved with the inner workings of Shas and is also involved with the kosher supervision business].

It was supposed to be a temporary job for the duration of the shmita year. But the Holy One, blessed be He, aided me and when the shmita year was over I stayed on. Rabbi Moshe asked me to stay and work in marketing.

How do you explain your success?

First and foremost, from the heavens I was given grace. But on a practical level, my employers received more than they expected from me.

I developed market consciousness for Rabbi Ovadia's trademark. Anything that Rabbi Ovadia Yosef is connected with has a tremendous market potential. And that potential was not being exploited.

I came in and after a lot of hard work managed to realize the market potential for food products that are under the kosher supervision of Rabbi Ovadia Yosef. The large retail chains woke up to this potential and we even expanded our operations overseas.

At the same time, slowly, I became close to the rabbi. I noticed that Rabbi Ovadia was very interested in the kashrut business. Not because it was economically lucrative - the rabbi does not bother himself with money. Rather, because he saw the expansion of a quality kosher supervision apparatus as a way of saving souls from sin.

Before we came onto the scene Jews ate food that was less kosher. Now they were eating food that was more kosher, and that was a big merit.

And that is precisely why Rabbi Ovadia established Shas: to bring more Jews closer to the Rock, the Source of all. He created an educational system and encouraged people to move from secular schools to religious schools that teach tradition, honoring parents, love for the Jewish people.

Looking back over the past two and a half decades since the party was established, do you think Shas has helped Oriental Jews advance?

Shas gives Oriental Jews a feeling of pride, it gives them someone to identify with. They do not feel they are losing their tradition.

We are talking about a generation of people whose parents came here when the state was founded and it was hard for them to acclimate. My parents came here from Morocco and it was very difficult for them. It was not self-evident that they would take a part in the governing of things here. It was not self-evident that their children would receive the kind of education they wanted them to receive.

Shas does everything out of love...

If not for Shas, tens of thousands of women would not go to the mikveh [before having sexual relations with their husbands].

Where did the religious Zionists go wrong with Sephardi Jews?

The National Religious Party did not work with enough intensity on these [religious] issues. They were afraid of being separatists from the secular Zionist majority. Religious Zionists wanted to assimilate, to become a part of the majority, and to feel like seculars. But you can't live in two worlds at once.

Shas declared in a loud voice that we separate ourselves on religious matters. On social activism issues we take care of everyone. We want religious services for everyone.

How do you explain the numerous corruption convictions that have plagued Shas, whether it be Shlomo Ben-Izri or Aryeh Deri?

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People who do a lot sometimes make mistakes. But there is no evil intent behind the different incidents. Rabbi Ben-Izri, for instance, I know him well. He does not live the way someone who embezzles a lot of money would live. He has a modest house. His clothes are modest. He has nine children. He lives a very simple existence, more so than other politicians.

I am convinced that within the framework of [political] action, especially in a party that was created ex nihilo, did not have a long political tradition, that never learned the intricacies of bureaucracy or of government, of how to work with a legal adviser, there was a sudden impulsive excitement to do a lot, and I would like to think that was what made some of our politicians err.

But I would also like to point out that Shas's failings pale in comparison to the corruption cases that have been tied to political parties recently.

Our main failure was in the [illegal] transfer of money to non-profit organizations and Torah institutions. The money never went into someone's pocket.

One of Shas's main demands as a condition for joining any future government coalition is that Jerusalem not be on the bargaining table. The Jerusalem Post reported, based on high-ranking Palestinian officials, that the prime minister was conducting negotiations on Jerusalem. The prime minister denied it. Do you really believe that Jerusalem has not been negotiated?

Believing is in the eye of the beholder. We have to ask whether we have sure knowledge that there are negotiations on Jerusalem. The Council of Torah Sages decided that Shas cannot be in a government that negotiates on the future of Jerusalem. The prime minister and the foreign minister said there haven't been negotiations. Should we believe official, or unofficial sources?

We have a commitment from Prime Minister Ehud Olmert. He sent an emissary to Rabbi Ovadia that we would be warned before negotiations begin.

There have been many governments that negotiated and none of them were about peace for peace. Even Netanyahu talked about settlement blocs, which implies that outside settlement blocs he would be willing to compromise.

What is Shas's position on moving ahead with negotiations with the Palestinians?

We say there has to be a partner that can ensure peace. Up until now we have been burned by our partners. Even when we had leaders who wanted to give away everything, like Ehud Barak, they didn't get anything because there wasn't a partner.

During the disengagement [from Gaza], Rabbi Ovadia debated the issue. It is true that he said we can give up land to prevent bloodshed. Saving life takes precedence over fasting on Yom Kippur or resting on Shabbat, so it also takes precedence over holding onto territories - not because we think that we are rapacious occupiers, but because we believe that it is worth it for real peace.

The peace agreement Egypt has prevented bloodshed. Even people who opposed the agreement at the time admit today that.

What happened to the good relations fostered by Shas under Deri with Israeli Arabs?

I heard that there were good relations. But that was at a time when Deri was interior minister, which gave him a lot more opportunities to help Arabs.

Like Arabs, Sephardi Jews are victims of discrimination.

Both Arabs and Oriental Jews were not given a piece of the political leadership.

Communicating with the Divine

Do you think the government should do more to foster good relations with Israeli Arabs?

I think that you are not phrasing the question correctly. I think the question should be, 'How do the Arabs see themselves in Israeli society? Is their heart with Hamas while their head is here, or have they reached the conclusion that they cannot dance simultaneously at two weddings?

Should Israel take measures to strengthen Fatah?

We can't blame ourselves if Abu Mazen [Mahmoud Abbas] or Fatah can't control the PA. Right now [Fatah] is nice because they cannot control Hamas and they need us.

I think that we should not be hard on ourselves after we did everything in our power to free prisoners and to open up roadblocks and to compete amongst ourselves to see who is willing to compromise more, and after all that to be paid back with more terrorism.

I don't think we should weaken Fatah, but I don't think we should be too involved in the internal issues of the Palestinians. On the other I think we should be working to weaken Hamas.

Why are you considered a leftist within Shas?

My views come from Rabbi Ovadia Yosef.

I come from a right-wing house. I got a haredi education. We didn't learn about Greater Israel. We were not taught to sanctify the land. But in my house the empathy was always clearly for the Right, while the Left was always rejected in an extreme and obvious way. There are good and there are bad; there is the Right and there is the Left. That is what I was taught at home.

But my views on territories and the Palestinian question come from Rabbi Ovadia Yosef. If someone has a problem with that, it is his problem, not mine. Now, Rabbi Ovadia Yosef wrote a halachic opinion that for real peace, we can give up territory.

The difference between [Shas] and the Left is that the Left thinks we're occupiers, that we are conquerors in a land that does not belong to us. We don't think so. This land is ours. It is all ours. If we give any of it up, we do so with great pain, from a position of power, in the name of peace.

Just a few weeks ago, a Palestinian woman miscarried and lost her baby while waiting at a checkpoint. Do stories like this make you reconsider what we are doing in Judea and Samaria?

Focusing on these individual cases of Palestinian suffering is not fair. We are not doing it purposely, and if we do hurt innocent people, we always apologize.

I've never heard Hamas say they are sorry for hurting innocent people. In fact, they try to hurt innocent people all the time.

It is clear that the Jewish people is a compassionate people. I do not believe that there are Jews who learn from our enemies and truly want to hurt.

Regarding the roadblocks, we put them up not because we want to hurt anybody. We put them up because we want to defend ourselves. If they did not behave the way they do, we would not have to set up those roadblocks. They blow themselves up to kill us, so we say, as it is written, "When someone comes to kill you, kill him first."

One of Shas's most central demands is the increase of child allowances. Does Shas want to reverse the economic reforms instituted by Binyamin Netanyahu?

The Treasury says child welfare payments cause people not to work. Well, I have five kids and it costs a lot of money. It is ridiculous to think that for a few hundred shekels, someone would prefer to stay home - despite all the

Communicating with the Divine

stigmas surrounding a household head that does not work, despite all the negative ramifications this would have for his children.

The Treasury's officials are insulting people's intelligence.

Eighty percent of the people living under the poverty line work. What are they [the Treasury] trying to sell us?

What we are asking for would not cost more than NIS 1 billion.

Bibi made a mistake by cutting suddenly. He hurt people who work and have to pay a mortgage and relied on a few thousand extra shekels a month that they were receiving from the state in the form of child allotments. All of a sudden these people were left stranded.

We are just trying to reverse some of the damage done. That's all.

The Treasury is ideologically opposed to child allowances.

Treasury Minister Ronnie Bar-On visited Rabbi Ovadia Yosef and told him it is not about money. Bar-On told the rabbi that he was opposed to child allowances in principle. So the rabbi told him that we will vote in favor of dispersing the Knesset.

Even from an economic perspective the child allowances make sense. All the money that is transferred to poor families will come to the economy in the form of consumption. Most people who receive the allotments are not going to spend the money in Turkey. They are going to spend it in the local grocery store for basic goods. And this encourages growth.

News media interviews with Atias in the months after he was appointed communications minister focused on the young, ambitious man's lack of political experience. They also played up the paradox of a modern, Western state appointing a communications minister who is ideologically and religiously opposed to having a television or Internet in his own home.

Liberal Israelis feared a new era of darkness led by a young Jewish ayatollah who would purge the television screens of women or confine them to burkas, block Internet access to all but the most puritanical sites, and launch a zealous campaign to regulate the media in accordance with ancient rabbinic law.

But more than two years after Atias was ensconced in the Communications Ministry, soft porn channels are still available on cable and satellite TV, erotic telephone calls are still an option by landline or by cellphone, and network TV content remains the same as the pre-Atias era.

In fact, some haredi activists think Atias is not doing enough to clean up communications and save precious Jewish souls from the dangers of gratuitous sex and violence on TV, the Internet or on the display window of a 3G cellphone. In a rash of anonymous pashkevilim [black and white notices plastered to walls, bulletin boards and lamp posts in haredi neighborhoods], Atias was baselessly attacked and vicious rumors were spread about his private life.

But most mainstream haredim understand Atias's political limitations.

One haredi source, who was intimately involved in the negotiations with cellular phone companies to create a "kosher" cellphone [no Internet access, no fancy ringtones, no erotic calls, no SMS], said that the very fact that Atias is haredi works against him.

"Legislation and regulations initiated by a haredi minister do not work," said the source, "because secular people see it as religious coercion. Exploiting market forces by threatening to boycott is the only way to get what you want."

Meanwhile, Atias has become the darling of the communications industry. Executives in the major cellphone companies say that Atias is a surprisingly fast learner and has a natural business sense.

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During his stint in office, Atias has been involved in a number of major developments in the communications industry, from the introduction of competitors to the local telephony market once controlled by Bezeq, to the gradual privatization of postal services, to the enhancement of competition among the four major cellphone companies by making it possible to switch from one to the other without changing numbers.

But Atias received the most news coverage for his role in advancing Internet censorship legislation that would require Internet Service Providers to filter Internet sites featuring pornography, gambling and violence. Only end-users who specifically request it will not be filtered.

Do you think that because you are haredi you have had more opposition to this legislation than if you were, say, a secular, leftist woman?

I think that a good portion of the media did not look at the content of the legislation and instead attacked the person who proposed it.

Many of the people who attacked me did not even read the law.

It is my obligation as a minister not only to deal with regulations and consumer issues, but also to formulate a value-based policy. I don't care what people say.

I am working so that when I leave the Communications Ministry, my influence will continue to be felt. I want to help the children of Israel so that they do not fall into the spiritual trap of being exposed to the negative elements that are on the Internet.

It is not difficult to make cosmetic changes. I want to do something that will save souls. We have to do everything possible to reduce the negative impact of the Internet on the youth and to do it via legislation and directives that will remain after I leave this office.

In this last government Shas received portfolios that in the past were not traditionally held by religious parties. This can be viewed as the maturation of the religious parties from very parochial concerns to much wider concerns. Do you see a situation in which there will be a haredi prime minister?

No. We are a minority and we don't want to force our views on the majority. We are here to maintain the Jewish identity of Israel, like preventing civil marriage and selling hametz on Pessah. We are here to make sure our constituency gets equal funding, and to help the poor. We have no desire to run the country.

Our fights are restricted to maintaining the Jewish character of the state. We fight civil marriages and encourage giving more budgets to Torah institutions and to the financially weak.

What about all the people in Israel who immigrated here from the FSU under the Law of Return, who serve in the army and work but can't get married here because they are not Jewish? Do you think that is fair?

We have to ask what's more important for the country. We fought for this land because God gave it to us. We did not pick the nicest piece of land. We are here because we are Jews.

God gave the land to us and that's why we fought for it. Assimilation and mixed marriages can end the Jewish identity of Israel. If we do not protect our Jewishness we are likely to find ourselves thrown out of this land and into the sea. If we allow assimilation, within 20 to 30 years the entire Jewish nation will disappear. We already have wars in which soldiers give up their lives to protect this nation. We cannot afford to be like other nations, because if we do, there will be no reason for us to fight for this piece of land.

Do Shas's rabbis really reach out to all sectors of Israeli society? And if so, why do you think there is a need for organizations such as Tzohar?

Rabbis that are connected with Shas do not try to create a new religion. There is one religion. There is one Torah that was handed down to us from Moses on Mount Sinai.

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When you talk about the rabbis who try to create a custom-tailored religion that fits like a suit each person in accordance with his personality, that is not religion.

We say to people, "this is the truth." If you cannot keep it all, keep part of it. Go to the mikveh, keep kosher. Do what is possible, and what you can't do, save for tomorrow.

But you cannot pick and choose. There is no such thing as different religions for different people. We are willing to help you come closer to God, but it has to be done in the true way.

Graphic

3 photos: Ariel Atias in his office, with a photo of the Shas spiritual leader. 'My views come from Rabbi Ovadia Yosef. If someone has a problem with that, it is his problem, not mine.' Aryeh Deri. Stioff Atias's favorite, despite the former Shas leader's conviction on corruption charges. 'From the heavens I was given grace.' (Credit: Ariel Jerozolimski)

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Soccer home at last for Palestinians; National squad to host Jordan on Sunday in first internationally recognized Palestinian home game

The Toronto Star

October 22, 2008 Wednesday

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Byline: Oakland Ross, Toronto Star

Dateline: AL-RAM, West Bank

Body

It was an important day yesterday, as the Palestinian national soccer squad faced off against a pick-up team of players from the West Bank cities of Bethlehem and Hebron.

The game was a warm-up match for a momentous encounter Sunday, when Jordan's Prince Ali and Sepp Blatter, president of FIFA, the international soccer federation, will be among dignitaries watching as the Palestinians take the field against neighbouring Jordan in the first internationally recognized Palestinian home game.

Because of security restrictions and inadequate facilities, the Palestinians had had to play their home games in other countries, including Qatar and Jordan. That will change with Sunday's friendly match.

Yesterday's contest played out under sunny skies in mild temperatures at the vastly enlarged and wholly refurbished Al-Ram Stadium, effectively a brand new complex that rises above the streets of Al-Ram 100 metres or so from the bleak concrete security barrier that separates the West Bank from Jerusalem.

FIFA itself financed the upgrade, which cost more than \$4.2 million, says Malek Barghouti, director of infrastructure for the Palestinian Ministry of Youth.

With seating for 6,500 spectators, a cantilever roof that projects over the western stands and a playing surface of new artificial turf, the structure is minute compared with soccer stadiums in many countries, but it now meets FIFA's minimum standards for international play - and that's a first for the Palestinian territories.

"It was all FIFA, 100 per cent," said Barghouti. "We should have a lot more than this but, for now, it's what we have."

So, whether they win or lose on Sunday, the game will mark an important transition in Palestinian self-esteem and confidence.

"It's an historic event," said Jibril Al-Rjoub, former security adviser to the late Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and now head of the Palestinian Football Federation. "It sends a clear message to the whole international community that Palestinians deserve independence."

Soccer home at last for Palestinians National squad to host Jordan on Sunday in first internationally recognized Palestinian home game

Al-Rjoub attended yesterday's pick-up match, along with several hundred soccer fans, many of whom munched steamed chickpeas or boiled corn on the cob.

The Palestinian national soccer side is currently ranked 180th in the world out of 207 national teams.

As well as playing home games abroad, Palestinians have had to run a gauntlet of Israeli security restrictions, causing them to miss important games, while depriving them of the services of some of their best players.

But this Sunday and in future, they will play in front of a cheering home crowd, something Palestinians have never done in an internationally sanctioned match.

Yesterday afternoon, workers were still busy, installing night lighting and other accessories, in preparation for the big international game Sunday, when the stadium is certain to be filled to capacity or beyond.

This weekend's game against Jordan highlights a recent renaissance in organized soccer in the West Bank, controlled by the Fatah party, where a newly formed men's football league began play in August with 22 teams.

When the season winds up in January, the top 10 squads will join what then will become the territory's premier league, with the remaining dozen sides relegated to second and third divisions.

The territory last had a proper soccer league in 1997. It was briefly revived in 2000 but promptly collapsed when Palestinians rebelled against Israeli occupation in the violent second intifada.

"Now, for the first time, we have real competition," said Barghouti.

The Palestinians also inaugurated a six-team women's soccer league, another first for the territory.

But huge obstacles continue to overshadow the local playing fields.

Several of the national team's top players are stranded in the Gaza Strip, controlled by Hamas, along with a number of team officials, including an assistant coach and the goalkeeping coach.

They are unlikely to be here Sunday. Imposing a partial blockade on the territory, Israel refuses to let them leave the coastal enclave.

Earlier this year, the Palestinians were forced to default a World Cup qualifying match against Singapore after Israel prevented many players and officials from making the trip.

Meanwhile, Barghouti says at least 10 top players are incarcerated in Israeli prisons, convicted of security-related offences.

But a complete team took the field yesterday, including star player Roberto Bishara who arrived here Monday from Chile, where he plays in its premier league.

In striking red-and-black uniforms, the elite players looked a little rusty and nervous but dominated play for a 2-0 win.

Next up: Jordan.

Graphic

Oakland ross toronto star The national soccer team practises for Sunday's friendly against Jordan.

Soccer home at last for Palestinians National squad to host Jordan on Sunday in first internationally recognized Palestinian home game

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LETTERS; COMMENT & DEBATE

The Age (Melbourne, Australia)

January 1, 2009 Thursday

First Edition

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Body

RED GUM NATIONAL PARKS

Wetland forests a win for trees, jobs

NEW NATIONAL parks for the Murray's wetland forests (The Age, 31/12) in northern Victoria will deliver significant environmental and economic benefits to the region. Logging and damaging cattle grazing in internationally recognised wetlands and river forests is clearly unsustainable and affects a range of threatened plants and animals.

The Victorian Farmers Federation and other pro-grazing groups are out of step with public policy and science on this issue. Cattle destroy river banks and damage wetlands, increasing pollution and sedimentation and affecting water quality. Good vegetation on river banks is essential to river health. There is no credible scientific evidence to suggest otherwise, but a weight of it to support the removal of cattle grazing.

These river wetlands and forests are worthy

of national park protection and will become some of Australia's greatest natural attractions. Assistance to affected regional communities is welcomed, with new jobs in park management and tourism predicted to be greater than job losses from reductions in logging and grazing.

Nick Roberts, Red Gum Icons Project, Victorian National Parks Association

Go with the flow, Premier

CONGRATULATIONS to Premier Brumby for his welcome nomination of new national parks to protect the river red gum forests along the Murray. A recent extensive review of European forests has shown that when forests are managed, that is, used for purposes such as grazing and logging, the range of flora and fauna is significantly reduced.

However, even without national park status, the Murray's river red gums will continue to die unless an environmental flow can be restored. Visitors to the Hattah Lakes National Park, near Swan Hill, for example, are met with the sight of once healthy stands of mighty trees crumbling into dusty piles of bark and branches. It is a sobering indication of their urgent need.

We hope that John Brumby can also achieve this most vital step, and ensure his place in the history books.

LETTERS COMMENT & DEBATE

Freya Headlam, Glen Waverley

No trees without rivers

DID over-indulgence at Christmas cause me to fall into such a deep slumber that I did not awake until April Fool's Day? Is Premier Brumby truly trying to make me believe that what our precious river red gum environments need to survive are designated parks?

Methinks the solution is obvious in the very title of these precious jewels of the bush; river red gums require rivers, not meandering streams emptied of water via the north-south pipeline to supply urban destinations with vote-buying resources.

Lisa Rudd, Yea

A nice place to visit

CONGRATULATIONS, Premier Brumby, on your momentous decision to proclaim two national parks at Barmah and Nyah, to be managed by the traditional owners. I look forward to visiting the area next year.

Michael Mardel, Glenroy

No peace without a just solution

PROFESSOR Oz-Salzberger (Comment & Debate, 31/12) imagines a neighbour, after a long feud, is now shooting at her from his living room, densely packed with his family. She does not ask why it is so crowded and why he is shooting. She does not wonder whether he is upset that her family has partitioned his back yard, built flats there and shot at any of his family who went near those flats; that her family barricaded his house, allowed only a near-starvation trickle of food; or that his sister died when she prevented her from seeing a doctor.

All analogies are misleading; but so are the professor's facts. When she says of Hamas that "no regime has ever used its citizens so deliberately as tools to arouse world sympathy", does she forget the deliberate use of settlers to occupy Palestinian land and the subsequent annexation of that land?

The recent history of the Middle East is as complex, confused and bloody as any, and Hamas is as unlovable as the successive Israeli governments that have driven Palestinians into its arms. Neither we nor Israel will know peace until there is a just solution for the Palestinians.

James McDougall, North Fitzroy

The last card

THE condemnation of Israel, for paralysing Gaza and creating an even harsher humanitarian crisis for its people, has been universal. In my judgement, the blood bath in Gaza reflects shamefully not only on Israel, but also on the Arab nations for failing to give meaningful support to their kith and kin.

Within the past two decades, the United States has led two major wars in this area - not because of its love for the people or their autocratic and cruel leaders, but because these nations are in possession of what the US, and the world, could not do without. Oil.

If these oil-rich Arab nations truly care about the Palestinian cause, they should put it to the US - as the only country that has any influence in Tel Aviv - that the free flow of oil is conditional on there being an immediate solution to the Palestinian problem.

Sadly, Israel and the US have an even stronger card up their sleeve: that of Arab discord and disunity, which is likely to continue unabated, as will the misery of the Palestinian people.

Sam Nona, Burradoo, NSW

LETTERS COMMENT & DEBATE

The ugly face of discrimination

CONGRATULATIONS to Paige Walker (The Age, 31/12) for having the guts to fight for her son's rights. I am in a similar situation because my son, who has Asperger's syndrome, was asked to leave his independent school this year because he was "unproductive" and his needs "unsustainable", despite us offering to top up aide funding.

His situation was just like Alex's. He was not allowed to attend school full time, not allowed to attend certain activities and so on. Clearly this sort of discrimination is occurring on a regular basis and it is good to see someone doing something about it.

Belinda Everett, Warranwood

Talking of trucks ...

I BELIEVE Bob Murphy does local councils a disservice (Letters, 31/12). Maribyrnong Council, which experiences large amounts of truck traffic, has worked effectively with VicRoads over many years on transport issues. It cannot close streets without consulting VicRoads. The proposed laws, allowing the State Government to prioritise transport types on public roads, are a good initiative. They encourage planning rather than arbitrary measures.

Regarding NIMBYs, the Maribyrnong Truck Action Group has campaigned for many years to improve the situation in this area. We recognised early that any solution needed to be good for the transport industry as well as residents. We have enjoyed a co-operative relationship with minister Pallas and are pleased with both the commissioning of the Eddington Report and the proposal for off-ramps from Westgate to the Port of Melbourne.

There is no simple solution to the problem of trucks in residential areas and we recognise the importance of the transport to our economy. But we also see a real need to manage growth in this sector. Trucks do not need to be on residential streets. It is not good for the trucking industry and it is not good for local residents.

Elwyn Davies, Maribyrnong Truck Action Group, Yarraville

Armchair experts

IT IS certainly time to replace the Australian cricket selectors and players with experts from the various branches of the media. After all, they know exactly what has gone wrong and just how it should be rectified. With that renowned international Peter Roebuck taking over from the inept Ricky Ponting, we could all look forward to another 15 years before they lost a home series and the backstabbing frenzy started all over again.

Brian Williams, Bannockburn

Power crazy

SO, ALL government controls on energy prices will be removed, energy suppliers will compete in an open market and price hikes will hail the new year (The Age, 31/12). We were told that competition would result in reduced prices. If any of us swallowed that load of cods, our stomachs must surely be erupting.

Anne M.Watts, Surrey Hills

Carbon catch-22

LESLIE Kemeny is a little bit right (Comment & Debate, 31/12), there are new nuclear power technologies on the horizon that may help reduce carbon emissions. But will some generous multinational give them to us? I think not.

In order to buy these emission-saving technologies, we will have to sell more coal, produce more beef, or smelt more aluminium with yet more coal. So what we save in emissions will be more than lost in the activities we expand to pay for them.

LETTERS COMMENT & DEBATE

If, on the other hand, we developed our own solar and geothermal technologies, we can not only reduce emissions but sell the technologies and products offshore and reduce the need to produce coal, beef and aluminium. In political speak, this is called win-win.

Geoff Russell, St Morris, SA

Ecstatic birth: not just for hippies

I CHOSE to give birth to my second child in the birth centre at Monash Medical Centre. I was accompanied by my husband and a birth attendant. A few moments before my daughter came into the world, the contractions intensified and a second before she slipped into the birth pool, I felt a sensation of ecstasy and great joy.

After the birth I was very excited and told whoever I met that I had experienced the most amazing thing in the world.

Most asked me if this was because of the epidural, while others merely looked at me as though I had lost my mind. Only after I found and read Ina May Gaskin's book (The Guide to Childbirth), where she describes such ecstatic experiences (Comment & Debate, 30/12) did I understand that this was what I had experienced.

Women also need to hear these kinds of birth stories, and not just the horror stories. My husband and I are middle-class academics. Ecstatic births are not the exclusive domain of hippies.

Merav Carmeli, Elsternwick

Nature's way

OH PLEASE, Jo Duffy (Letters, 31/12). I don't think it's just in the West that childbirth is considered painful. Having lived for some time in an Eastern country and having given birth to a child there, I know that it is considered to be just as painful there as it is here.

It is painful; why not be honest about it? Why try to convince women having their first child that it is an orgasmic experience, although I guess if you've been smoking the right stuff it just might be! So it's painful, so what? The pain is quickly forgotten - nature takes care of that.

Wendy Hughes, Hawthorn

Fighting, not biting

THANK you for the article "Prisoners go untreated as hepatitis C sweeps jails" (The Age, 29/12), which draws attention to a situation that our whole community needs to be aware of. I would, however, like to correct a mistake, as I am quoted as saying "There's a range of other activities inside prisons which could lead to (hepatitis C) infection too, including illegal tattooing and biting". In fact, I said fighting, not biting.

Hepatitis C is only spread when blood from one infected person enters the bloodstream of another. This situation can arise in a prison fight where there is a high number of prisoners infected and the risk of blood-to-blood contact is high. Blood-to-blood contact due to biting is extremely unlikely, however, and therefore does not pose a risk for hepatitis C transmission.

Helen McNeill, chief executive, Hepatitis C Victoria, Brunswick

letters@theage.com.au

Graphic

LETTERS COMMENT & DEBATE

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Criminals with guns should be the Target

Daily Mail (London)

January 5, 2009 Monday

IRE Edition

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Body

Regarding the 31 handguns stolen according to your Department, could you please give me a breakdown of the guns, since there have been reports of air pistols, starting pistols and other non-firing 'gun-like objects', which are not real firearms at all.

How many of the 31 'handguns' were stolen from gardaí or military, and not from licensed personnel at all?

Also, how many were: • Blank-firing replicas/starter pistols?

- Replicas/imitation firearms?
- Deactivated handguns incapable of firing real ammunition?
- Pellet guns?
- Airsoft guns?
- Real firearms capable of firing real, live ammunition?

With reference to the 'two Webley revolvers' stolen, were these two revolvers deactivated, by any chance?

Or were they in fact real firearms capable of firing real ammunition?

I ask because .455, .450, .476 ammunition to fit Webley revolvers is so scarce as to be a collectors' item.

I must ask what are you going to do about the illegal firearms in the hands of criminals, which are the real problem?

DECLAN CASHEN, Via email.

DNA is God-like genius CONGRATULATIONS to Rex Palmer and Audrey Ranson on their superb letters (Mail) regarding God, the Creator.

Another marvel, the fantastic complexity and orderliness of the DNA code – the sheer density of information packed into incredibly tiny cells shows that much thought has gone into their design – manifests the work of a brilliant intellect rather than chance processes.

Criminals with guns should be the Target

An organism reproducing itself by a complex process which is so exquisitely engineered can only be described as miraculous.

That life in its simplest forms could originate on Earth by chance is a physical and mathematical impossibility. This idea violates the law of biogenesis – that life originates only from life – and it also violates other scientific laws.

JAMES B O'BRIEN, Ballintra, Co. Donegalor is it just chance?

IT'S said there are more stars in the universe than grains of sand on Earth, so why would people think anything happens due to God's actions, rather than chance?

Recent examples in favour of God include possible cancer-destroying Page 26 Irish Daily Mail, Monday, January 5, 2009 Straight to the POINT LETTERS trumped patriotism, hands down.

Loyalty to Irish business is obviously something which only us little people are expected to show.

BARRY WALSH, Clontarf, Dublin.

Lessons from Ulster THE history of the North has serious lessons to teach us concerning the current conflict between Israel and Palestine.

If the British Army had decided to cut off and blockade Catholic areas in the North, then subject those areas to merciless bombing raids, killing countless innocents, you can guarantee there would be no Irish peace process and the IRA's ranks would be swollen with recruits ready to commit violent acts against Britain.

Israel has subjected Gaza to a most savage blockade and is now bombing innocent Palestinians with its world-class military force.

While **Hamas** rockets cannot be justified, you can't equate Israel (the occupier and criminal party) to the Palestinians (the occupied and victim).

Dr ABOU-SALEH, Sutton, Surrey.

Time for straight talking I DON'T worry about the 'credit crunch' that much, but it's on my mind. But what's more on my mind is that people need to wake up and smell the coffee and rid the world of cronyism and his pals.

I've yet to encounter anyone in 'the system' who worries enough to look into precisely what is happening, and why.

You hear the usual moans and dire warnings from the pessimistic crowd, but no one seems to care in a real way. They're all too busy discussing 'Celebrity Underwater Basket Weaving' or whatever the latest fad TV show is.

I'm all for the populace becoming dissatisfied with the way the world is going. Even if they take issue with an illusion, at least they are going in the right direction.

On the front people like to be seen to be in total control and put on an 'everything is fine' attitude, but people's complete fear of even talking about their finances or futures or what's going to happen is a sure sign that they are worrying about it. Even though they don't want to look at it.

A new dispensation, plain talking for confusing times, ought to become a political mantra. However, the powers that be will be dispensing the usual Diazepam rhetoric for insomniacs.

ANTHONY WOODS, Ennis, Co. Clare.

Costlyend to strikes?

A WISE man once told me to never pick a fight with a man who has nothing to lose.

Criminals with guns should be the Target

The top officials of Cork GAA – and those in other county boards beleaguered by ‘player power’ – should heed this advice.

As the Cork hurling impasse rumbles on and on, it becomes clear that the players are not going to yield.

And why should they? They have very little to lose.

Fair enough, if they continue to refuse to play for manager Gerald McCarthy then they have to go without the honour of representing their county at the highest level of the game.

But, at the risk of sounding flippant, so what?

Hurling for Cork does not pay the bills or put food on the family table.

If anything, in these recessionary times, the staggering commitment required keeps you away from the job that keeps you solvent.

Talk of ‘strikes’ in GAA always puzzles me. Strikes are more usually industrial disputes where people’s livelihoods are at stake.

The employer always holds the trump card of being the wagepayer, and this is why many strikes fail – the workers need to earn a crust.

Cork County Board doesn’t pay its players salaries. Nobody is going to bend the knee to them until they do.

This makes me think the GAA should look again at some form of pay-for-play, if not full-blown professionalism.

After all, how often do you see paid rugby and soccer players withdrawing their services?

GER HEALY, Douglas, Cork.

Criminals with guns should be the target Hospitals still plagued I WAS horrified to read that our hospitals are still, on occasions, infested with rats, mice, cockroaches and maggots (Mail).

We’re well into the 21st century – but our hospitals are still suffering from the kind of hygiene standards that would have had our ancestors from the 19th century up in arms.

Dead rats found in a hospital’s X-ray department, mice in the kitchens of another, large numbers of cockroaches running amok in another kitchen and an infestation of ants in a laboratory – the frightening list goes on and on.

Apparently, nobody has been fined – or sacked – over these dreadful conditions.

I just pray that anyone I am close to never ends up in one of these hospitals.

A final horrifying thought: how would you feel if an ageing, sick parent woke up to see a mouse, or worse, a rat, scurrying across a hospital floor?

Shudder the thought.

RHONDA KEARNS, Dublin 7.

Gaeilge a luxury for some A TEACHER of Irish at a school in one of Dublin’s poorer districts – a friend of mine – moaned to me of the difficulties of doing his job over a pint the other day.

His main complaint was that his pupils showed little interest in the subject and many questioned why they were studying the language at all. He had managed to teach them very little.

My friend considers the academic and career prospects of the young people he teaches to be limited.

Criminals with guns should be the Target

But is it not possible that they are a lot smarter than he gives them credit for – at least in that they recognise that having a little knowledge of Irish will do nothing to help them get a job?

Is it not time to face the fact that while learning a language few people use is an interesting diversion for the middle classes, for many of our young people it is a luxury they cannot afford?

MICHAEL DELANEY, Dublin.

■ MAYBE the inexcusable delay in implementing a new postal system for Ireland is all down to so many of our politicians, as well as those in the legal profession, living in Dublin 4 and 6.

NICK FLANNERY, Dublin.

■ LOOKING at Celebrity Hair Swap (Mail) I think Britney should go for a short Agyness cut, Catherine Zeta-Jones could do worse than copy Katie Holmes' tresses, while Cheryl Cole would be stunning blonde!

ÁINE COLLINS, Co. Westmeath.

■ SOMEONE has invented a gadget to alert car drivers exceeding the speed limit. I thought such a thing already existed, called 'eyes'.

ROY LEWIS, Sussex.

■ CLAUDIA Carroll is right to thank Cecelia Ahern for playing a role in her recent literary successes. Cecelia has opened many doors, and looking at the mass of Irish female writers currently finding international eminence, she is clearly highly influential in her field.

JILLY O'SULLIVAN, Co. Carlow.

■ IF HAMAS rockets keep hitting the tail of the Israeli tiger, why the surprise when it turns its fangs on them?

BARRY MITCHELL, Sussex.

chemicals in mistletoe and the tilt of 23 degrees of the Earth, among others, but they can, I believe, be countered by logical, reasonable explanations.

There may well be a God, and I am willing to be convinced one way or the other, but why have so many wars been fought, and are still being fought, over religion?

Our circumstances are purely due to the laws of probability and chance.

Is winning the lottery chance or God's intervention? Similarly, in which category would a tsunami or earthquake belong?

As an example, if you take all the politicians in government and lock them in a room, one will eventually come up with a good idea. Divine intervention or random chance?

This debate will run and run.

DAVID POWELL, Frimley, Surrey.

Tryshopping local, Bertie THE Taoiseach, Tánaiste, and the Minister for Finance have called on us all to be 'patriotic' and to support Irish business in the current economic climate.

I wonder, will they call on their former leader Bertie Ahern to do likewise?

Criminals with guns should be the Target

Mr Ahern (a self-proclaimed patriot and man of the people) is reported to be in talks with Cornerstone Publishing – a U.S. company based in Indiana – to publish his memoirs in a deal worth e400,000, about twelve times more than an average working person would earn in a year.

His decision to choose a foreign publisher was undoubtedly based on the fact that it could afford to pay him vastly more than any Irish publisher could even dream of. In other words, personal financial gain Lethal: But how many of the 31 handguns reported stolen recently were real firearms like these?

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Load-Date: January 5, 2009

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Seeds of horror sown by blockade; GAZA

The Age (Melbourne, Australia)

December 30, 2008 Tuesday

First Edition

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Section: NEWS; Letters; Pg. 8

Length: 1804 words

Body

THE brutal, criminal attack by the Israelis on the desperate people of Gaza has its roots in the total Israeli blockade of Gaza, denying the people basic needs such as food, fuel and medicine. This has been highlighted in the past two months by UN High Commissioner Mary Robinson, Archbishop Desmond Tutu and the head of the UN's refugee relief organisation in Gaza.

The facts speak for themselves: 39 Israelis have been killed by Palestinians in Gaza in the past eight years, while nearly 3000 Palestinians have been killed by Israel, according to B'tselem, the Israeli information centre for human rights in the occupied territories. In the past 48 hours, more than 300 Palestinians have been killed and hundreds more injured. One-third are civilians living in the most densely populated area on earth.

Israel has given the people of Gaza two choices: either they live near starvation level or are killed by the Israeli bombing. Not much of a choice for anyone.

Ibrahim Farran, Millswood, SA

Would you do nothing?

JUST imagine an enclave of terrorists lived in inner Melbourne and began firing rockets daily at suburbs such as Ferntree Gully, Canterbury or Toorak. Would we sit back and let it happen? I think not.

Now give thought to the victims of Sderot, Ashkelon and Yavne who endure these attacks from Gaza and have 30 seconds to seek cover. Children in these towns grow up suffering severe anxiety attacks and nightmares, fearing they may be victims of the next rocket.

I would be outraged if the world just sat back and ignored the attacks on my neighbours in Melbourne's suburbs, and heaven forbid that our neighbours should try to defend themselves.

Michelle Rubin, Footscray

The right to statehood

THE violence between Israel and Palestine is an inevitable outcome of failed policies from all sides of the equation. The Palestinian people have the right to an independent state, something Israel already has. We cannot expect the Palestinians to live in prison-camp conditions - their just aspirations are for things we take a little too lightly and for granted.

Seeds of horror sown by blockade GAZA

Until all the world powers take seriously the just claims of the Palestinians, the unrest, violence and deaths will continue.

Graham Reynolds, Box Hill

Unlevel playing field

ALAN Freedman (Letters, 29/12) tries to exonerate Israel of responsibility for the bombing of Gaza by citing incitement. What Freedman ignores is the reality of the Palestinians. They have to negotiate with Israeli governments of any stripe, whether headed by Shamir, Begin, Sharon, Barak or Netanyahu or Olmert, all of whom have created facts on the ground by demolishing homes and farms and placing armed groups in settlements. Israel, however, can choose not to talk with Hamas, in spite of Hamas offering an indefinite ceasefire as a prelude to peace, and ruin Gaza's economy with a blockade.

Narendra Mohan Kommalapati, Abbotsford

So much more than a roof to a home

CONGRATULATIONS to Dewi Cooke on her respectful and sensitive article about Kris, Foxy and Rosco (The Age, 24/12). She offers a humane perspective on the complex issue of homelessness, giving a humane face to these "rough sleepers" who spend most of their life being judged, stereotyped and discriminated against.

The solution to homelessness is about much more

than simply finding a roof for people. It is about communities, who, like Dewi Cooke, are prepared to sit and listen non-judgementally to the stories of those who are struggling, offering a world where they can find acceptance and inclusion.

Virginia Moebus-Nelson, community worker, Melbourne

A complex problem

TRISH Bolton (Comment & Debate, 29/12) correctly targets the negative discourse that surrounds single mothers in the media. However, she arguably does the issue of homelessness a disservice by only promoting one sectional interest.

Many men are violent but so are some women. The problem of homeless mothers is socio-economic as much as gender-related. Educational deficit, severe inter-generational poverty, drug use and mental illness dog many homeless people. Bolton's emphasis on male violence does not counter this common link. To attempt

to make homelessness the preserve of a feminist agenda overlooks a huge cohort of those who are affected.

Andrew Trezise, Greensborough

Payback time

OH, COME on Evan Thornley ("Millionaire MP snubs Brumby over cabinet post", The Age, 29/12), with your presumably exemplary due diligence skills developed through years in the private sector, surely you knew that even one term of Parliament was longer than two years.

And if your next project is as reported, then you should be required to pay every cent of

the costs of the impending byelection. The electorate has been cheated.

Chris Clark, Hallam

It's just not cricket

Seeds of horror sown by blockade GAZA

SOUTH African cricketers have highlighted the true state to which our national game has sunk. The international contest itself, both televised and on ground, is slipping into a shoddy amalgam of marketing and commercial media profiteering.

It has become a superannuation income for retired, but not retiring past players, with media commentary of an increasingly banal nature, and spectators' ears assaulted by an on-ground audio-visual commentary barrage. There is nowhere to hide, apart from the blessed exception of ABC radio.

Swept upwards on the wings of cash and a decade of glory, off and on field, the demeanour of the Australian cricket team goes hand-in-hand with the commercialisation that now permeates the game and careers.

As more and more bastardised variations of for-profit cricket are thrust upon us, grace in victory and defeat are apparently thought signs of weakness. Winning has covered these fault lines, but the Springbok reality check might just stimulate some attention by the cricket board to the effects of commercial influence on the spirit and essence of a wonderful human pastime.

Paul Maher, Chewton

Naming rights

WITHOUT wishing to put a damper on Lord Mayor Doyle's bridge-naming exercise (The Age, 29/12), the then city of South Melbourne had the vision for Southbank and invited the government (planning minister Evan Walker) in to have a look.

What about a name more in recognition of the former city of South Melbourne's good work? It was its vision in the first place.

Bruce Cormick, South Melbourne

Pope's message

between the lines

DAVID Schutz (Letters, 29/12) is either trying to deceive people or needs to brush up on his reading comprehension skills. While there is no official English translation of the Pope's address to the Curia, there are English translations available. The one I found while searching for a translation was on Schutz's own blog.

In this translation, the Pope clearly refers to homosexuality even though the word itself is never used. If anything, it is the reference to climate change that was taken out of context.

Nevertheless, the media reports and subsequent commentaries got the underlying meaning correct. Before telling people to check their facts, maybe we should learn to read between the lines.

Alex Carnie, Brunswick West

Kids too smart for

corporate culture

DAN Oakes points out that kids and corporate speak are a scary mix (Insight, 27/12). I contend that corporate culture in or out of school is scary and recent meltdowns of world markets bear testimony to that. However, Oakes and other adults should not be too worried about the effects of classroom-based management- speak on their children.

Take heart in the wisdom of John Holt as he observed in *How Children Fail* that very little of what is taught in school is learned, very little of what is learned is remembered, and very little of what is remembered is used. In fact, my 30

Seeds of horror sown by blockade GAZA

years in the classroom indicates that, being the survivors they are, children may turn completely against the sound and use of management-speak if it is rammed down their throats. So much the better for us all.

Don Swanson, lecturer, business

communications, Deakin University

Killing a campus

PROFESSOR Teese and Dr Jamie Doughney have well-based concerns about recent developments at Victoria University (The Age, 27/12). Certainly, to cease enrolments at Sunbury campus from 2010 is no solution. VU's decision is unviable, not the campus itself.

Tertiary education access problems exist in Melbourne's north-west and in regional areas. This campus is a magnificent public asset and highly skilled, productive and dedicated staff work there. A "managed demise" has taken place. VU never advertises academic positions for the campus, yet can withdraw courses.

The VU council based its final decision to close the campus on bias. The data was selective and limited. Taxpayers should consider whether tertiary education is being undermined where they live.

Dr Ruth Williams, school of applied economics, Victoria University

Take the long road

ON THE trip from Wangaratta to Geelong on Saturday morning, the petrol prices varied from 102 to 114 cents a litre (disregarding voucher discounts.) At Wangaratta, it was 105. A few kilometres south, at the service stations on the highway near Glenrowan, it was 114. At Seymour, off the highway, the price was as low as 103, then back on the highway just a bit further on, it was 109.

The price rose to 112 cents as we approached the city. On the Geelong Road, and on the highway in Geelong, it was still 112. In the Geelong suburbs, it was as low as 102, then it was back up to 114 at Leopold on the Bellarine Highway.

Petrol prices might have dropped, but the industry's (and the Government's) failure to control prices is a disgrace. One thing to note, though - it's worth making a short detour off the highways.

Margaret Smith, Point Lonsdale

A police state?

WHOEVER thought it was a great idea to line up a formation of nine police officers in navy fatigues right across the footbridge to the Telstra Dome before Melbourne Victory's match against Sydney on Saturday night, congratulations on making the Victoria Police look like a bunch of totalitarian thugs.

David Collins, Yarraville

A loveless legacy

THANK you, Tim Pekin, (Comment & Debate, 29/12) for your insightful association of the Australian craving for alcohol with our culture's apparent lack of purpose and meaning. We were born to be loved, and those that don't receive love are hamstrung to pass that lack on. Our boorish reliance on alcohol is, as Homer Simpson once said, the cause and cure for all our problems.

As a training clinical psychologist who has worked in prison and hospital settings, I have unfortunately observed alcohol intoxication as common to nearly all young male offences or admittances.

In one word: waste - of time, resources and a capacity to love.

Seeds of horror sown by blockade GAZA

Australian males, in particular, the "mature and wise" post-30-year-olds, what will your legacy be? Reflect and perhaps sober up (some time ago, I did). Build anew because you are dearly and meaningfully needed.

Simon Baxter, Northcote

Graphic

ILLUSTRATION BY GOLDING

Load-Date: December 29, 2008

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Israel wages PR battle as Gaza conflict rages; High-tech tools a key part of arsenal, while foreign media kept on tight leash

The Toronto Star

January 13, 2009 Tuesday

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Section: WORLD AND COMMENT; Pg. AA03

Length: 839 words

Byline: Oakland Ross, Toronto Star

Dateline: JERUSALEM

Body

Israel's deadly war in Gaza is as far away as the Middle East - or as close as a click of your computer mouse.

Operation Cast Lead, code name for Israel's offensive in Gaza, is undoubtedly a military operation, but it is also on the World Wide Web, part of an Israeli military site that's updated regularly with videos, photographs, and information, all designed to present the conflict from the official Israeli point of view.

Call it public relations, call it propaganda, call it what you will - in the brutal conflict now unfolding, Israel seems to be making a far greater effort to tell its side of the story, and to do so convincingly, than it did during its last war, waged against Hezbollah militants in neighbouring Lebanon in 2006.

Granted, the country's public relations performance during that inconclusive conflict was widely regarded as a disaster.

"They are doing a much better job now," said Eytan Gilboa, chair of the communications department at Israel's Bar-Ilan University.

"The message is clearer. The objectives of the military operation are clearer. There is much better use of new media."

For those who like to watch buildings and other objects go up in smoke, the Israeli Air Force is posting short videos of the war on YouTube, with titles such as "Israeli Air Force precision strike on Qassam rockets," or "Israeli Air Force strikes Hamas government compound."

The communications battle is also being waged with phones, or at least some phones - those that belong to journalists covering the conflict.

Reporters here regularly receive text messages from the Israel Defense Forces offering to help them cover the Israeli side of the war, in the language of their choice.

Support for the offensive remains pervasive among Jewish Israelis, a clear contrast to the war in 2006, when early public backing for the operation against Hezbollah quickly turned to dismay, as seemingly ill-prepared Israeli troops got bogged down in southern Lebanon. Many Israelis began to question why the war was being fought at all.

Israel wages PR battle as Gaza conflict rages High-tech tools a key part of arsenal, while foreign media kept on tight leash

Few such questions are being asked this time, or at least not by most people here.

"Public relations has something to do with reality," said Tamar Liebes, chair of the communications department at Jerusalem's Hebrew University. "It's very much clearer to Israelis and to the rest of the world that this was not a quick, un-thought-out action."

But to the extent that Israel's communications offensive is aimed at winning friends and influencing people in foreign places, then this country faces a major challenge - a powerful current of international opposition to the Gaza offensive.

"It's very hard to win the PR war," said Liebes. "Public relations cannot compete with television."

And the TV pictures from Gaza - images of bombs, death, and destruction, day after day - do not exactly paint Israel in a rainbow of pleasing hues.

"The pictures coming out of Gaza are pictures of dead children and dead women," said Yoni Ben-Menachem, director-general of the Israel Broadcasting Authority. "This is creating a big protest in the Arab world and in Europe. I think the political echelon is very worried."

Still, Israel's public-relations initiative soldiers on, taking advantage of the hot and trendy as well as the tried and true. Ashkelon and Sderot are among the Israeli communities hardest hit by rockets fired from Gaza, and the government is eager to have their stories of suffering feature prominently in international coverage of the war.

Those stories are real, and that suffering is genuine - no question about it. But the IDF is not nearly as accommodating when it comes to the presentation of Palestinian pain, and this also seems to be an integral part of Israel's communications strategy.

Since this conflict began Dec. 27, the government has barred foreign journalists from entering Gaza, despite a Supreme Court ruling ordering small numbers of foreign media workers be allowed in. Only yesterday did the IDF relent and allow a handful of foreign journalists into Gaza, but only as embedded reporters under Israeli control.

The Israeli government has zealously sought to manage its message during the conflict, ensuring different government departments and agencies plug information leaks and speak from the same official page with a consistent voice - a rare phenomenon in this quarrelsome land.

But there are some aspects of this conflict even the steadiest of voices would be hard-pressed to illuminate in easily comprehensible terms. For example - the fatality figures. During more than seven years of rocket fire from Gaza, the missiles have claimed a total of 13 Israeli lives. An additional 13 Israelis have died in this war, four from Palestinian rockets.

Meanwhile, in the past 17 days of Israeli retaliation, more than 900 Palestinians are believed to have perished, in addition to hundreds more who lost their lives in previous punitive incursions by Israel.

Israeli authorities say this gaping disparity can be justified, but communications experts agree this is a difficult message to convey.

Graphic

HATEM MOUSSA ap Palestinian children who fled their homes during the Israeli offensive share a meal at a United Nations school where they are sheltering in the Jabaliya refugee camp, in northern Gaza Strip yesterday.

Israel wages PR battle as Gaza conflict rages High-tech tools a key part of arsenal, while foreign media kept on tight leash

Load-Date: January 13, 2009

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'I didn't see any of my girls, just a pile of bricks': Israeli air strike kills five daughters from one family as Gaza death toll passes 300: 'I didn't see any of my girls, just a pile of bricks'

The Guardian - Final Edition

December 30, 2008 Tuesday

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theguardian

Section: GUARDIAN HOME PAGES; Pg. 1

Length: 735 words

Byline: Hazem Balousha, Jabalia and Rory McCarthy, Jerusalem

Body

The family house was small: three rooms, a tiny kitchen and bathroom, built of poor-quality concrete bricks with a corrugated asbestos roof, in

block four of Jabalia refugee camp in northern Gaza. There are hundreds of similar homes crammed into the overcrowded streets, filled with some of the poorest and most vulnerable families in the Gaza Strip.

But it was this house, where Anwar and Samira Balousha lived with their nine children, that had the misfortune to be built next to what became late on Sunday night another target in Israel's devastating bombing campaign of Gaza.

An Israeli bomb struck the refugee camp's Imad Aqil mosque around midnight, destroying the building and collapsing several shops and a pharmacy nearby. The force of the blast was so massive it also brought down the Balousha family's house, which yesterday lay in ruins. The seven eldest girls were asleep together on mattresses in one bedroom and they bore the brunt of the explosion. Five were killed where they lay: Tahrir, 17, Ikram 15, Samer, 13, Dina, eight and Jawahar, four.

They were the latest in a growing

number of civilian casualties in Israel's

bombing campaign. At least 335 Palestinians have been killed and as many as 1,400 injured. On the Israeli side, four civilians and one soldier have been killed by rocket and mortar attacks. Israel's military offensive continued last night with further strikes on Gaza City and may yet intensify.

Imam, 16, lay in the room with her sisters but by chance survived with only injuries to her legs. She was eventually pulled free and rushed to hospital. "I was asleep. I didn't hear anything of the explosion," she said yesterday as she sat comforting her mother. "I just woke when the bricks fell on me. No one could see me from above. The

'I didn't see any of my girls, just a pile of bricks': Israeli air strike kills five daughters from one family as Gaza death toll passes 300: 'I didn't see any

neighbours and ambulance men couldn't see us. They were walking on the bricks above us. I started to scream and told my sisters we would die. We all screamed: 'Baba, Mama. Come to help us.'"

Her parents had been sleeping next door with their two youngest children, Muhammad, one, and Bara'a, 12 days.

Their room was damaged and all were

hurt, but they survived and were taken straight to hospital even before any of the older girls were found.

Imam eventually recognised her uncle's voice among the rescuers and she shouted again for help. "He found me and started to remove the bricks and the rubble from me," she said. "They started to pull me by my hands, the bricks were still lying on my legs."

Her mother, Samira, 36, had seen the pile of bricks in the girls' bedroom and was stricken with grief, convinced they were all dead. Like all the family, she was asleep when the bomb struck. "I opened my eyes and saw bricks all over my body," she said. "My face was covered with the concrete blocks."

She checked on her two youngest children and then looked in the room next door. "I didn't see any of my daughters, just a pile of bricks and parts of the roof. Everyone told me my daughters were alive, but I knew they were gone."

She sat on a sofa surrounded by other women at a neighbour's house further along the street and struggled to speak, pausing for long moments and still overcome with shock.

"I hope the Palestinian military wings retaliate and take revenge with operations inside Israel. I ask God to take revenge on them," she said.

Her husband, Anwar, 40, sat in another house where a mourning tent had been set up. He was pale and still suffering from serious injuries to his head, his shoulder and his hands. But like many other patients in Gaza he had been made to leave an overcrowded hospital to make way for the dying. Yesterday his house was a pile of rubble: collapsed walls and the occasional piece of furniture exposed to the sky. He spoke bitterly of his daughters' deaths. "We are civilians. I don't belong to any faction, I don't support Fatah or Hamas, I'm just a Palestinian. They are punishing us all, civilians and militants. What is the guilt of the civilian?" Like many men in Gaza, Anwar has no job, and like all in the camp he relies on food handouts from the UN and other charity support to survive.

"If the dead here were Israelis, you would see the whole world condemning and responding. But why is no one condemning this action? Aren't we human beings?" he said. "We are living in our land, we didn't take it from the Israelis. We are fighting for our rights. One day we will get them back."

Seumas Milne, page 29 >=

Load-Date: December 30, 2008

Hospitals flooded by casualties; Gaza doctors are struggling in appalling conditions to cope with rapidly mounting numbers of injured, write Sudarsan Raghavan and Reyham Abdel Kareem

The Sunday Independent (South Africa)

January 11, 2009

e1 Edition

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Section: DISPATCHES; Pg. 16

Length: 791 words

Body

Mohammed Alwan applied pressure to the wounds of the young man in a corridor of Gaza City's Shifa hospital on Monday. Blood flowing from his body turned the surgeon's gloved hands crimson.

"Khalas," a voice said, Arabic for "It's over".

The doctor refused to give up. He pumped the man's chest, hoping to resuscitate him. A few minutes later, the man died.

"What can I say?" he said in a fatigued voice. "I have seen this scene many times. I've been here four days straight and I've yet to go home."

As Israeli tanks and infantry push deeper into Gaza, an already dire humanitarian situation has worsened. The Israeli government has imposed what Palestinians call a siege on the coastal strip - restricting deliveries of food, medicine and other staples - since Hamas took Gaza by force from the rival Fatah party in June 2007.

On Monday, Israel's military strategy of dividing the strip in two further hampered Gazans' ability to reach hospitals and relief efforts.

The air assaults and ground clashes have paralysed much of what makes the strip of 1,5 million people work - hospitals, water and power systems, markets and roads.

About 800 Palestinians have been killed and more than 2 500 have been reported wounded in the 10-day offensive. Palestinian health officials estimate that many of them - between 24 and 30 percent - are women and children. Most are at Shifa, Gaza's largest hospital.

Doctors there are working day and night on floors soaked with blood to help the rapidly mounting numbers of wounded. In the halls and corridors, screams and uncontrolled sobbing, along with the sound of bombs and mortars, punctuate conversations.

"The numbers of killed and wounded are rising. Every minute we have a bombardment," said Hassan Khalaf, the director of Shifa hospital. "The number of cases is overwhelming us. No hospital in the world can handle this."

Hospitals flooded by casualties Gaza doctors are struggling in appalling conditions to cope with rapidly mounting numbers of injured, write Sudarsan Raghavan and....

It has become too dangerous for his staff to retrieve victims. Eleven members of his medical staff have been killed since the offensive began. "They were in ambulances," Khalaf said.

For the past three days, there has been no electricity. The hospital's emergency generators have been working around the clock.

Even before that, when electricity was sporadic, the generators were working 16-hour days. The hospital, he said, has only two days of fuel left.

"Electricity and communications are down over much of the strip both on account of lack of fuel and damage to critical infrastructure," said Maxwell Gaylard, the United Nations humanitarian co-ordinator for the Palestinian areas.

"Over a million people are currently without power, and over a quarter million without running water, some for up to six days."

Khalaf said there are also shortages of medicines, medical tools, nitrogen for anaesthesia, monitors - nearly every item imaginable. Many essential staff members, especially nurses, have been unable to come to work, cut off by the fighting, Israeli tank positions and fear.

"Those in the middle of Gaza Strip could not come to work because the Israeli tanks have cut the strip into two pieces," Khalaf said.

Fazwi Nabulsia, the head of the hospital's intensive care unit, said he hasn't worked since the ground invasion began last Saturday. He lives south of Gaza City near the former Israeli settlement of Nitzarim. Israeli forces are now in the area, blocking the road between his house and Gaza City, Nabulsia said.

"Maybe you can speak with the Israelis and ask them to allow me to go to hospital," he said over the telephone, his voice tinged with desperation. "We are in crisis."

Inside Shifa hospital on Monday, its doctors struggled to cope. Imad Majdalawi had handled 20 operations in 24 hours. In virtually every case, he had to fix broken bones, treat burns and cuts, and stop bleeding. "The worse thing I saw was the burns," he said.

In one case, he wanted to send a patient who lost one of his eyes in an Israeli bombing to an eye hospital. But his request was turned down: the generator for the surgical theatre in the hospital was needed to fuel the emergency room.

On Monday, he was treating Ghadeer, a 14-year-old girl whose hands were covered in gauze. Blood seeped through it. She was crying and shaking. Her mother and four brothers had been killed in an airstrike. She didn't know.

"I am cold. I can't move," Ghadeer moaned.

Majdalawi soothed her. "Don't worry, Ghadeer. Everything will be fine." But there was no anaesthesia or even the appropriate scissors and thread to help Ghadeer. "We are leaving patients in pain," he said.

A neurosurgeon, Rami al-Sousi, was engaged in a delicate operation to pull shrapnel from 5-year-old Salim al-Ar's head.

Ninety percent of the patients he treated were civilians, he said. - The Washington Post

I Abdel Kareem reported from Gaza

Load-Date: January 11, 2009

Hospitals flooded by casualties Gaza doctors are struggling in appalling conditions to cope with rapidly mounting numbers of injured, write Sudarsan Raghavan an....

End of Document

Israeli Troops Force Jewish Settlers Out of Building in the West Bank

The New York Times
December 5, 2008 Friday
Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section A; Column 0; Foreign Desk; Pg. 6

Length: 796 words

Byline: By ETHAN BRONNER

Dateline: HEBRON, West Bank

Body

Israeli troops forcibly evicted about 200 hard-line Jewish settlers from a contested building in this volatile biblical city on Thursday, the first serious clash in what seems to be a spiraling confrontation between the government and defiant settlers.

The operation, carried out by 600 soldiers and policemen with stealth and efficiency, took half an hour and resulted in two dozen relatively light injuries. But events did not end there. Young settlers then rampaged through Palestinian fields and neighborhoods, setting olive trees on fire and trashing houses.

Maj. Avital Leibovich, an Israeli Army spokeswoman, said the southern part of the West Bank, known in Israel as Judea, was designated a closed military area. That means only those who live here may now enter, an effort to prevent outside settlers from causing further trouble. Within an hour of the order, cars were backed up in huge lines at new military roadblocks.

The contested building, which occupants had dubbed the House of Peace, is on the road to the Cave of the Patriarchs, where Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and their wives are said to be buried, a site Muslims and Jews have coveted and fought over for centuries.

As the sun descended, the area around the building looked like a war zone. Evacuees were still being dragged about, with four police officers per person; rocks were strewn on the roadways; plumes of black smoke were rising from the olive groves; and hundreds of helmeted troops in riot gear were confronting a crowd of infuriated settlers.

The men in the crowd wore beards and sidecurls, while women had long skirts and covered heads, members of the religiously observant Jewish population in and around Hebron, which numbers several thousand among hundreds of thousands of Palestinians.

As Palestinians watched from rooftops and windows, some settlers shouted at the troops, calling them Nazis. A few had sewn yellow stars on their shirts, as Jews were obliged to do under Hitler. On a wall near the confrontation, Hebrew graffiti declared, "There will be a war over the House of Peace."

Much is at stake for both sides in this confrontation because the Israeli government says it wants to ease the construction of a Palestinian state in most of the West Bank, whereas the settlers and their backers say they will do

Israeli Troops Force Jewish Settlers Out of Building in the West Bank

all in their power to prevent such a state. They are focusing partly on increasing their numbers in Hebron, second only to Jerusalem in its historic and religious significance to them.

The four-story building in question was built and owned by a Palestinian who agreed to sell it. He said he had been unaware the buyers were Jews and that he had been tricked, and that he had backed out of the deal. The settlers say that he knew very well what he was doing but that threats against him had made him claim otherwise.

The Israeli government ordered the settlers out. They challenged the order. Three weeks ago, the Supreme Court took the government's side in a 3-to-0 ruling and gave it 30 days to make good on the order. In the past week or two, settlers had grown more rebellious, throwing rocks at soldiers and defacing Palestinian buildings and graves. It was clearly only a matter of time before the army would step in.

The official who made the call for the evacuation on Thursday was Ehud Barak, the defense minister and head of the Labor Party, who said at a news conference later that "what was tested today was the ability of the state to enforce its laws and its essence upon its citizens."

Mr. Barak had met with settler leaders on Thursday morning to find a way out of the confrontation. The settlers emerged from the meeting believing there was still negotiation to be done, but Mr. Barak clearly thought otherwise.

Because elections are scheduled for February and Mr. Barak is his party's leader, opponents of the evacuation accused him of seeking political advantage through his decision.

"Barak sent the army and police as part of the left wing's election campaign and the blood of the casualties is on his hands," said Arie Elad of the National Religious Party.

Settler leaders were indignant, saying Mr. Barak had tricked them after talking soothingly to them in the morning. They said there was nothing more scandalous in the land of Israel than for Jews to evict Jews from their homes.

In a separate development, the Israeli government agreed Thursday for the first time in four weeks to allow journalists and foreign aid workers to enter Gaza. The area, ruled by the militant group Hamas, is under a closing led by Israel that severely limits goods and people from going in and out. But only recently did the closing include foreign journalists who had appealed to the government and Supreme Court for renewed permission to enter.

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

PHOTOS: Jewish settlers rampaged Thursday on the roofs of Palestinian homes in Hebron, responding in fury to the forced eviction of settlers from a disputed building. (PHOTOGRAPH BY RINA CASTELNUOVO FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES)

Hundreds of Israeli police officers and soldiers confronted settlers to evacuate the Hebron building called the House of Peace. (PHOTOGRAPH BY ARIEL SCHALIT/ASSOCIATED PRESS)

Load-Date: December 5, 2008

Race for the White House: Key issues: How the candidates compare

The Guardian - Final Edition

November 4, 2008 Tuesday

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theguardian

Section: GUARDIAN HOME PAGES; Pg. 4

Length: 859 words

Byline: Daniel Nasaw

Body

Healthcare

Barack Obama would require companies to cover all Americans regardless of their health. For those who do not receive coverage from their employers, he would create a registry of private health insurance plans and offer coverage through the government. Employers would be required either to provide health insurance or pay into a pool to support the national plan. He would subsidise coverage for low-income Americans.

John McCain's plan would encourage Americans to purchase their own insurance coverage rather than get it from their employers. He would offer a tax credit to individuals who do so, but would tax the value of employee health benefits. He would allow people to purchase health insurance plans from any state in the country, pre-empting state-level coverage regulations.

Taxes

Obama would allow President Bush's tax cuts for the wealthy to expire but would cut taxes for low- and moderate-income Americans and senior citizens. He would also increase some payroll taxes for Americans who make more than \$200,000 per year (or \$250,000 for married couples), and increase the maximum tax rate on capital gains.

McCain would make Bush's tax cuts permanent and increase the tax deduction for dependents. He would also trim the corporate income tax rate. On the whole, McCain's tax plan would reduce federal revenue by \$4.2tn, compared to \$2.9tn for Obama, according to the Tax Policy Centre.

Iraq

Obama has pledged to begin withdrawing US combat troops from Iraq immediately, and would have all troops out of the country within about 16 months.

McCain was a staunch proponent of the war and the later troop "surge". McCain was criticised earlier this year for saying US troops could be in Iraq for "100 years", but in May he proposed a plan to heavily cut back the US presence by 2013.

Race for the White House: Key issues: How the candidates compare

Housing market and economic stimulus

Both candidates voted in the Senate for the government's \$700bn rescue plan which intended to inject liquidity into the US credit market.

Obama further proposes tax breaks for companies that create jobs, extending \$25bn to fund road and school construction and maintenance. He would also allow Americans to withdraw from tax-free retirement accounts without penalty until 2010, and would institute a 90-day moratorium on home foreclosures.

McCain would spend \$300bn to purchase mortgages that have outstripped the value of the home they are attached to, replacing them with fixed-rate loans reflecting the reduced value of the property. He would reduce taxes on retirement account withdrawals until 2010 and would not require retirees to withdraw from retirement accounts if they would face a penalty.

Abortion

John McCain supports overturning Roe v Wade, the 1973 US supreme court decision which prohibited states from banning abortion. He believes that states should then pass laws outlawing the procedure.

Barack Obama supports women's right to choose abortion and has proposed federal funding for comprehensive sex education and to improve awareness of emergency contraception.

Immigration

Both candidates support a comprehensive immigration reform plan that would establish some path to legal status for the roughly 12 million illegal immigrants living and working in the country. They would both increase the number of visas for low-skilled workers and bolster border security and enforcement.

Iran

Obama favours direct, high-level talks with Iran but says if Tehran refuses to give up its nuclear programme, he will step up economic pressure and seek to isolate the regime further.

McCain has signalled he will not significantly depart from Bush's policy. He has called for broad sanctions against Iran and a South African-style divestment campaign to persuade Tehran to drop its nuclear programme.

Israel

Obama maintains he is firmly committed to maintaining strong US-Israel ties, including military and economic aid. He would continue US support for a two-state solution, although he caused a stir in June when he said Jerusalem should be the capital of Israel.

McCain has pledged to increase military aid to Israel. He has said that the Palestinians are "badly served" by Hamas, but he appears willing to broker negotiations.

Energy

Both candidates favour expanding production of biofuels such as corn-based ethanol. Both back expanding nuclear energy usage, but Obama stresses that any new nuclear capacity must be accompanied by adequate environmental and security safeguards.

McCain has enthusiastically called for an increase in oil drilling, especially off US coastal waters. Obama initially opposed increased drilling but now says he would consider it as part of a broader energy package that included environmental protections.

McCain proposes a \$300m prize for the successful development of a plug-in electric car. Obama would offer a tax-credit to purchasers of high-tech energy-efficient vehicles.

Race for the White House: Key issues: How the candidates compare

Guantanamo Bay

Both candidates would close the camp. Obama has criticised the system of military tribunals established by Bush, but has offered few specifics on how he would handle prisoners there. McCain supports the tribunals and has vowed to overturn a court ruling granting prisoners the right to contest their detention.

Load-Date: November 4, 2008

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From drab to decadent: the evolution of Islamic TV

Daily News Egypt

October 26, 2008 Sunday

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Length: 902 words

Body

CAIRO: Less than a decade ago, the term "Islamic Television" was not yet used in the Middle East. State-run channels featured early morning segments of bearded men reciting the Quran. And on Fridays they aired extended sermons from local mosques. But these somber, lackluster broadcasts only attracted the most die-hard devotees and had little social impact. Today Islamic television is a multi-million dollar industry with a smorgasbord of different channels that boast high production values and sleek fast-paced direction.

Many are only designed to provide entertainment while others are devoted exclusively to political provocation. In 1998 Saudi Arabia's ART launched the region's first Islamic satellite channel Iqraa. Their flagship program was "Talk from the Heart" hosted by now renowned Islamic televangelist Amr Khaled. The show's guests included actresses and reformed drug users who openly discussed their path from debauchery to enlightenment. Khaled encouraged uninhibited displays of emotion and more often than not the program ended with someone in tears. "Talk from the Heart's" earnest format instantly struck a cord with millions of ordinary Muslims and revolutionized Islamic television forever. It also revealed a feverish need for informal shows that spoke to Muslims about their everyday problems. Amr Khaled became an overnight sensation, creating a cult following of millions of fans around the world. His show also paved the way for an entirely new kind of Islamic celebrity, enjoying the same mania and glamor associated with movie stars and pop singers. Quick to seize the opportunity, television producers soon launched new Islamic channels such as Al Resalah and Al Nas that in turn produced their own stars. Today an Arab viewer is spoilt for choice with preachers that suit every pallet: from the ultra-conservative to the liberal English speaker. The selection is also no longer limited to men. Women such as Abia Al Kahlawy, Heba Kotb, and Souad Saleh all host highly successful programs. Saleh's weekly show called "Women's Fatwas" on the Egyptian satellite channel sees women asking for guidance about their personal life. "We have dedicated callers from Europe, the US and Canada who call time and time again. The secret of this show's success is that it reaches out to Muslim women on an intimate personal level," the program's director Nahed Salah El Din told Daily News Egypt. Egypt has launched a bigger variety of Islamic programming than any other country. But none of these openly represent political Islam or attempt to impose an explicit word view. It's a different story for Lebanon's Al Manar, however, that began broadcasting their satellite channel in 2000. Funded by Lebanese Shia party Hezbollah, Al Manar set a unique precedent with its unabashedly partisan approach and bombastic style. The channel often uses women wearing the niqab as broadcasters and features propaganda music videos that regularly attack America and Israel. In recent years the US has described Al Manar as a terrorist organization on par with Hamas and Al-Qaeda. But the channel remains as defiant as ever continuing to produce programs that some believe encourage suicide

From drab to decadent: the evolution of Islamic TV

bombings and acts of terrorism. And while Al Manar seems hell-bent on increasing animosity between the West and the Muslim world, other Islamic channels are trying to do exactly the opposite. In the UK the Islam Channel has dedicated itself to building bridges with the West, as well as providing English-speaking Muslims with their own voice. "We wanted to counteract growing hatred against Muslims after 9/11 and the London bombings. We knew we had to do something," Arsan Ali, program director at Islam Channel in London, told Daily News Egypt. Seen all over world the Islam Channel has achieved unprecedented success, attracting millions of loyal viewers. Its itinerary includes everything from specialized talk shows to children's programs. But it is their new game show "Faith Off" that has generated media frenzy in recent months. "Faith Off" is the world's first ever inter-faith game show, where Sheikhs, Christians, Buddhists, Jews, and Muslims are made to compete against each other. Contestants are tested on their knowledge of other religions. The inevitable errors made by these contestants provide ample comedic material but also reflect greater misunderstandings amongst different communities. Ali explains his channel's motivation for creating the show. "We wanted to launch a program that put people of different faiths face to face. Ultimately the idea is that it forces individuals to look past religious differences to see how similar we all are." The show has proven to be a big hit and the Islam Channel has now launched a new program entitled "Modern Mosque" that scouts the UK for the 'best mosque' in the country. "The idea is to look throughout England for the ideal mosque that caters to the local community and includes the best facilities. After the July bombings here in the UK mosques were presented in the media as centers of violence. We hope to show a different side to these places." Whether it's about sheer entertainment, building bridges with the West, or even anti-American propaganda, Islamic TV is having a worldwide impact. Over the last decade Islamic television has transformed itself from its austere beginnings to a flexible medium that can be adapted to fit a variety of TV genres.

Load-Date: October 28, 2008

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News in brief

The Jerusalem Post

October 23, 2008 Thursday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 3

Length: 879 words

Byline: Yaakov Katz, Jerusalem Post staff, Elie Leshem

Body

Barak weighs limiting prisoner visits

Defense Minister Ehud Barak sent a letter to Attorney- General Menahem Mazuz on Wednesday asking for his legal opinion on imposing restrictions on prison visitation rights for Palestinian families from the West Bank.

Barak noted that Palestinians from Gaza were not allowed into Israel to visit jailed relatives and that the same policy should be implemented in the West Bank in an effort to pressure **Hamas** into reducing its demands in the negotiations for the release of St.-Sgt. Gilad Schalit.

* Yaakov Katz

PA receives \$150 million from US

The United States signed an agreement on Wednesday to give \$150 million to the government of Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, Agence France Presse reported.

The funds are the first installment of the \$555m. Western nations pledged at a donors conference in Paris last year.

Israel and the Palestinians relaunched peace talks last November under US auspices, but have made little progress since then.

US President George W. Bush expressed the hope that Israel and the Palestinians will reach a peace agreement by 2008, a goal which both Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Abbas admitted was highly unlikely.

* Jerusalem Post staff

Nasrallah poisoning claim downplayed

A report Wednesday on an Iraqi Web site claiming that Hizbullah leader Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah's life was saved by 15 Iranian doctors after a poisoning attempt last week should be taken with a grain of salt, said Eyal Zisser, a professor of Middle Eastern history and senior research fellow at the Dayan Center in Tel Aviv University.

The report cited Lebanese diplomatic sources as saying that the Iranian doctors were whisked to Lebanon to treat the ailing Hizbullah leader, who, fearing an Israeli assassination, has been holed up in his bunker for many months.

News in brief

"I am very skeptical of this report," Zisser told The Jerusalem Post, adding that the Web site that had published the report, Almalaf, was virtually unheard of, had not made any such reports in the past and was therefore "unreliable."

"We must bear in mind that Lebanon is very open in terms of the media, and were such a thing to happen, we would probably get wind of it in reports from local media sources," Zisser said. * Elie Leshem

Iran captures 'nuclear spy pigeons'

Two alleged "spy pigeons" were apprehended near Iran's nuclear facility at Natanz, according to Iranian media reports.

A report in the Etemad Melli newspaper said security forces found metal bands and invisible string attached to the birds, one of which was found this week, and the other earlier in the month.

The source quoted in the report declined to give further description and did not say what would happen to the birds.

The uranium enrichment plant at Natanz has 4,000 operating centrifuges, according to latest reports, despite pressure from the West and UN sanctions to encourage the Islamic Republic to abandon its nuclear program.

The Iranian government insists the program is only used to generate power for civilian use.

* Jerusalem Post staff

'Barak is most dangerous man in Israel'

"[Defense Minister] Ehud Barak is the most dangerous man in the country," ex-education minister and former Meretz chairman Shulamit Aloni told Army Radio Wednesday.

Aloni said she would be pleased if the Palestinians would sue Barak, who she termed a warmonger, in the International Court in The Hague.

Former chief of General Staff Lt.-Gen. [res.] Dan Halutz, she said, was also worthy of a Hague lawsuit. Halutz, she said, was "a war criminal."

"I would like to say openly that Barak is the most dangerous man in the State of Israel. His decision is a crime against humanity, if implemented. Cutting electricity from residents, children, women and hospitals is a crime against humanity. That's the UN's definition."

When asked why she viewed Barak as dangerous, the former education minister said, "Because of his personality, because he's looking to start wars, because of his vanity and condescending nature and because he chooses extreme measures."

A Barak spokesman said in response: "Aloni's words are delusional. There is no doubt that her old age put her youth to shame." * Jerusalem Post staff

IDF stops man carrying explosives

Soldiers from the IDF Givati Brigade's Tzabar Battalion found a pipe bomb and three Molotov cocktails on the body of a Palestinian man waiting to pass through the Hawara checkpoint, south of Nablus on Wednesday.

Border Police forces detonated the bomb in a controlled environment and the suspect was transferred to a security interrogation. * Jerusalem Post staff

IDF troops seriously wound Palestinian

A 17-year-old Palestinian boy was seriously wounded Wednesday when he was shot in the head by IDF troops in El Fara refugee camp outside Nablus, Palestinian sources claimed.

News in brief

Islamic Jihad said the boy was shot during IDF searches in the camp for one of its armed wing's gunmen.

He was treated in the camp by Palestinian medics and reported to be in stable condition. * Jerusalem Post staff

Scooter driver, 90, hurt in accident

A 90-year-old man riding an electric scooter was seriously injured on Wednesday in an accident in Ramat Gan.

The man was hurt when a car crashed into him on Ha'etzel Street. The casualty was evacuated to Tel Hashomer Medical Center. * Jerusalem Post staff

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

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TALKING POINT

The Courier Mail (Australia)

January 12, 2009 Monday

1 - First with the news Edition

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 18

Length: 1871 words

Body

Communion is the key role of priests

I CONSIDER myself to be a liberal Catholic and I love many of the things that St Mary's at South Brisbane stands for, but I must admit that I, too, am heartily sick of what is going on there.

It is not that the priests there aren't really nice guys, even humble guys, and they are doing wonderful work on social justice issues and welcoming the marginalised. The problem is, that they are half-baked with their theology and that has now baked itself into a recipe for outright disaster. Right theology and right worship actually informs right action and this has shown itself in this sorry situation.

Where is the fostering of unity and communion that the gospel also encourages? The lesson I have learnt from this is that even humble, nice people can be unwittingly filled with arrogant presumption.

I have always been a fan of the "what would Jesus do if he was here now?" litmus test. However, again, in South Brisbane that test has been bandied about so often that I am fed up with it and I am left wondering whether someone will come out saying that if Jesus was here today he would be out on the high seas campaigning for land rights for gay albino whales. Did it ever occur to the people of South Brisbane that the Catholic Archbishop of Brisbane and others may also be constantly reflecting on what Jesus might do?

I implore the St Mary's community to take a real, honest and open look at its attitudes and beliefs and practices and absolutely reject the option of splitting with the Church. If you go that way I fear you will become an irrelevancy and it will mean that the Catholics who came along with you have been fed an insubstantial and patchy vision of the Church which has led them right out the door. It is not too late.

Fr Paul W. Kelly, Maryborough

THE community I lead, Corinda Graceville Parish, has a long history of involvement in social justice issues, like St Mary's. Our parish has been very vocal in support of Scott Rush and Michael Czugaj (both former parishioners) who are in a Bali prison on drug charges.

However, I get the impression folks at St Mary's believe they are right and the rest of us are wrong.

The parish I serve has up to 1200 people a weekend at its masses. I would like to think that Corinda Graceville Parish is a vibrant worshipping community just as St Mary's purports to be, and yet when we gather, we pray the prayers of the Roman Catholic Church and we observe the structure surrounding those prayers. We often celebrate

TALKING POINT

the Sacrament of Baptism within the Mass on a Sunday and we baptise in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Do I wear vestments or the assigned liturgical outfit to lead these celebrations? Of course, because I lead a celebration with prescribed words, gestures, and dress, which are recognised in Catholic churches the world over. This is a question of what is called ecclesiology. It is about how the Roman Catholic Church functions and how it needs to be in communion with all Catholic communities and ultimately with the Pope himself.

I don't wish to offend the good folk of St Mary's and I pray that they will receive these thoughts in the spirit in which they are meant.

Fr Tim Harris, parish priest, Corinda Graceville Catholic Parish

Aggressive security staff

I PASSED through Brisbane airport recently, with my wife and four young children, on the way back from New Zealand. I was shocked to find that the security staff at the airport were extremely rude and aggressive.

I realise that since September 11, security needs to be tight, but there is no need for these people to be so nasty towards innocent travellers. It would seem that the power has gone to their head.

When I tried to find someone to complain to, I was told that the security staff are employed by a private firm that has nothing to do with the airport or any airline and therefore there was nothing I could do about it. Are we living in a democracy or a dictatorship?

John Keating, Altona Meadows, Vic

Drivers should be professional

I AM sick and tired of receiving complaints from the people I pick up in the taxi about our foreign drivers. The Australian drivers wonder how can drivers on student visas be allowed to drive 12 hours plus when they are restricted to earning a limited number of dollars.

In years past you had to hold a licence for more than three years to obtain a cab licence. It is about time the Department of Transport checked out some of these drivers.

Bill Grieve, Enoggera

I AM not surprised that a police officer in Cunnamulla was exonerated by the Ethical Standards Command for being drunk on duty. After consuming 18 beers plus rum and coke, he reported for duty at 12.45am. In another job, you would face the sack. So is there one law for police and one for the general community? Police would not give reasons for their decision. Power corrupts.

Bill Gates, Keperra

SO truck drivers are leaving their stock-filled trucks to board flights out of Camooweal. Who's looking after the stock? The mark of a civilised society is how it cares for the animals under its control.

Chris Lloyd, Alderley

Ugly invader powerlines

AS a Currumbin resident I am concerned about the proposed overhead powerlines. The trees 10m each side of the powerlines will be cleared over the length of the route from Mudgeeraba to Tugun and thousands will be felled.

In the Currumbin area, the ``community bushland" is of immense value and as a community we need to have a vision for the future and courage to take a stand now.

TALKING POINT

The Tugun desalination plant will no doubt draw huge amounts of electricity, and I dare say is a major part of the equation. It will provide water to all southeast Queensland. The cost of getting power to the Tugun plant and putting the powerlines underground therefore should be borne by southeast Queensland not just a Gold Coast fund allocation.

I hope those making these decisions at Energex and the State Government Energy Minister Geoff Wilson will consider their responsibility for the long term.

Don't let these intrusive structures become a statement of supreme arrogance and a terrorist act upon the visual amenity of the Palm Beach/Currumbin area.

David Van der Vooren, Currumbin

New Darra train service welcome

A NEW weekday Citytrain service commences today from Darra at 6.35am. This service will pick up much of the inner-city overload ahead of the presently congested 6.14am service from Ipswich.

This new service will run a few minutes ahead of the 6.14am service ex Ipswich from Darra and will help ameliorate the gross overloading that has been occurring on the later service inbound from Indooroopilly. It will help to make the daily commute more comfortable and increase capacity.

As more rolling stock and crew is made available to the Citytrain network, additional services need to be constantly added to ease the congestion bottlenecks. The Caboolture line must be next on the list.

Robert Dow, Darra

Shame on state for discount snub

SO Queensland is reneging on the reciprocal state travel concession proposed by the Federal Government. Thousands of southern travellers and holidaymakers go north and spend millions of dollars in Queensland each year, but that government is not prepared to provide travel concessions to get them there.

The Association of Independent Retirees through their advocacy to government has spent years fighting for this concession for seniors. We congratulate the Federal Labor Government on this initiative and thank the Victorian Government for the implementation. However, shame on Queensland for its miserable response.

Rae Buswell, president, G V Branch of AIR, Shepparton, Vic

Solution for children's sake

IN the very epicentre where the Jewish, Muslim and Christian religions were born out of common ground, how ironic is it that aid workers and carers are getting killed trying to help a seemingly lost cause

This land has to be shared by all three religions. The Israelis and Palestinians are actually brothers and sisters; they're the same people who walked out of Egypt 5000 years ago and the rest is history. They don't even know why they dislike each other any more.

David Jacobi, Lawnton

IT is amazing to read that the current US Secretary of State is suggesting that Palestinian women and children are being killed in Gaza and the West Bank by the Israeli military because Hamas militants are using them as shields. This is Palestinian land! Where are they supposed to fight the Israeli soldiers who occupy land which is agreed to be theirs?

The Israelis are in some ways suffering from the ``abused child syndrome''. Many of their grandparents were abused at the hands of the fascist regimes in Europe in the '30s and '40s, and now they may be accused of

TALKING POINT

inflicting the same treatment on the Palestinians. They and the Bush administration are losing the political and the moral war and should develop more effective policy.

Merv Hyde, Yeronga

I WAS brought to tears by the photograph (C-M, Jan 10-11) of the tiny bodies of innocent babies who are heart-breaking victims of the Israel/Palestine war.

I applaud the United Nations for doing everything in its power to stop the violence and congratulate The Courier-Mail for its coverage of this ongoing tragedy so that we here may learn from and appreciate the horrors we are spared each day. My hopes and prayers go to both sides for a peaceful, swift resolution and I count my blessings.

Lucinda Benson, Calamvale

HOW many of those Muslim and other people protesting last week throughout Australia to Israel's retaliation against Hamas have ever protested against continuing Muslim atrocities of massacre, rape of women and children, forced displacement and torture of the peoples of Darfur over these past years?

William Hill, Benowa

IT is appalling that the world powers stand by and do nothing while hundreds of humans are slaughtered in Gaza, many of them children.

Imagine the world outcry if 800 of Israel's people had been killed by the people in Gaza in the past two weeks. Action is required now.

Peter Keogh, Bokarina

'I would love to have a pair of boots made from John Howard's hide. They would be everlasting'

Vic Vaggs neatly ties up the friendship of former PM John Howard, a White House preferred guest, with outgoing President George W. Bush, who has a shoe name after him

'Premier Anna Bligh has been wearing red a lot . . . her advisers could tell her that red is an aggressive colour'

Liz Haydon says Anna Bligh should tone down her image in the lead-up to the state election

Letters

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The winner of Letter of the Month wins a zippered A4 leather compendium, valued at \$80, courtesy of The Courier-Mail.

TALKING POINT

Load-Date: January 11, 2009

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Israel's Mrs Clean

Sunday Business Post

January 4, 2009

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Section: PROFILE

Length: 1977 words

Body

Tzipi Livni

AGE:

50

APPEARANCE:

tall, stylish, usually unsmiling

NEWSWORTHINESS:

Israel's acting prime minister has staked her political future on the military action in the Gaza Strip

Shortly before Eitan Livni died in 1991, he brought his family together and showed them the design he wanted for his gravestone. It depicted a map of the Biblical land of Israel, complete with the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, with a gun and bayonet carved through the centre. The words that accompanied it underlined the former guerrilla's straightforward attitude to the demands of his Palestinian enemies: "Only Thus!"

Although he was a strict and undemonstrative father, Eitan would presumably be very proud of his daughter, Tzipi, today. As the carnage in Gaza continues, Israel's foreign minister and acting prime minister has adopted an uncompromising approach that belies her old image as a peace-seeking moderate. In Paris last Thursday, she dismissed global calls for a ceasefire with icy coldness: "There is no humanitarian crisis and therefore no need for a humanitarian truce."

Behind the bravado, however, Livni is in a perilous political position. Although she is the newly-elected leader of Kadima, the largest party in Israel's ruling coalition, her inability to form a new government means that a general election is scheduled for February 10. According to the opinion polls, the favourite to win that election is Benjamin Netanyahu, the hardline Likud leader who believes that the current air strikes against Hamas don't go far enough. All this means that Livni's future effectively depends on her performance as a de facto war leader over the next few weeks.

Israel 's Mrs Clean

Success would mean becoming Israel's first female prime minister since Golda Meir, the original Iron Lady, who ruled from 1969 to 1973.

Failure would mean being cast into the wilderness of opposition, not to mention the painful likelihood that her year-long peace negotiations with the Palestinian Authority would have proved to be in vain.

Livni's dilemma is familiar to female politicians worldwide. Despite her pedigree, many Israelis suspect the 50-year-old vegetarian cat-lover simply doesn't have the mental toughness to lead the nation in a time of conflict. Like Hillary Clinton, she has had to get used to having every aspect of her public performances carefully scrutinised for signs of emotional fragility - and any crack in the perfectly groomed facade is likely to prove politically fatal.

Although Livni is officially Israel's acting prime minister, she is just one of a trio of politicians with direct responsibility for the military campaign. Despite serving in the same government, all three are known to dislike and distrust each other, leading to intense speculation over who's really calling the shots when they meet behind closed doors.

Outgoing premier Ehud Olmert may yet be indicted on corruption charges, but still wants to use the Gaza offensive to restore a reputation that was tarnished by his failure to defeat the Lebanese Hezbollah movement in 2006. Ehud Barak, the defence minister and Labour leader, meanwhile, is a wily ex-commando who served as prime minister from 1999 to 2001 and has not given up hope of returning to that position.

Livni's biggest asset is her reputation as a politician of absolute integrity, reflected in her nickname, Mrs Clean. As a woman in the notoriously macho world of Israeli politics, she has a wholesome image that stands in contrast to the slick, wheelerdealer style that has brought many of her rivals into disrepute. But she is still dogged by speculation that she is too soft-hearted for the bare-fisted realities of Middle Eastern politics.

Asked once by a reporter to discuss her private life, Livni reportedly snapped:

"Feelings I discuss with my children." Given her family background, however, it's impossible not to wonder how much her ultra-nationalist upbringing will weigh on her mind in the crucial weeks ahead. Eitan Livni and Sarah Rosenberg were Polish Jews who married in Tel Aviv in May 1948, one day after the foundation of the State of Israel. They were also senior members of Irgun, the Zionist guerrilla group that fought both British soldiers and Arab civilians during the country's fight for independence.

The youngest of their three children, Tzipi (her name means 'bird' in Hebrew) grew up listening to exciting stories of the Livnis' heroic exploits, such as the time her father led a mass escape from the Acre fortress, or her mother pretended to be pregnant and robbed a train carrying the salaries of British bureaucrats. Less romanticised accounts have focused on Eitan's role in planning the bombing of British headquarters at Jerusalem's King David Hotel in 1946, an attack that killed 91 people, including 58 civilians.

The young Tzipi was an outgoing tomboy who excelled at soccer and basketball. She was also an intensely serious child, acutely aware that her family's underground service made them relative outsiders in a country still dominated by the old Labour aristocracy. At the age of 12, her teacher wrote to her mother complaining that Tzipi had disrupted a history class with loud claims that Irgun was not receiving the credit it deserved for securing Israeli independence.

Like all Israelis, Livni joined the army when she turned 18. By the time she was discharged in 1979, she had reached the rank of lieutenant. In the same year, she was admitted to law school, where she was recruited by talent-spotters from the country's intelligence agency, Mossad.

Her four years with Mossad are shrouded in secrecy, with Livni only willing to confirm that she spent most of the time stationed in Paris. Some of the wilder rumours claim that she was a frontline hunter of Arab terrorists operating across Europe. The agency insists her role was simply to occupy and pay utility bills for a safe-house in the French capital in order to give it the semblance of a normal apartment.

Israel 's Mrs Clean

Although Livni has never explained why she abandoned her spying career, it seems likely that it had something to do with meeting Naftali Shpitzer, an advertising executive seven years her senior. The couple became engaged within three weeks and are now married with two adult sons, one in the navy and the other a paratrooper. They are said to enjoy an exceptionally close relationship, with Shpitzer acting as her chief strategist during the recent Kadima leadership election.

For the next few years, Livni worked as a corporate lawyer in Tel Aviv and steered clear of politics. According to her husband, the event that rekindled her interest in public life was the signing of the Oslo Accords, the land-for-peace deal negotiated under the Labour prime minister, Yitzhak Rabin, in 1993. After applying a close legal analysis to the agreement, Livni concluded that Rabin had made too many concessions - and decided that the best way to honour her parents' memory was to enter politics herself.

She was first elected to the Knesset as a member of the right-wing Likud party in 1999. However, her political career really took off in 2001 when she became part of then prime minister Ariel Sharon's inner circle. During Sharon's tenure, she served in a number of ministerial posts and rapidly became the country's most visible female politician.

Once an uncompromising hardliner nicknamed Mr Settlement because of his insistence that Israelis had the right to build on land occupied during the 1967 war, Sharon experienced something of a Damascene conversion while in office. As the 2001 Palestinian intifada escalated with a campaign of terror bombings against Israeli civilians - and with demographic trends pointing towards an Arab majority in an Israel that included the West Bank and Gaza - he and his colleagues, including Livni, began to rethink the assumptions they had held since childhood.

By 2004, Sharon was ready to abandon his historic Greater Israel idea (a Jewish state stretching from the Mediterranean Sea to Jordan) in favour of a two-state solution. After Livni was persuaded to endorse his new policy of unilateral disengagement from the Gaza Strip, she spent days locked away in private rooms in the Knesset encouraging MPs to accept the plan.

When Sharon left Likud to form the more centrist Kadima (Forward) party in November 2005, she followed him. Just over a month later, Sharon suffered a massive stroke and was effectively removed from the political scene. Although Livni was touted by some people as a possible successor, she did not feel ready for the job and transferred her support to the more experienced figure of Olmert instead.

As foreign minister, her chief responsibility was to lead the US-backed negotiations with the Palestinian Authority. In March 2006, she extended an olive branch by becoming the first Israeli cabinet minister to explicitly differentiate Palestinian guerrilla attacks against military targets from terrorist attacks against civilians.

"Somebody who is fighting against Israeli soldiers is an enemy and we will fight back," she declared in an interview on US television. "But I believe that this is not under the definition of terrorism, if the target is a soldier."

The peace talks were based on the so called 'Clinton parameters', which envisage Israel keeping three big blocks of settlements close to the West Bank border and compensating the Palestinians with land near the Gaza Strip and a corridor between Gaza and the West Bank.

The Bush administration has taken a close interest in the negotiations, with Condoleezza Rice reportedly talking to Livni at least twice a week. However, any hope of a deal before Bush leaves office belongs in the realm of fantasy.

Livni's relationship with Olmert, always uneasy, was damaged beyond repair by his handling of the 2006 war against Lebanon's Hezbollah guerrillas. She openly called for his resignation and indicated that she wanted to succeed him, but reluctantly remained by his side in cabinet after he refused to quit.

After revelations that he had accepted more than \$150,000 in cash from an American businessman made Olmert's position untenable, Livni hammered home the message that "values and norms must be upheld in Israeli politics". She also positioned herself for an inevitable leadership race against the former general and security hawk, Shaul Mofaz.

Israel 's Mrs Clean

Although the pre-election polls suggested that Livni would win with a comfortable majority, she ended up just squeezing through. Of the 72,000 registered members of Kadima, just over half turned up and she eventually defeated Mofaz by just 431 votes.

After the initial euphoria had worn off, it became clear that this shaky mandate would damage her chances of forming a new coalition and becoming prime minister in her own right. Smaller parties such as the ultra-orthodox Shas faction demanded huge increases in social welfare in order to secure their support, demands that Livni had already publicly declared that she could not accept.

Following several weeks of fruitless negotiations, she called a general election instead, indicating that she would fight it as a woman of principle devoid of personal vanity and only prepared to govern on her own terms.

The resumption of ***Hamas***'s rocket fire in mid-December, after a six-month truce, inevitably put huge pressure on her to opt for a military response. Even so, her precise role within the temporary government triumvirate of Livni, Olmert and Barak remains unclear.

The reality is that for all the personal details she occasionally lets slip in interviews (including her love of the beach, drumming and the music of the Animals), Livni is essentially an unknown quantity on the world stage. That state of affairs is unlikely to last much longer.

With the tension in Gaza now greater than at any time since 1967, the hand of history is firmly on Livni's shoulder. The only certainty this weekend is that Israel's Mrs Clean is

Load-Date: January 7, 2009

End of Document

Syracuse guard has feet on court, heart in Israel

University Wire

January 14, 2009 Wednesday

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Length: 830 words

Byline: By Zach Schonbrun, Daily Orange; **SOURCE:** Syracuse

Dateline: SYRACUSE, N.Y.

Body

As a young girl growing up in Israel, there were always certain things that tested Syracuse's sophomore guard Marisa Gobuty's resiliency - like when security guards were posted on the hotel floor where her youth basketball team slept. Or when she'd have to turn her "Israel" jersey inside out before going outdoors. Or when the team bus would be checked and rechecked before the girls could board.

"In Israel, there's an atmosphere that you have to just live your life," she says.

Which is why there was not so much shock on Dec. 28, when her parents called her to say Israel had attacked Gaza, only some feelings of helplessness and a quick shuffle to her computer, where she sent out countless emails to friends and acquaintances from home. Many were preparing for military deployment; some had Facebook statuses which already read "in Gaza."

There was also the realization that if Gobuty was not a sophomore guard for the Syracuse women's basketball team, she'd be over there fighting, too.

If basketball can get kids out of ghettos and slums, it can also get them out of the line of fire. So today Gobuty's trigger finger is only aimed at a rim; her focus is on hoops, not Hamas.

It was a scholarship to Syracuse that permitted her deferment - or, rather, postponement, for she will still likely have to serve in the Israeli military once she graduates. (In Israel, every citizen is required by law to serve for two years.) The thing is, though, that Gobuty said even now she would gladly trade uniforms: Her love for her country and her support for Israel hasn't been tempered by 5,000 miles, or the current crisis.

"It's something that means a lot to me and I'm very passionate about," Gobuty said. "It's home, and if everybody else has to pay their dues, so do I."

Instead, she's here as a vocal supporter, an armchair witness and a college sophomore with a Blackberry never far from reach. She drifts to CNN.com or the Jerusalem Post Web site constantly, longing for updates, waiting for emailed responses from friends who haven't answered. Since the day fighting broke out, the conflict hasn't strayed far from her thoughts.

It's a battle with split emotions, of course, because one hour she's in the Carrier Dome shooting basketballs in practice, the next she's in Schine Student Center sitting at a support table for Hillel. She was at last night's game vs. Seton Hall and played 11 minutes, but perhaps her mind drifted off to the other side of the world, or the other side of town, where the Jewish Community Center was holding a rally at the same time.

Syracuse guard has feet on court, heart in Israel

She insists it hasn't been a distraction - a heavy heart hasn't weighed down her follow-through - and that basketball has in fact been somewhat therapeutic.

"It puts everything into perspective more," Gobuty said. "It really makes me understand I have a great opportunity, and at the end of the day, I get to be on this court and play basketball every night and my friends are dealing with things that are a lot more serious - life or death situations."

Israel is her home, Gobuty says, a statement that should not be taken lightly, considering she was born in Canada, lived in California, attended high school in Florida, and now goes to SU. But her family moved to Herzliya, Israel, when she was nine. She didn't know Hebrew. She didn't know anybody. She did know she wanted to go into the army. And play for the national basketball team.

In a few years she was the starting point guard for the Under-16 Israeli national team, Bnei Herzliya, with security guards detailing every trip and precautions taken before every step.

A week ago, an Israeli men's basketball team, Bnei Hasharon, was forced to cancel a game in Turkey as a mass of protesters swarmed the court, prompting riot police to intervene.

"That team plays five minutes from my house," Gobuty said.

So now she knows Hebrew, she knows countless Israelis, and she knows a little something about adversity, and a packed XL Center - where Syracuse will be playing when it travels to Connecticut on Saturday - won't do much to make her sweat. Does crowd noise make the anxiousness go away?

Not when gunfire is the persistent ringing in her head. Not when the e-mail inbox still waits for responses from dear friends. Gobuty knows if she can't help Israel physically, she can support it emotionally. She's not afraid to wear her Star of David on her sleeve.

"I'm out there, I'm pro-Israel, I'm Jewish, and I'm not shy about it," Gobuty said. "Sometimes it concerns me a little bit. But I think, after living in Israel, that's not something that I really think about. ...After everything they've been through, you don't stop living your life. I think that's the attitude I've developed."

She has "Syracuse" across her chest now, but there's never been a doubt what team her heart belongs to. This summer she plans to play for the Israeli national team again: She'll wear a uniform on a court, not a battlefield, with "Israel" facing right side out.

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A unique voice from Sur Bahir

The Jerusalem Post

October 24, 2008 Friday

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 10

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Byline: KSENIA SVETLOVA

Highlight: Zohair Hamdan was going to run for mayor, but changed his mind. He may or may not seek a city council seat. And he certainly wants to be the next mayor's adviser on east Jerusalem matters. But whom does he really represent?

Body

There are no campaign posters or billboards of mayoral candidates Nir Barkat, Meir Porush or Arkadi Gaydamak in Sur Bahir. The east Jerusalem neighborhood's dusty walls are adorned with the usual variety of Fatah and Hamas symbols, verses from the Koran and old, yellowing photos of Palestinian politicians likely left over from the January 2006 stormy campaign.

Despite the lack of publicity, everybody knows where Zohair Hamdan lives.

Hamdan, 55, is a father of 18 and married to three women. He is a well-known figure in Sur Bahir, although half of the neighborhood dignitaries won't speak to him or give out his cell phone number.

Today he is aiming for the position of Arab affairs adviser to the next Jerusalem mayor, may or may not run for city council, but insists that he will be ready to run as mayor in the next elections in 2013.

"By then I will gain some experience in the municipality, will understand more what is going on and then make my move," he promises.

Hamdan was born in Zarqa, Jordan, studied engineering in Beirut and ended up in Jerusalem in 1976, uniting with his family in Sur Bahir. Despite his Jordanian origins, he says that he is a pure Jerusalemite and that "Jerusalem runs in my blood."

"Well, Gaydamak is of Russian origin, isn't he? It didn't stop him from running for municipal elections - and he doesn't even live here," says Hamdan, relaxing in his office, the walls covered by images of the Hashemite royal family and maps of Jordan.

He isn't shy about his ongoing connections to or affinity for his homeland. "I maintain close ties with the Jordanian court - first with King Hussein and now with King Abdullah. They do not intervene in our internal affairs here in Jerusalem, unlike some other elements [referring to the Palestinian Authority, which he believes is trying to intervene in elections and pressure Jerusalem Arabs not to vote - K.S.]," he says.

HAMDAN IS used to journalists. Since announcing his decision first to run for mayor, and after cancelling that, to run for city council, with the intention of running next election for mayor, Arab, Israeli and Western press have paid multiple visits to hear about the atypical east Jerusalemite candidate.

A unique voice from Sur Bahir

But as of this Sunday, Hamdan had not submitted the necessary paperwork to run in the city council elections. It is possible that he will join forces with one of the Jewish candidates. Evyatar Elad, a spokesperson for mayoral candidate Nir Barkat, as well as local businessman Jacob Ner-David, who is the managing director of Jerusalem Capital and one of Hamdan's supporters, both said that they believe Hamdan will not run independently. And on Monday, he told In Jerusalem he was leaning toward endorsing and working with Barkat. In the meantime, Hamdan continues to elicit considerable public interest.

Indeed, his slogan, "One Jerusalem for Jerusalemites," is arguably more right-wing than anybody else's.

Sitting in his leather armchair, with a view of the West Bank security barrier from his window, Hamdan is not even willing to consider the division of Jerusalem. None of the current talks will produce something real, he says, mainly due to the weakness of the Palestinian Authority, and his beloved city will stay united.

"One Jerusalem for Jerusalemites" also means equity for its residents, he stresses. As a future mayoral candidate, Hamdan has been nurturing ties with the heads of Jewish neighborhood administrations in Jerusalem for a few years now.

"Look at the streets of Sur Bahir. We pay arnona and taxes just like everybody else, but no one comes to pick up the garbage. When I enter the city council, first of all I intend to clean up the mess, meaning the actual garbage on the streets, and second, the mismanagement of our [Arab] neighborhoods," says Hamdan.

"I also happen to know that some Jewish neighborhoods in Jerusalem suffer from discrimination, not only us in Sur Bahir, Jebel Mukaber or Ras el-Amud. Look at the streets of Rehavia and compare them with the Katamonim - the difference is visible immediately. We all live in Jerusalem, and we are all entitled to municipal services as Jerusalemites - no matter which side of the city we live in."

Hamdan also says that his first move as an Arab affairs municipal adviser will be what he calls "the mukhtar [village elder] reform."

Hamdan wants to fire all the mukhtars in addition to the neighborhood committees that were nominated many years ago, claiming that they are illegal and aren't fulfilling the needs of the community.

"They just get huge salaries but actually do nothing for their people. For example, we, in Sur Bahir, have our own engineer. Can you imagine? Why the hell do we need our own engineer? All we need today is someone to clean up the garbage, then we will think about everything else," he says.

UNSURPRISINGLY, HAMDAN'S positions, particularly on the division of Jerusalem, evoke angry reactions in much of the Arab sector. Indeed, Hamdan is boycotted by a significant part of the dignitaries in his own neighborhood.

The local mukhtar, Sheikh Hassan Abu-Asle, declined to talk to In Jerusalem about Hamdan, while the manager of the local branch of Clalit Health Services, Fuad Abu-Hammad, said that not only is he against Hamdan's local political ambitions, but urges him to "put an end to the disgrace."

For Abu-Hammad, like many from the Arab sector, participation in the local elections is a source of conflict because it is seen as giving legitimacy to the Israeli democracy.

East Jerusalem Arabs are Palestinian, he says, and therefore it is inappropriate for anybody from Sur Bahir or any other Arab neighborhood to run for the municipal elections, let alone the mayoralty, as Hamdan is bent on doing sooner or later, since it harms the Palestinian cause.

"The Israelis will use it against us, claiming that it's the most democratic country if there is an Arab candidate for a mayor of Jerusalem. But really, there is no true intention to change things in the eastern part of the town. I don't think that it's waiting for the Arab candidate to add more classrooms to our schools or to clean up the garbage in our neighborhoods. Therefore there is no use," says Abu-Hammad.

A unique voice from Sur Bahir

Traditionally, only five to seven percent of the Arab sector participate in the municipal elections, yet Hamdan is certain that this time more people will decide to turn out, estimating upwards of 10-15%.

Of course, not all those who come to the polling stations will back Hamdan or his favored mayoral candidate - in Beit Hanina and Ras el-Amud few people knew who he was.

And Hamdan is concerned about the effect PA intimidations might have on his electorate.

"No one is entitled to speak on behalf of Jerusalemites but themselves. We deserve our own representation and will not allow anyone to interfere with our life," he says, referring to PA President Mahmoud Abbas.

"In previous elections, people were afraid to vote. Today they know already who Fatah is and who Hamas is and they want neither."

Such provocative attitudes have not gone unpunished. In February 2001, Hamdan was shot by members of the Abayat family who belonged to Tanzim Bethlehem, and spent 19 days unconscious in the hospital. He attributes the attack to his talk against the division of Jerusalem, but nonetheless holds to his political positions.

Although it may seem that Hamdan is not representative of political opinions in east Jerusalem, says Ner-David, actually a lot of people there relate to his agenda.

"I do not know anybody from east Jerusalem who is interested in the division of the city," says Ner-David, an Orthodox Jew who lives in Baka and believes that coexistence in the city can only be built through a more active participation of east Jerusalemites in municipal affairs.

"We all live together in this city and we must run it together. Otherwise, we cannot achieve any success in developing the tourism infrastructure and other ventures in the city," he continues. "Until now the east Jerusalemites were always waiting for something - before Oslo for negotiations, and then for some political change. Now I think it's clear that they have to wake from their sleep and take their destiny into their hands. It might be someone like Hamdan or somebody else, who is courageous enough, but things obviously have to change."

MANY SEEM doubtful an Arab city councillor - be it Hamdan or anybody else - can make improvements in their sector.

Zuhra Hamad, a student from Beit Hanina, doesn't believe that anyone, especially an Arab city councillor, can improve the situation for Arabs in Jerusalem.

"If he is elected, it will just prove that he is an amil or collaborator," says Hamad. "There's no way Israelis will let any Palestinian nationalist into their city council, and if he won't fight for our cause, we don't need him."

Indeed, in private conversations, many called Hamdan a collaborator, pointing to the shooting incident in 2001 and the fact that members of the Abayat family were killed by the IDF in 2002 - which some believe was revenge for the assassination attempt on Hamdan.

Muhammad from the Old City suggested that Hamdan was being paid for expressing such outrageous opinions on Jerusalem.

"We all know that there is a stalemate in the talks and that there is no progress as of today, but we all hope to see a Palestinian flag on Al-Aksa some day," he says.

Ram, a fruit vendor from Shuafat, says that he prefers that the situation go back to the Seventies, when Jerusalem was open, people could trade and weren't obsessed with nationalism.

"I didn't participate in the elections at that time either, as we regard this authority [Israel] as occupying, but until now there has been no alternative - certainly these guys in Ramallah aren't the alternative," says Ram.

MERETZ LIST head Pepe Alalu, whose No. 4 and No. 7 candidates for the upcoming election are both Arab, says that Hamdan doesn't represent the population of east Jerusalem, and will not get any support beyond his own family circles. "He is well-known, and I really do not think that he represents anyone in east Jerusalem beyond himself."

As for expected low voter turnout in the Arab sector, Alalu believes that no one there should be pressured for or against voting in municipal elections. "I meet with people and I have connections with them, but I believe that it's a very charged political issue and whether they should participate in the elections or not is their own business," he says.

In response to collaborator accusations, Hamdan says that even Abbas is called a collaborator today. It's much worse that the Palestinian leader seeks Israeli permission to enter Jerusalem and goes through the Shin Bet security drill, than having an Arab Jerusalemite run for municipal elections to fight for his people's rights, he says.

Although it still remains to be seen whether Hamdan will restrict his ambitions to a mayor adviser's post this time, it's clear that he has succeeded in gaining considerable political leverage and public attention. "The PA and Abu Mazen [Abbas] are trying to get Jerusalem through the political negotiations, while we, the east Jerusalemites, can do it through the election process. We can gain more power inside the municipality and make the change happen. I believe that this time we will see different results at the ballot box," he says.

Graphic

6 photos: Zohair Hamdan. Many east Jerusalemites are skeptical that an Arab city councillor can effect real change. Wild card. 'I really do not think that he [Hamdan] represents anyone in east Jerusalem beyond himself,' says Meretz city councillor Pepe Alalu. (Credit: Ksenia Svetlova. Ariel Jerozolimski)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

No end in sight to the killing of innocents

New Straits Times (Malaysia)

January 9, 2009 Friday

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Section: Pg. 25; LOCAL

Length: 923 words

Byline: Hardev Kaur

Body

THE bombs are raining down on Gaza, while ground assault moves deep into what is left of the Palestinian territory. Innocent babies, children, women and civilians are being slaughtered. Homes, schools, markets, mosques and hospitals are being flattened with the use of "intelligent bombs". Civilians are being driven out of their homes and there is no place safe enough.

Is this Chapter Two of United States President George W. Bush's "shock and awe", and is this his idea of a "peaceful" Middle East?

It is, to the civilised world, a "terrorist attack" on innocent Palestinians and the impoverished region. The 18-month Israeli blockade of Gaza has brought the region's economy to a halt and produced a humanitarian disaster.

The continuing carnage, along with that of the 33-day Israeli assault on Lebanon in 2006, is certainly not "the birth pangs of a new Middle East", as US State Secretary Condoleezza Rice has said.

It is barbaric and brutal. The US support for the invasion - both the outgoing president and vice-president have "offered unqualified understanding for Israel's assault" - is a green light for an intensification of the slaughter of the Palestinians.

By some accounts, more Palestinian civilians were killed in the first three minutes of the Israeli onslaught into Gaza than the number of Israelis killed by Hamas attacks in the last nine years. Every single life is precious. But the death toll in Gaza is growing by the minute and there is still no end in sight.

Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni said Israel would "change the equation" in the region and that it was not targeting civilians. The reality is something else.

Dr Mads Gilbert, a foreign doctor at the hospital in Gaza, disputed Israeli claims, adding that 25 per cent of those killed had been children. Another report says 50 per cent of the dead were women, and minors. The 40 children killed at the United Nations school were all civilians.

Oved Yehezkel, the Israeli cabinet secretary, said on Sunday that "there is no humanitarian crisis in Gaza".

He must be living on a different planet.

No end in sight to the killing of innocents

According to Maxwell Gaylard, UN humanitarian affairs coordinator, because of the attacks, people could not reach available food. Children were hungry, cold, without electricity and running water, he said, "and above all, they're terrified".

"That, by any measure, is a humanitarian crisis."

With the power lines down, much of Gaza has no electricity. There is a dire shortage of cooking gas.

Hospitals are filled beyond capacity and stretched to breaking point with civilian casualties, while doctors and medical supplies are held up at the border crossings.

The full picture is obscure, as Israel has not only barred foreign journalists from entering Gaza for most of the past two months and every day since the invasion, it also bullies correspondents who cover its crimes against the Palestinians in Gaza.

There has never been a doubt of America's unqualified support for Israel. According to Sami G. Hajjar, a scholar of Middle East politics and a visiting professor at the National Defence University, "Bush, even by comparison with past US presidents has been very, very pro-Israel".

Washington has used its veto powers at the UN more than 40 times in support of Israel, and did it again at the Security Council earlier this week. It blocked a ceasefire deal as "unacceptable" and "unbalanced", effectively giving Israel carte blanche to continue with its brutal killings.

With unqualified support from Washington, Israel is thumbing its nose at the rest of the civilised world.

Said Livni: "This is not a short battle and it is not a single battle, and we have long-range goals."

Might those goals be the decimation of the Palestinian state, taking over the Gaza Strip and all Palestinian territories?

The rest of the world is hopelessly ineffective at stopping this carnage. The impotence of the rest of the world and the UN Security Council echoes that of 2003, when the US unilaterally invaded Iraq on lies, deceit and false pretences.

Where was the special envoy for peace in the Middle East, former British prime minister Tony Blair, an ardent supporter of America's invasion of Iraq?

Blair only flew into Israel nine days after the Gaza Strip bombardment began. According to reports in the British press, Blair had never visited Gaza, despite the fact that more than a third of the 1.5 million Palestinian population live there in abject deprivation.

While Gaza burns and the carnage continues with untold atrocities being committed and whole families being killed, Bush was honouring Blair, his friend and supporter, with the highest US civilian award, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, for his work in improving the lives of his citizens and efforts to promote democracy, human rights and peace abroad.

Really! The Palestinians in Gaza do not see peace and their human rights are being bombed by air, land and sea. They can't go out of their homes, which are in total darkness, and there is no fuel, food or security. Forget about democracy!

It is time for the world, and indeed the Arab world, to pressure the US to see that Israel is stopped. While the rest of the world continues to talk, the Israelis continue to escalate.

"For us, being cautious means being aggressive," one unnamed officer told the Haaretz newspaper.

No end in sight to the killing of innocents

Another Israeli report said the fourth stage of the invasion could last several months; even up to a year. But the Palestinians cannot wait a minute longer. And the rest of the world is being held impotently hostage to naked Israeli aggression.

Load-Date: January 8, 2009

End of Document

US president-elect Barack Obama has continued to remain silent; MIDEAST: Obama Silence 'Ends Hopes From U.S

IPS (Latin America)

January 8, 2009 Thursday

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Byline: Adam Morrow and Khaled Moussa al-Omrani

Body

'Obama's silence shows that he is just as biased towards Israel as (outgoing U.S. President George) Bush,' Ibrahim Mansour, political analyst and managing editor-in-chief of independent daily Al-Dustour told IPS. 'Like Bush, Obama's only role in the region will be to implement Israeli directives.'

On Dec. 27, Israel began a series of devastating air strikes on targets throughout the Gaza Strip. On Saturday (Jan. 3), Israel launched a parallel ground offensive, which is currently meeting stiff resistance by Palestinian resistance fighters in strategic areas throughout the territory.

According to Israeli officials, the campaign -- which has included thousands of air strikes and naval bombardment -- comes in retaliation for rockets fired at Israel by Palestinian resistance factions in the Gaza Strip.

The Palestinian death toll has now reached 590, an estimated 40 percent of whom were **women** and children, while some 2,800 others have been injured. Four Israelis, meanwhile, have been killed by Palestinian rocket fire since the campaign began, while an undetermined number of Israeli soldiers have been killed -- with conflicting reports from Israeli military and Palestinian resistance sources -- since the launch of the ground offensive.

Despite growing international outrage over Israel's massively disproportionate use of force against a largely civilian population, Obama has refrained from making public statements on the issue. Some Obama officials have suggested that the president-elect might not comment on events in Gaza until his official inauguration Jan. 20.

'The president-elect is closely monitoring global events, including the situation in Gaza,' Obama's national security spokeswoman Brooke Anderson said in a statement Dec. 28. 'There is one president at a time, and we intend to respect that.'

But Egyptian commentators say that Obama's reluctance to comment on -- let alone condemn -- Israeli heavy-handedness should come as no surprise.

'The Palestinian cause was never high on Obama's electoral agenda, which was topped by Iraq, Afghanistan and Iran, along with the global financial crisis,' said Mansour. 'Besides, any issue that concerns Israel is decided by Israel, not by the U.S. president.'

Last July, during a visit to Israel, Obama disappointed many Arab observers when he expressed overwhelming support for Israel and its methods of dealing with Palestinian 'terrorism'.

US president-elect Barack Obama has continued to remain silent MIDEAST: Obama Silence 'Ends Hopes From U.S

'I'm here...to reaffirm the special relationship between Israel and the U.S. and my abiding commitment to Israel's security,' Obama told Israeli President Shimon Peres at the time. He went on to tell Israeli officials of his 'unshakeable commitment to Israel's security.'

He also visited the southern Israeli town of Sderot, the occasional target of short-range rockets from the Gaza Strip, where he reaffirmed Israel's 'right to defend itself.' Obama went on to express support for Israel's refusal to negotiate with Hamas, despite the resistance group's victory in democratically held Palestinian legislative elections in 2006.

Obama's overt support for Israel has led many Arab observers to despair of the notion of unbiased arbitration of the conflict by the U.S.

'Like his predecessors in the White House, Obama will never stand against Israel,' Iglal Raafat, political science professor at Cairo University told IPS, echoing a common perception. 'He might express his support for the so-called peace process, but only in so far as it benefits Israel.'

Egyptian observers have been further disappointed by a number of Obama's initial cabinet appointments. Critics point in particular to Hillary Clinton as incoming U.S. secretary of state and Rahm Emanuel as incoming White House chief of staff.

Hillary Clinton made a name for herself as an ardent supporter of Israel during her tenure as New York senator. Last June, Clinton told the American Israeli Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), the leading pro-Israel lobby in the U.S., that the next U.S. president 'must be ready to say to the world that America's position (on Israel) is unchanging, our resolve unyielding and our stance non-negotiable.'

Emanuel's connections to Israel, meanwhile, could not be more direct. A long-time Democratic Party insider, Emanuel is the son of a former member of the Irgun, a militant -- some would say terrorist -- Zionist group that operated in Palestine in the 1930s and 1940s. Along with assassinating Palestinian adversaries, the Irgun also targeted British army personnel and civilians in the lead up to the establishment of Israel in 1948.

'All recent U.S. administrations, be they Democratic or Republican, have shown total support for Israel,' said Mansour. 'This is reflected in their choice of cabinet appointments, be they passport-carrying dual citizens of Israel or American Jews loyal to the Jewish state.'

'When it comes to the Middle East, Israel sets the U.S. political agenda -- whether it be the level of antagonism between Washington and Iran, or the degree of closeness between Washington and its Arab allies,' added Mansour.

Raafat concurred that, in terms of Middle East policy at least, Obama will offer little in the way of real change.

'He might withdraw some troops from Iraq, or show more willingness to negotiate with Syria and Iran, but he won't do anything that isn't seen to be in the interests of the U.S.,' she said. 'And U.S. and Israeli interests appear to be two sides of the same coin.'

Nor is the Muslim Brotherhood, Egypt's largest opposition movement, pinning its hopes on the U.S. president-elect's vaunted promise of change.

'The Muslim Brotherhood believes real change can only emanate from the people, and not from foreign powers,' Hamdi Hassan, prominent Muslim Brotherhood MP told IPS. 'And it can only come when the people are prepared to pay a price for it'

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US president-elect Barack Obama has continued to remain silent MIDEAST: Obama Silence 'Ends Hopes
From U.S

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YOUR LETTERS; Dredging up the past

Newcastle Herald (Australia)

January 3, 2009 Saturday

Late Edition

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Section: NEWS; Letters; Pg. 20

Length: 861 words

Byline: LETTERS

Body

Dredging up the past

I READ with interest the article about the possible dredging of Swansea Channel ("Dredging for Money" Herald 24/12).

It was mentioned that a Lake Macquarie estuary management plan says dredging could have adverse impacts elsewhere in the channel.

I commend the writer for including these comments.

I strongly suggest that the whole question be approached from a well-researched scientific perspective, embracing the long-term wellbeing of the whole channel ecosystem.

It seems to me that the current discussion has a biased focus on navigability for yachts.

I am concerned about the idea of inviting a private contractor to dredge the channel.

This initially looks like a win-win scenario, but I fear it may be too easily abused, without clear accountability, and the environment may be the silent loser.

I urge the Government to retain responsibility for the channel with a broad and long-sighted plan for it.

If funding is not available for dredging, perhaps dredging is not the right answer.

Suzanne Rosenberg

Cooranbong

January 2

Parents will pass or fail schools

I REFER to the article "Excellent start, by virtue of public schools" Herald 1/1).

I am a teacher in the independent system at Bishop Tyrrell Anglican College in Newcastle.

YOUR LETTERS Dredging up the past

I was educated at Cessnock Public School and Cessnock High School, so I can concur with many of the positives the writer highlights about the public education sector.

I can't express how fortunate I was to have such caring and enthusiastic teachers.

But I do take issue with the article. It was claimed that state schools handsomely out-performed the private sector in the HSC.

This is like saying the US, with a population of 300 million, out-performed Australia with only 20 million at the Beijing Olympics.

My point is that it's unnecessary to compare one with the other.

I think today's parents are more aware than ever when it comes to their children's education and ultimately they will make the decision that's right for them.

Paul Lynch

Arcadia Vale

January 1

Peace fading in Middle East

OWEN Keegan (Short takes 1/1) feels sure that nearly everyone is sick of hearing about the bloodshed in the Middle East.

I think that well-meaning peace negotiators have little chance of encouraging either **Hamas** or Hezbollah to accept Israel as a legitimate neighbour, so I'm afraid we are going to hear a lot more about violence in that region for some time.

Support for Israel by Western nations has probably been the catalyst for some of the senseless international terrorism which has wreaked havoc in a number of countries in recent years.

I reckon I have heard just about every angle on the Newcastle rail line and the proposed Tillegra Dam but I think we will be reading about hostilities in the Middle East long after those matters have been resolved.

David Stuart

Merewether

January 1

More questions to inspire republic

THE ALP policy to have a two-stage plebiscite about a republic invites unnecessary failure in my view. Greens leader Senator Bob Brown has just launched a draft bill to generate the first plebiscite, asking just one question: "Are you in favour of Australia becoming a Republic?"

Chances are that, as research demonstrates, only 50 per cent would say yes.

Why not ask two or three questions to gauge what the public wants, then base a referendum on that?

To Senator Brown's question voters will naturally wonder what kind of republic is meant.

If a president was to be elected directly by the people, I think support for a republic would shoot up to 80 per cent.

YOUR LETTERS Dredging up the past

Other questions could be if we want a directly or indirectly elected president, and if we want an executive-type president or a president with only symbolic powers.

Reportedly, it was the Queen herself who asked at the time of the 2006 Commonwealth Games what was taking Australia so long to get on with it.

A very progressive lady.

Klaas Woldring

Pearl Beach

January 1

Knight coach to save cricket

IT was interesting to hear Ricky Ponting's comments after his team's loss in Melbourne about how the young blokes need to step up a bit.

In the game I saw it looked like the senior players were the ones who needed to step up a lot.

In my opinion there seems to be a policy of jobs for the boys, or should I say jobs for the pensioners.

Put Brian Smith in charge to remove the dead wood.

Grahame Perkins

Cooks Hill

December 31

Playing for the love of it

I WAS in Perth to watch the W-League Jets last weeked, a game that has put them into the inaugural semi-final.

Past euphoria with the Knights and Jets men in the finals will hopefully be duplicated for this talented but modest group of champions.

Unlike most other elite players, these women play for the love of the game and the city.

There are no big pay packets here.

The likes of Gill, Peters, Smith, Frosteval, Neilson and Salisbury, all national team players, are playing for free, unheard of by others of the same calibre in any sport.

The Hunter should get behind this great team.

Sharon Cashen

Adamstown

January 2

Letter of the week

This week's double pass to a Jets game, courtesy of The Herald, goes to George Porter, of Tighes Hill, for his Short take on the proposal for a "Newcastle card". The tickets are in the mail.

Graphic

ONE PHOTO:

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**2008 A YEAR TO REMEMBER; CONTINUING his latest review of the year,
DAN O'NEILL looks at what was making the headlines in March.**

South Wales Echo

December 26, 2008 Friday

First Edition

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 18

Length: 854 words

Byline: DAN O'NEILL

Body

MARCH

LOCAL

The Echo headline "HYPOCRITES" sums it up when Assembly members grab an 8.3 per cent rise giving them more than pounds 50,000 a year while public servants get a mere 2%.

But even more scathing is the reaction of Dr Barry Davies, Archbishop of Wales, to the death of cancer patient Ama Sumani. "Her death is on the conscience of this nation." She had been returned to Ghana while undergoing treatment for cancer at the University Hospital of Wales because her student visa had run out.

They were best friends, on a shopping trip in the car Rhiannon Davies had for her 18th birthday. And Rhiannon and 17-year-old Jade Emmanuel died together when they crashed in heavy rain on the Heads of the Valley Road near Hirwaun. Another crash takes the life of 19-year-old Stacey Vanstone of Fairwater. Her car spins off the road in St Fagan's.

As this month's "storm of the century" batters South Wales, hundreds are evacuated from a Newport caravan site, racing at Cheltenham is cancelled with parts of the country snowbound over Easter. Meanwhile we wonder why Luke Pittard, 25-year old pounds 1.3m lottery winner goes back to work at McDonald's in Pontprennau. Why? "Because I really missed it. There's more to life than money."

NATIONAL

We had feared for her safety. Wondered whether the massive search by 300 police and sniffer dogs would end in a tragic discovery. Instead, after 24 days, nine-year-old Shannon Matthews is found in a relative's Dewsbury home, imprisoned by her mother Karen and Terence Donovan, her partner's uncle in a plot aimed at collecting pounds 50,000 reward money.

Meanwhile Kate and Jerry McCann are paid pounds 550,000 by Express Newspapers for "false and defamatory articles" concerning their (genuinely) missing daughter, Maddie.

2008 A YEAR TO REMEMBER CONTINUING his latest review of the year, DAN O'NEILL looks at what was making the headlines in March.

Another mother in the news, Fiona MacKeown, says she's not to blame for the murder of her daughter Scarlet in Goa, even though she left the 15-year-old alone for days with her 25-year-old tour guide.

Prince Harry returns to Britain after 10 weeks spent secretly in Iraq. The news media agreed a total blackout in return for pictures and stories. There's less fuss over the return of helicopter pilot Michelle Godman, 31, the first woman DFC-winner. This in the week that RAF personnel based in Peterborough are banned from wearing uniform in the town because of abuse from local yobs.

It's a minimum 30 years for 32-year-old nurse Colin Norris, killer of four elderly women patients in two Leeds hospitals. And 38 years for Pierre Williams, 33, for hammer murder of Beverley Samuels and children Fred, 13 and Kesha, 18 last July in their Manchester home.

INTERNATIONAL

Israeli planes kill 120 in response to Hamas rockets and an avenging Palestinian gunman kills eight students and wounds nine in Jerusalem before being shot. Hundreds die in Iraqi suicide bombings and a grim milestone - tombstone? - is reached, the 3,000th US serviceman dies. And 300 die when insurgents battle Iraqi police and army.

More than 100 protesters against Chinese occupation are killed in Tibet, bringing calls for a boycott of the Beijing Olympics.

And as America agonises over its next president, Russia does it the easy way - President Putin appoints Dmitri Medvedev his successor, electing himself Prime Minister.

SHOWBIZ

Little Brit star David Walliams adds to cross-Channel honours by joining Olympic rower James Cracknell in a swim across the 12-mile Straits of Gibraltar. For charity. And Heather cops pounds 24.5m divorce settlement from Macca before pouring a jug of water over the McCartney brief. Coincidentally, Neil Aspinall, "the Fifth Beatle," dies aged 66.

And X Factor winner Leona Lewis is the first Brit to top the US charts since Kim Wilde in 1987.

SPORT

Just six weeks after World Cup despair it's Grand Slam glory for Wales and a 41-try test record for wonder wing Shane Williams. Headlines, too, for Danny Cipriani, dropped by England two days before the Scotland game after being seen leaving a nightclub. "I was only dropping off tickets."

Meanwhile, Enzo Maccarinelli's dream of cruiserweight title unification is ended by a David Hayes' knockout. And at Cheltenham Denman beats stablemate Kaujo Star in the greatest Gold Cup since Arkle and Mill House.

And 13-year-old Tom Daley becomes the youngest ever European diving champ from the 10 metre platform.

Drug cheat Dwayne Chambers wins silver at the world indoor championships then challenges for a place in the Olympics. Football's lack of respect for referees is highlighted when Ashley Cole turns his back on the ref when cautioned. And as Beckham wins his 100th (controversial) cap against France our cyclists win nine golds at the world track championships.

DEATHS

A busy month for the Grim Reaper: actors Paul Scofield, 86 and Richard Widmark, 93, legendary tenor Giuseppe di Stefano, 86, Welsh composer Alun Hoddinott, 78, Sci-fi giant Arthur C Clarke, 90, Sheffield soccer icon Derek Dooley, 78 and RL star Eric Ashton, 73, former ITV star Carol Barnes, 63, former Tory minister Lord Pym, 86, film director Anthony Minghella, 54 and John (Cap'n Birdseye) Hower, 84.

2008 A YEAR TO REMEMBER CONTINUING his latest review of the year, DAN O'NEILL looks at what was making the headlines in March.

Graphic

PROUD DAY: The Welsh squad celebrate their Grand Slam win at the Millennium Stadium

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**Comment & Debate: Wanted: an opposition: If they are to be elected,
Cameron's cohorts must ditch the silly Bullingdon showboating and foolery**

The Guardian - Final Edition

November 25, 2008 Tuesday

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the **guardian**

Section: GUARDIAN COMMENT AND DEBATE PAGES ; Pg. 28

Length: 859 words

Byline: Geoffrey Wheatcroft

Body

In 1906 AJ Balfour, until recently Tory prime minister, whose party had just been crushed in the Liberal landslide, was speaking in the Commons as leader of the opposition. He was engaged in the hair-splitting dialectics he relished when he was silenced by Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, the new prime minister, with the brutal words: "Enough of this foolery."

His words electrified the House, and sounded a clarion call. As the languid Etonian, a gifted patrician amateur, was put in his place by a formidable professional speaking on behalf of the people, there was a ring of class war. It was said that, especially for the latest intake of radical and plebeian MPs, that simple phrase expressed "the new sense that politics was a task for men and not a sport for gentlemen".

Over recent months, the fortunes of Balfour's latest successor have risen and fallen. From a poll lead of up to 20 points, David Cameron and the Tories have fallen back and are barely ahead.

It may well be absurd that Gordon Brown should have been transformed from a walking political disaster his colleagues couldn't wait to be rid of to the saviour of civilisation, just because he acted with uncharacteristic decisiveness in a financial crisis partly of his own making as chancellor, but then politics, like life, isn't fair.

And yet the Tories have for some time past been a problem in themselves. Man for man (I'm afraid that's the phrase, given how few **women** there are), the opposition frontbench is better in terms of personal and intellectual ability than the Treasury bench. One reason Brown astonished everyone by bringing back Peter Mandelson was that, whatever else, Mandelson is genuinely clever and able, and most members of the present cabinet are conspicuously neither.

Despite that, it's hard to escape a sense there is something wrong with the Conservatives. These Tory boys may be clever, but they are too often silly. There's an indefinable feeling of a smirk about to break through; a frivolous flavour of undergraduate politics hangs over them. Take three notable figures, all formerly of the Bullingdon Club.

Even Cameron's fortunes haven't fallen as fast as George Osborne's. Although he might well have had a good case to make yesterday against the government's emergency measures, he is a visibly weakened figure in parliament.

Comment & Debate: Wanted: an opposition: If they are to be elected, Cameron's cohorts must ditch the silly Bullingdon showboating and foolery

There is more than one explanation for this, but they include the grave self-inflicted wound labelled "Corfu". When Osborne whispered to the press that Mandelson had been bad-mouthing Brown, it was not only discreditable, it was incredibly stupid. It evidently didn't occur to Osborne that he might be found out, and questions would then be asked about what he himself was doing in such company. Just how little Brown minded shortly became apparent. But apart from the fact that "Peter pours poison" might not qualify as hot news, if Osborne really thought he could win a round of spin'n'smear against the dark master he's not fit to be out on his own.

Although Boris Johnson has crossed the Thames to County Hall, he still ranks in the Tory hierarchy. He has made an impressive start as mayor of London, and might yet become a national hero by slashing the 2012 Olympics in half. But he has his own large silly streak, not just in his eventful personal life, and I am haunted by an essay he once wrote in the Spectator. He told us that he had been persuaded of the necessity of Zionism by re-reading Virgil, and realising how the Virgilian concept of Destiny explained the Jews' voyaging to the Land of Israel as Aeneas had voyaged to Rome. Perusing this, I suddenly envisaged a scene in a squalid Gaza camp, where the straw-haired politico strides up to some desperate Hamas recruit and thrusts a copy of the Aeneid into his hands with the words: "I say, old bean, just read this and you'll see why you ought to be here." For that matter, although they need most of the help they can get, even some Israelis might have thought of Johnson's effusion, "With friends like these . . ."

That leaves the leader himself. Cameron made an impressive start, too, but he too often strikes attitudes that make him seem politically tone-deaf. Brown didn't distinguish himself in last week's hideous parliamentary exchanges about Baby P, but Cameron was worse still, appearing to exploit the tragedy for partisan ends.

There was an even greater folly in August. Cameron rushed to Tbilisi to embrace the dubious regime and, in perhaps the silliest words any politician has uttered all year, insisted Georgian membership of Nato should be accelerated. Even before we learned more about Georgian provocation, it was obvious there were two sides to the story. And if Cameron meant what he said, he intended that the overstretched British army should be sent to fight for South Ossetia. Does he think about these things at all before he plays to the gallery?

We need an effective opposition, and a plausible alternative government. The Tories may still win the next election, but showboating, attitudinising and generally treating politics as a game for gentlemen in blue tailcoats is not the way to do it. Enough of this foolery.

wheaty@compuserve.com

Load-Date: November 25, 2008

Americans hold our futures in their hands

The Daily Star (Lebanon)

October 28, 2008 Tuesday

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THE DAILY STAR

LEBANON

Length: 933 words

Byline: Khalaf Ahmed Al Habtoor

Body

When people in this part of the world aren't focusing on the financial crisis, the buzz revolves around who will be the next president of the United States. "Do you prefer a John McCain or Barack Obama White House?" they ask. Naturally, we all have our personal preferences, but at a time when the world is in turmoil.

When people in this part of the world aren't focusing on the financial crisis, the buzz revolves around who will be the next president of the United States. "Do you prefer a John McCain or Barack Obama White House?" they ask. Naturally, we all have our personal preferences, but at a time when the world is in turmoil, mine is based less on personalities and more on policies. Whoever can lead the world out of recession and uncertainty gets my vote. You only have to turn on the television to realize that ordinary people from Birmingham to Beijing and everywhere in between are waking up to the fact that there exists a very real emergency affecting homes, jobs, savings, investments and businesses. So I would respectfully ask my American friends to choose the man with the best plan when they enter the ballot booth on November 4. Certainly, the candidate's basic character is a factor, but voters would do well to realize this isn't "American Idol." The person they decide upon this time literally has the power to make or break the futures of not only Americans but billions of their fellow global citizens. I would, therefore, ask Americans to vote with their heads rather than emotion. Like most residents of this neighborhood, nothing would delight me more than to greet a new US leader without an ingrained pro-Israel bias; one who would work toward a two-state solution or, even better, a comprehensive peace on the lines of the 2002 Saudi initiative. But judging from the past, this is about as likely as Emirates Holidays offering package tours around the galaxy. We know from bitter experience that US presidents, whatever their personal inclinations, are hidebound by the fundamentals of Washington's foreign policy, aspects of which are immutable. They all have to operate within certain parameters devised to serve America's own interests and are all constrained to some degree by Congressional sentiment, lobbyists and polls. Ironically, some emerge as good friends to the Arab world once they are out of office. Within those confines some are worse than others. For instance, I've struggled to come up with something positive to say about George W. Bush's eight years in office. Just ask yourself this question. "Is the world today a better place than it was when Bush took over the presidential reins from President Bill Clinton?" I've also concluded that this administration's foreign policy has been responsible for massive collateral damage and devastating unforeseen consequences. The list of failures is long. For example, the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan did not fulfill its stated aims. Neither Osama bin Laden nor the leader of the Taliban, Mullah Mohammad Omar, have ever been caught. Furthermore, a growing number of commanders and politicians have concluded that the war is not winnable. The

Americans hold our futures in their hands

White House would have us believe the 2003 invasion of Iraq has ultimately been a success. We are supposed to forget the pretexts under which the war was waged and instead they would like us to congratulate them on the outcome of the surge. I wish my Iraqi brothers and sisters well. But with so many dead and so many deep divisions, history will be a harsh judge. From the US perspective, the toppling of Saddam Hussein also had an unforeseen consequence - a more powerful Iran. What about Palestine? How much progress has been achieved toward the two-state solution that Bush promised to bring about in 2003 when he announced his "road map?" None. Worse, due to Bush's fervency to forcibly spread democracy and his insistence that the Palestinians hold a monitored ballot, Hamas was handed a legitimate entree into the leadership. Then, after congratulating the Palestinian people on a free and fair election, the US and Europe promptly shunned their choice, causing a power struggle between factions and leaving the peace process without a single Palestinian address. When it comes to Lebanon, the Bush White House does get one gold star. It did initiate a UN Security Council resolution calling for the 2005 Syrian pullout. But, if we fast forward to the Israel-Lebanon conflagration during the summer of 2006, we see that Bush abandoned his Lebanese friends in government by refusing to call for a cease-fire even as the bodies of Lebanese women and children were piling high. As an unforeseen consequence, Hizbullah has been boosted. In all fairness, we cannot heap blame for all the ills of the world onto the lap of one man, but that said, it's an inescapable truth that under Bush's watch a surveillance society was born, civil liberties eroded, human rights conventions disregarded and torture sanctioned. The last eight years have also witnessed a proliferation in nuclear weapons and a shift in the global balance of power. A resurgent Russia and the economic and military powerhouses that both China and India have become mean the neoconservative dream of worldwide US hegemony is now officially dead. We can only hope that whoever is inaugurated as the 44th president of the United States will have the courage to do everything he can to put this planet we all share to right. American people, be wise in your decision. We're all in your hands. Khalaf Al Habtoor is chairman of the Habtoor Group. He wrote this commentary for THE DAILY STAR.

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FORGET NUCLEAR POWER, LET'S GO SOLAR

St. Petersburg Times (Florida)

January 10, 2009 Saturday

4 State / Suncoast Edition

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Section: NATIONAL; Pg. 13A; YOUR LETTERS

Length: 2062 words

Body

Meeting Florida's energy needs

There is debate about whether to postpone raising the rates of Progress Energy customers. After reading Asjylyn Loder's article Gainesville utility places premium on solar power (Jan. 2), it appears that there are alternatives to building a new nuclear plant. Nuclear is an overpriced, outmoded option to produce electricity. Yes, the carbon emissions, the primary cause of global warming, are minimized, but the costs of construction and disposal of nuclear waste are too great.

Ed Regan, an official with Gainesville Regional Utilities, traveled to Germany to see why that country is today a leader in solar power. He is instrumental in putting in place in Gainesville the same kind of system Germany uses. Through the use of solar feed-in tariffs, businesses and residential customers are actually paid a premium for the excess electricity they produce and sell back to the utility. In this way, the high price of solar for these early adopters is mitigated and banks are more willing to finance the investment.

The cost to do this is spread among all customers: \$2.50 per customer per month in Germany, and about 40 cents per customer per month in Gainesville. That sure beats the surcharge of \$11.42 per 1,000 kilowatt hours Progress Energy is going to be charging in advance for building a nuclear plant.

Solar power would provide jobs and eliminate the conundrum of what to do with the nuclear waste. Surely Tampa Electric and Progress Energy, with the oversight of the Public Service Commission, could study this issue and move toward implementing what Gainesville has started. Los Angeles followed Gainesville's lead and adopted feed-in tariffs. Public service commissioner Nathan Skop recently proposed a similar measure. It's time to take the new nuclear plant off the table and study the economic viability of solar power with feed-in tariffs.

Linda Lowe, Brandon

Ignorant critics limit energy supplyJan. 7, letter

Consider thermal pollution

The letter writer has a point. America did once lead the world in nuclear power due to its awesome engineering prowess. However, the writer never mentioned the huge problem of thermal pollution associated with all nuclear and fossil fuel electric power generation. Some 20 percent of all global warming is attributable to waste heat from thermal electric power generation and other waste heat sources such as the internal combustion engine.

FORGET NUCLEAR POWER, LET'S GO SOLAR

For every BTU that gets turned into a kilowatt hour of electricity two BTUs must be dispersed into a body of water or into the atmosphere. Why further heat up our bays and rivers with waste heat? Is it our goal to fry the planet?

America needs to put what is left of our hollowed-out engineering might into photovoltaic electric power generation. There is no thermal pollution in generating electric power from photovoltaic arrays coupled with phase change storage media of molten salts or compressed air for nighttime electricity production. Photovoltaic electric power generation is feasible and can be made very economical (See Scientific American, Jan. 2008).

Lastly the writer doesn't mention that the decommissioning cost of a nuclear power plant is maybe two to three times the initial installed cost. Why worry, just let our great-grandkids pay. It's the ultimate free-market answer to all our power problems: kick the problem down the road.

Ken Fiallos P.E., Seffner

Costs add up

Thanks to the Florida Legislature, Progress Energy is now charging us 25 percent more to cover increased fuel costs and to build a nuclear plant, which won't be finished for years.

Unfortunately the gross receipts tax, municipal franchise fee and municipal utility tax are based on percentages of the total bill, therefore we need to add an even greater percentage to our bills for taxes and fees.

Burt Kauffman, St. Petersburg

Balancing the state budget

Buy time with a temporary increase in the sales tax

Florida legislators are trying to find a way to balance the state budget before the end of this month's special session. Though they are trying to avoid the introduction of a general increase in taxes, they should consider a bill that imposes a temporary quarter of a cent raise in sales taxes, which would sunset at the end of a year. This will not only help balance our state budget, but also give state officials time to critically analyze our state expenditures and make thoughtful, well-planned adjustments.

By next year the newly elected state and federal agents will have had an opportunity to negotiate certain financial aid packages for programs such as Medicaid. Decisions to cut certain services or borrow from state trust funds pre-empt a possible increase in federal funds to the state.

My proposal will buy legislators more time, not unlimited time. The quarter of a cent raise in sales tax imposes a small burden without targeting one specific group or program. Another benefit is that a lot of the funds needed to balance the budget will come from out-of-state pockets.

Under most circumstances I would be opposed to an increase in sales tax, even a minimal increase on a temporary basis, but these are not ordinary times, and considering the alternatives, I believe this is our best option.

Michael Steinberg, Tampa

Budget plans lack vision, add pain - Jan. 9, editorial

Boost tax on alcohol

Again I am subjected to one of your shortsighted ways to raise revenue to cover state shortfalls. This shortfall problem has been experienced many times over the past decade and one of suggested methods of raising revenue has always been to raise cigarette taxes.

FORGET NUCLEAR POWER, LET'S GO SOLAR

Not only is this a tax on a minority of our population, but these individuals also are being taxed with little consideration for the other taxes they are paying. A broader-based tax and one that would fill state coffers immediately would be an increased tax on alcohol.

Alcohol consumption and/or abuse causes far more social problems than those caused by smokers. The time has come to spread any increase in taxes across a wider population of consumers, namely alcohol consumers, than again targeting an already declining segment of the population - smokers.

Douglas Robb, Tampa

Internet sales tax

Tax would be a fatal blow

Many people feel that the lack of sales tax on the Internet is unfair. However, what is being proposed is even more unfair, and would kill Internet shopping. Brick-and-mortar stores charge sales tax based on where they are located. They are responsible for at most one state sales tax, one county sales tax, one city sales tax. Any changes to these taxes are communicated well ahead of time to those who collect these taxes.

What is generally proposed for Internet sales, however, is collecting sales tax based, not on where the Internet store is based, but on where each customer lives. This means that the Internet store is responsible for 50-plus state and territory taxes, hundreds of county taxes, and thousands of city taxes. And this does not even account for those customers who live in other countries. Many of these taxing authorities also have different rates for different items at different times of the year.

If we are indeed pushing for a tax on Internet sales, then let's be fair. Use the same policy for all stores, regardless of how they contact their customers. If I were to buy from a small store in Maine via the mail, I would not be expected to add sales tax to the purchase. So why should I be expected to do this for Internet purchases?

Lee Creel, Tampa

Look to gambling

Last Sunday's St. Petersburg Times presented an interesting juxtaposition. There was a massive ad touting the new Florida Powerball - which would be added to the other legalized games of chance the state offers. There was also the front-page article on how we have a massive tax revenue shortfall in Florida with no idea how we're going to bridge that gap (Florida, this is going to hurt).

The answer seems very simple: Legalize gambling (slots, cards, craps) and open state-sanctioned casinos. Gambling is gambling!

In the past, the Times has come out against legalized gambling. The nannyist arguments your paper has served up about gambling preying on those who can least afford it or increasing crime or compulsive gambling don't hold water if you look at how things are run at the Hard Rock casino or other Indian sponsored casinos. It's funny how Nevada doesn't have a tax revenue problem every year but we do. They are a tourist/vacation destination and so is Florida. It's a good match to encourage increased tourism.

Its time for the Times and our Legislature to support legalizing the other forms of gambling (slots, cards, craps) in a controlled state-run environment and use the proceeds to fund the state tax coffers.

David Gliewe, Clearwater

Rethink role in Mideast

FORGET NUCLEAR POWER, LET'S GO SOLAR

The recent resumption of hostilities between Israel and the Arabs (this time in the form of Hamas) should be an invitation to Americans to reconsider our long-range commitments to the Middle East. Since Israel's birth in 1947 the country has constantly been in conflict with one or more of the surrounding Arab countries and territories.

At least since the 1960s, various American administrations have tried to negotiate peace between Israel and the Arabs. Over the past several decades, we have given subsidies of some \$3-billion per year to both Israel and Egypt, and undisclosed millions to the Fatah party of the Palestinian Authority. These efforts have been fruitless because the belligerents refuse to embrace the compromises necessary to bring about a lasting peace.

The outline of such a peace is clear to anyone familiar with the conflict. Arabs must recognize that their ancestral lands seized by Israel after its war of independence are lost forever. And Arab states must be willing to guarantee Israel's right to exist, and suppress violent factions within their countries that seek to overthrow the Jewish state. On Israel's side, it must withdraw from all the territories taken in the 1967 war, including the entire West Bank and the Golan Heights, and agree to the redivision of Jerusalem, with Palestinians controlling the East, Israel controlling the West, and the holy places under international control. Until both sides agree to these significant compromises, there will be no peace.

What should be America's role? It is in our national interest to withdraw completely, taking our subsidies, our weapons systems, and our diplomats with us. If Israel and the Arabs, now facing one another without American mediation, signal a willingness to negotiate these painful compromises, we could offer our good offices, but not until we can see the distinct possibility of a lasting settlement.

Terry Parssinen, Ph.D, professor of history, University of Tampa

Palestinian silence

What I haven't seen in the opinion pages and letters to the editor regarding Israel and Gaza over the last few years since Israel pulled out of Gaza is any Palestinian outrage over the rockets fired indiscriminately into Israel directly at civilian areas. I haven't seen Palestinian supporters who are outraged that U.N. buildings are being used as weapons storage and factories, deliberately endangering women and children.

No one is outraged that Palestinian leaders and Hamas are openly calling for "human shields" to surround and protect those who are the leaders, the rocket launchers, or to surround the schools and hospitals where they run to hide after firing rockets.

These appeals are shown in Arabic on al-Aqsa TV, on ANB TV-Lebanon and on various Palestinian Web sites. That's how the civilians know where to run to. These are war crimes. Those who stand silently by are just as guilty of war crimes as those who actually commit them. Israel, on the other hand, warns civilians of impending attack.

Susan Segal, Palm Harbor

Russia stars at nights - Jan. 1

An exploited animal

I cannot express how dismayed I am by the review of Russian Accents restaurant and the exploitation of a bear for profit. The irony is that Russia has made enormous strides in banning the private ownership of these animals as a result of pressure from world wildlife advocates; and I think that community would be horrified to learn of its presence here.

By publishing your review, albeit inadvertently, you condone such a thing. I would never patronize such an establishment, and wish you had encouraged your readers to do the same.

Deborah Albert, Tampa

Graphic

PHOTO, ASJYLYN LODER, Times (2): Progress Energy Instead of making consumers pay in advance for a nuclear plant in Levy County, shown in a drawing above, the state should encourage solar power through feed-in tariffs, as is being done in Gainesville, where panels are being installed at a storage facility, below.

Load-Date: January 12, 2009

End of Document

Turkey feels Palestine's pain

The Daily Star (Lebanon)

January 13, 2009 Tuesday

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THE DAILY STAR

LEBANON

Length: 969 words

Byline: Khalaf Ahmed Al Habtoor

Body

Few heroes have emerged on the diplomatic level during the Gaza conflict and, sadly, the Arab world hasn't managed to produce even one. An Arab League emergency summit of foreign ministers predictably came up with nothing. Displays of genuine emotion by representatives of Arab governments have been rarities.

Few heroes have emerged on the diplomatic level during the Gaza conflict and, sadly, the Arab world hasn't managed to produce even one. An Arab League emergency summit of foreign ministers predictably came up with nothing. Displays of genuine emotion by representatives of Arab governments have been rarities.

Turkey's position on Gaza has been clear and crisp, in sharp contrast to our own regretful diplomatic paralysis. Since the start of Israel's aggression, Turkey's Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan has shuttled between Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan and Syria in a proactive attempt to achieve a ceasefire. He has also ended Turkey's mediation in Israel-Syrian peace talks.

Most of all, I salute Mr. Erdogan for his unequivocal message to Israel, his country's long-time ally. Speaking on January 4, he said, "God will sooner or later punish those who transgress the rights of innocents."

Accusing Israel of creating a humanitarian tragedy by the use of excessive force, he said, "Israel will be cursed for the children and the defenseless women who died under bombs. Israel will be cursed for tears shed by mothers."

When Israel characterized his verbal attack as overly emotional, Erdogan responded with "No, I am not emotional. I am acting on the basis of knowledge and experience. I advise Defense Minister Ehud Barak and Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni to leave aside upcoming elections in February. History will accuse them of putting a stain on humanity. What reason can justify such savagery?"

"It is unforgivable that people who suffered profound pains in their history could do such a thing," he railed. "In fact, they should have displayed more respect for human life than anyone else in the world."

I suspect these courageous words have reverberated in the minds and hearts of all Arabs as they did within my own. And I applaud his references to Turkey's Ottoman past, when he said we are the grandsons of Turkey's Ottoman Empire, who gave refuge and safe heaven for the prosecuted Jew from France, Spain, Italy and Hungary

Turkey feels Palestine 's pain

who sought and found that safe refuge. The difference is the residents of Gaza have nowhere to flee and no nation is offering even a temporary safe harbor.

Unlike Turkey, at the start of Israel's campaign some Arab governments contented themselves with blaming Hamas for Israel's bombs. Instead of standing together against a country that occupies, oppresses and murders our fellow Arabs, our leaders chose either to discredit the victims or virtually ignore them.

It's as though they haven't heard the heart-wrenching wails of the man who lost his mother, father, wife and all his children during one attack or seen the footage of another surrounded by the shrouded bodies of his three young sons and daughter.

It's as though they've no knowledge of the targeted ambulances and the bombed UN school that had been turned into a shelter for civilians fleeing their homes. When ambulances are clearly marked and, according to the UN, Israel had been provided with the school's GPS coordinates, these attacks do constitute war crimes.

Mads Gilbert, one of two Norwegian doctors who volunteered to help the people of Gaza and is now working with dedicated Palestinian colleagues wrote this SMS message: "We are wading in death, blood and amputees; many children, a pregnant woman. I have never experienced anything so terrible ... Do something! Do more!"

Confronted with video evidence of understaffed and unequipped hospitals overflowing with wounded, dead and dying no efforts must be spared to provide humanitarian relief.

Now that the carnage is such that Israel's propaganda machine can no longer provide effective cover, the diplomatic process has gone into overdrive. Israel has been embarrassed into providing a three-hour daily humanitarian corridor.

By the time you read this column a ceasefire that involves international monitoring may be in place. This is my hope but, in truth, the United Nations has rarely taken any binding Chapter 7 decision to protect Palestinians and, therefore, it is likely that any resolution passed will be heavily weighted in Israel's favor. Such resolution should not offer Israel an undeserved victory to compensate for its military failures during the 2006 Israel-Lebanon conflict or to bolster Israel's ruling Kadima Party in upcoming elections.

I heartily agree with the sentiments of the Saudi foreign minister, Prince Saud Al-Faisal, who said the council's "deafening silence" placed a large question mark over its credibility as well as "the entire system of international security."

Therefore, if the UN continues with its failure to live up to the principles enshrined in its charter, the Arab League needs to be entirely independent and fortified to look after its members' interests through dialogue and negotiation. It should also be enabled to use the ultimate option of military force as a last resort. If we can no longer rely on the impartiality of the UN then we must look to a strengthened Arab League as our regional parent.

There are no winners here. Israel's ugly mask has been lifted and the only beneficiaries are extremists on both sides as well as anti-Semites around the world. In the final analysis violence can never resolve disputes and only breeds more hatred. As history has shown time and time again, dialogue is the only way forward if a just and lasting peace in our region is ever to prevail. When will we ever learn?

Khalaf Al-Habtoor is chairman of the Habtoor Group. He wrote this article for THE DAILY STAR.

Load-Date: January 21, 2009

Beirutis put little faith in protest as means of ending Israeli war on Gaza

The Daily Star (Lebanon)
January 14, 2009 Wednesday

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THE DAILY STAR

LEBANON

Length: 952 words

Byline: Florence Thireau

Body

Protests continued in Lebanon and around the world this week, calling for an end to Israeli hostilities and global action to stop what the UN Human Rights Council on Monday called "grave" abuses committed over the past 18 days of violence in the Gaza Strip. As Israeli tanks moved closer toward the center of Gaza City Monday.

BEIRUT: Protests continued in Lebanon and around the world this week, calling for an end to Israeli hostilities and global action to stop what the UN Human Rights Council on Monday called "grave" abuses committed over the past 18 days of violence in the Gaza Strip.

As Israeli tanks moved closer toward the center of Gaza City Monday, and the death toll rose beyond 900 lives, many of them women and children, The Daily Star went to the Beirut neighborhoods of Achrafieh and Mazraa for a local perspective on whether protesting against the Israeli war in Gaza would be effective in ending hostilities.

Respondents generally expressed pessimism, believing that protesting against the current war, both locally and abroad, would have little effect on international action to halt the violence that has cost so many Palestinian lives over the past few weeks.

Many said that their political apathy, and their lack of faith in the political parties that are often demonstrating, namely Hizbullah, kept them from participating in protests. This attitude was manifested on the streets of both Achrafieh and Mazraa.

In Achrafieh, Mariet said: "I don't think that protesting will accomplish anything. I'm not political, so no I would not protest."

Nearby, George echoed her sentiments: "No, it's not going to change anything. I'm not political, so I won't protest myself, but even if I was, protesting is not going to change the situation in Gaza."

Colette, 40, said: "I reject Israel's policy and I blame the Lebanese government for its lack of action regarding Gaza. I regret that only Hizbullah and Palestinians are protesting in Lebanon. I don't support Hizbullah so I cannot protest with them."

Beirutis put little faith in protest as means of ending Israeli war on Gaza

Two younger women nearby, Samia and Nour, echoed her sentiments, that they wished to protest, but did not wish to protest or stand with Hizbullah. But they said they were, "shocked by the deaths of children and women."

Down the street, Amir, an Armenian living in Beirut, expressed a similar lack of faith in any progressive action stemming from protesting, but went further in his analysis: "Look, it's a genocide, and I'm Armenian. I know all about that. But it doesn't matter what [protesters] say ... How many times have there been protests? Protests of 1.5 million people even! Is there any change? There has been 25 years of war, at least. The problem is political and when we're talking about politicians, what will protests accomplish?"

Still, Amir believed that "if someone has a view to resist, and he's defending his home, let him resist, and let him protest." Regarding global protests, he said: "Maybe it will have an effect. I don't know."

Claude, 55, said: "I regret that Christian parties are not organizing protests in Achrafieh. For some it might seem like Gaza's situation is a Muslim problem, but all Lebanese people should be concerned. I recognize Israel's right to defend itself as well as the Palestinians.' I think Lebanon's government is the best among Arab governments ... It gave \$1 million to the Gazans and I am expecting good results from it. Giving money is [better] than protesting in the streets."

Nadine took a more radical tone. "I'm very shocked by this systematic targeting of innocents such as children and women in Gaza, but I can't help thinking that it is not Lebanon's problem. Lebanon should try to focus on its own problems. Our best solution is isolation. We welcomed Palestinians in our country 60 years ago and it created a lot of problems. Media are always defending the weakest, but I don't think that the weakest are always innocent. All these protests are useless. We should focus on the next legislative elections. Besides, in a democracy, the only legitimate way of protesting is to vote."

In Mazraa, Osama told The Daily Star that "protesting isn't going to change anything, and ultimately it won't bring anything good for the Palestinians."

However, further down the street, Mohammad was more vocal: "Israel is doing something terrible. They're using phosphorous bombs, committing war crimes, and they should stop it. There is no reason for this war, and if there is a reason, they should give us one. There are poor people in Gaza, women and children. How can they say this war is with Hamas? However, I don't believe that the Palestinians who are here and in [the Occupied West Bank] are doing enough." Asked about protesting specifically, he replied, "I don't know. It gives an opinion, and that's important. I will protest if I feel I have to."

At a jewelry shop in Mazraa, Samer said: "Locally, I don't think protests will accomplish anything. But globally, I do think so. Perhaps it will change the stance of people in Europe or America to see protesters standing with the Palestinians. But in the Arab world, no. It will not change anything. So no, I would not protest myself here in Lebanon. It is meaningless here."

Ahmad, a 21-year-old journalist in Mazraa, was more positive. He told The Daily Star that "Lebanon is the only Middle Eastern country where you can protest without fearing to be arrested, unlike Egypt or Syria. We all know that protesting in Beirut can create a 'domino effect' in the Arab world."

But unfortunately, Amhad's sentiments were not shared by most Beirutis, who felt that no amount of vocal protests would change or solve the Gazans' current predicament as they face violent siege at the hands of the Israeli military.

Load-Date: January 21, 2009

Zuma

Cape Argus (South Africa)
January 14, 2009 Wednesday
e1 Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 12

Length: 927 words

Body

I After Monday's Zuma trial outcome, the ANC issues a statement that "JZ is still our man". Therein lies the problem, though, in that no one in South Africa wants Zuma except 4 000 delegates in Polokwane.

I The sad part about the Zuma debacle is that it is more a reflection on the inefficiency, incompetence and ingrained racial bias of the judiciary than the allegations made against the ANC president. - DS

I As a senior citizen observing the antics of Zuma doing everything in the book to avoid prosecution, I can't help wondering what has happened to our good old law and order and the constitution. - Rob Gould

I With Jacob Zuma (and the ANC) fighting hard on all fronts to make certain that Zuma becomes the next president of our country in just a few months' time, South Africans deserve to be told the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth about his finances. That becomes even more important and urgent considering that his (financial) fairy godfather is in jail for corruption.

I Trying to prosecute Zuma is undermining the constitutional rights of the ANC? Are people so poorly educated that they will believe statements like this?

I The ANC suffers from a massive blind spot when it comes to the Zuma indictment!

I Zuma's case is about stealing from the people of the country period! The communists harping on about it being politically motivated is a ploy to try and turn a lie into truth. Why won't Zuma just let his case go to court if he is not guilty? This will save the taxpayer millions by not having the police there to control his unruly supporters.

I By hook or by crook, it is determined that Jacob Zuma will become president of South Africa. Please, for all our sakes, step forward Robin Hood.

I Vusi Pikoli was fired by Mbeki because he disobeyed him on Jacki Selebi. Kgalema Motlante fired him because he prosecuted Jacob Zuma. The moral of the story, don't arrest or prosecute a president's friend!

I Thanks to Mayor Helen Zille for the Christmas lights and tree in Retreat. Also a big thank you to the neighbourhood watch for a peaceful Christmas.

I I visited Cape Town over the festive season. We were at the Blouberg beachfront. Can someone please explain why the toilets are so utterly disgusting? What would it take to revamp them and put a person there to look after the toilets? You are always complaining about lack of employment, well, here's your chance, local councillors.

Zuma

I I drove on the N2 past the airport this morning, past piles of rubbish, plastic bags and dead dogs on both sides of the road and past the non-progressive road works, in between taxis . What a beautiful sight. What do the tourists think?

I Mayor Zille, when are you going to find a solution to the informal settlement in the bush between Big Bay, Blouberg and West Beach? If I set up a camp in the bush in Camps Bay illegally, would I also be allowed to live there, run shebeens and break into homes?

I Why is the Aroma bottle store in Kromboom Road allowed to operate in a residential area often open till after 7pm? The least they can do is clean up after the people living on their stoep.

I Israel and Israelis, where is your humanity? How can you justify this destruction? Have you no shame to drop bombs on defenceless women and children? Gaza is like a massive cage with 1.5 million oppressed people locked in by Israel. They have no rights. And people ask why they are firing rockets? It's called resistance.

I To all Muslims, go live in Palestine. I am so sick of your whining.

I Why are Muslims complaining and campaigning about Israel attacking Gaza? Why are they not campaigning for their fellow Muslims in the Western Cape to stop killing our youths with any type of drug just to make money? My support will forever be with the Jews.

I If Israel is so productive and not destructive, maybe you want to find a new term for producing refugee camps and killing a thousand innocents!

I Logic tells you that Hamas can't use kids as human shields. They are not parading in the streets. Their homes are being bombed by those Zionists.

I I can't believe that there are people out there that still support Israel. Israeli deaths 13, Palestinian deaths 925!

I How can the massacre of almost 1 000 killed and 3 000 injured in Palestine not be the story like 9/11? The West are hypocrits. - Ishmael

I Mr Bush, your Weapons of Mass Destruction have always been in Israel.

I I support Israel whole-heartedly as a Christian and because God promises blessings for those who do. Islam goes on and on about how peaceful they are but why is it that the vast majority of terrorist groups choose this religion?

I More than 900 Palastinian civilians dead compared to 13 Israelis deaths, of which 10 are soldiers. The Red Cross is prevented from helping the injured, illegal white phosphorus being used by Israel in Gaza. This is not a war, this is genocide.

I The police are doing a good job about the shebeens. It is not good to see a child drunk, doing wrong things.

I Revoke the Halaal certification! Who is fooling who here? Muslims are still buying Coke despite the fact that it contains alcohol.

I I completely support poaching of crayfish as it is the only way to access it at a reasonable price. Why must I pay R300/kg at Checkers?

I With reference to Barbie Sandler's letter of January 13, your position is idealistic! What a big ask to pretend that apartheid never existed? Who do you think you are, ma'am, to ask this of people who have not had the opportunities you have had?

I So an SMSer wants Chaaban back because he is a colourful man! Don't you mean "colour fool"?

Load-Date: January 14, 2009

Zuma

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Letters

The Jerusalem Post
January 11, 2009 Sunday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 14

Length: 949 words

Byline: Rachel Schoenbrun, Batya Berlinger, Miriam Z. Hirsch- Botzer, Tess Edmin, Lou Messina, Michael T. Fuller, Jenny Weil

Highlight: Readers' Letters

Body

Best interests

Sir, - A recently published study released by law Prof. Ruth Gavison of the Hebrew University suggests solutions to several issues that have led Israel to adopt policies contrary to its own best interests. The key to our confusion is our reluctance to acknowledge that the Arabs among us, even those in the Knesset, consistently side with anti-Israeli forces and reject identification as Israelis.

There should therefore be no problem with redefining them as Palestinian Arabs rather than Israeli Arabs. As such, they would neither vote for members of the Knesset nor qualify for the children's allowance, a simple solution to two threatening issues: maintaining the Jewish character of the state and resolving the demographic threat.

This would also allow Israel to govern Judea, Samaria and Gaza instead of turning these areas over to hostile elements like the PLO and Hamas. We could revamp their educational and media systems, which currently preach an intense hatred of Jews, Zionism and Israel that precludes any possibility of ever living in peace with them ("Redefine East Jerusalem Arabs as Palestinians to uphold Jewish majority," January 7).

RACHEL SCHOENBRUN

Jerusalem

Lives of hardship, charm...

Sir, - Thanks for "Avoiding a life of struggle and suffering" (September 4) on familial dysautonomia, and for using my son Tulli's picture. Truly, these children were given a special dose of charm that helps them deal with their problems.

Prof. Maayan is a gift from God, and her devoted assistant, Na'ama Holtzer, is our guardian angel. Always there for us, they have assembled a unique and caring team.

The trips Judy Siegel-Itzkovich mentioned are done through Simcha Layeled/Israel Special Children's Fund, with the help of the Dysautonomia Association and private donors. Without this generosity and volunteerism, FD teens and young adults would probably never go on jaunts to Eilat and other places because of the complexity of their conditions and the logistics involved.

Letters

Research on new drugs, or even vitamins, that could help alleviate the symptoms of FD is being done through the help of Dor Yeshorim, at Fordham University, NYC, in the lab run by Dr. Berish Rubin (see Mishpacha magazine, issue 224, September 3, 2008). Tocotrienol, a form of vitamin E, can help stabilize blood pressure to some degree; in my Tulli's case, it has increased the moisture in his eyes so he needs less artificial tears.

May you one day be able to update your report with this headline: "No more FD children born."

BATYA BERLINGER

Jerusalem

...and laughter, too

Sir, - I am a healthy, 52-year-old woman who was sibling to three late brothers with dysautonomia (and one healthy brother). My affected brothers were diagnosed at the time the illness was discovered, in the late '50s. Being a unique family, as we were, I spent much of my childhood in research labs. My brothers were treated by Dr. Felicia Axelrod in New York University Hospital, who answered my questions as a teenager and even gave me career counseling. My amazing parents, the late Rev. Asher and Henriette Hirsch, helped found the first parents group.

I was a lifelong participant in the research, and the affected gene was discovered from my own blood - enabling everyone to check for the disease with a simple blood test today.

My brothers were very cute kids, and handsome young adults. They were bright, sensitive individuals with a great sense of humor. We fought, wrestled lovingly, and had heart-to-heart talks about the meaning of life - without tears. The sudden attacks and frequent hospitalizations were a part of our lives.

Would my mother have chosen to abort the cherished 19, 20, and 36 years of life of my dear brothers? Thank God, that was not a question. Meir Aharon, Samson Rafael and Avraham Eliezer (Eli), of blessed memory, were loving, productive, contributing members of society. They are so much a part of who I am, and of everyone who knew them.

MIRIAM Z. HIRSCH-BOTZER

Head of Pediatric Occupational Therapy

Child Development Center, Ziv Hospital

Safed

Hang up an Israeli flag...

Sir, - One of the ways I can show my support for the brave citizens in our South - who refuse to leave their homes and believe in the justice of this war - and our soldiers in Gaza is to hang up my Israeli flag. I know that this is not usual, but I would ask anyone who feels as I do to put Israeli flags on their cars, balconies, anywhere they can be seen.

We do this with pride on Independence Day, and I feel we should do it now to show we are one nation and one country ("European Jews launch series of pro-Israel rallies," January 8).

TESS EMDIN

Nahariya

...to show your support

Sir, - I have been harassed incessantly because of my support for you. I count that as a blessing. When I fly my Israeli flag for all to see, people always have a negative comment to make. I will still fly it to show my support.

Letters

Remember, you are the apple of God's eye and always will be. May God bless you and keep you and may He make his face to shine upon you.

LOU MESSINA

Syracuse, New York

Sir, - Just to let you know that I am not even Jewish, but I wanted to help you, no matter what. Unfortunately I've had a stroke, but I would still help you right now if I could, somehow.

MICHAEL T. FULLER

Vancouver

Orthodox girls

can be good sports

Sir, - I was so pleased to read "Shiraliga a smashing success" (January 2). It's nice to know that Orthodox girls now have an opportunity to participate in basketball tournaments.

People who love sports will be cheering this league because there will be so many new opportunities for such young women to compete and express themselves.

Let's have more of these innovative, positive articles!

JENNY WEIL , Jerusalem

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

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Our readers' views

The Columbian (Vancouver, Washington)

January 5, 2009 Monday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. C4

Length: 985 words

Body

Working people are losing ground

The Dec. 26 editorial in The Columbian, "Ill-timed greed," is much protest over a 4 percent pay raise for state workers. That 4 percent will not begin to cover the costs of all utilities in this area raising rates as much as 10 percent. Gasoline has begun its upward climb. Members of Congress voted themselves a pay raise.

I guess utilities, oil companies, Wall Street CEOs, and Congress members don't count when it comes to greed. Working people have the unions to thank for a living wage and benefits, not the greedy CEOs and Wall Street financiers who would prefer to maximize their take by outsourcing jobs to non-unionized states or countries.

What about all the top administrators who haven't stepped up to the "take a pay cut" plate.

If sacrifice is to be the save-all of the hard economic times ahead, then let it begin from the top down. Working people are losing enough ground as it is in this country.

Thomas E. Martin

Vancouver

Another great volunteer possibility

The Jan. 1 editorial in The Columbian, "Compassion in 2009," mentioned many wonderful and valuable opportunities for volunteering at community organizations. Not mentioned was the Wellness Project, a free mental health clinic for low-income, uninsured adults in Vancouver.

All of the professional mental health therapists at the Wellness Project are volunteers, as are the licensed clinicians who supervise them. There are also volunteer opportunities for the clerical duties needed to keep the place running smoothly.

The Wellness Project has a long and growing client waiting list. This attests to the need of its services to our community and the great value volunteers can bring.

Sharon Winkler

Vancouver

A better way to make a buck

"The paper dollar has become too costly to produce and replace." We have heard this for years, and it has been proven ineffective as a solution to the problem each time it has been tried.

What the heck. Let's give the numismatists something else to collect, with not one, but four new \$1 coins (Presidential \$1 coins begin circulating in 2009).

The Mint czars continue to throw more money at a problem already solved by the Canadians.

Solution: the \$2 Coin. With this simple idea, Canadians have said "adieu" to their paper dollar forever. Maybe President-elect Barack Obama can find someone competent to head the mint?

Jerry Hall

Vancouver

Is it really good to play the lottery?

The Washington Lottery, in its promotional material, tells us "It's good to play." But, consider the facts of the "pay off."

At locations where lottery tickets are sold, there are cards showing how lottery income is allocated. Are the cards ever read by players? For every dollar from lottery customers, 62 cents is paid in prizes.

Our readers' views

Of course, it's exciting to think you might become a millionaire by buying a lottery ticket. To get \$1 million in payoffs, the lottery must sell 1,612,903 \$1 tickets. Only 62 percent is paid in prizes. So, for a \$1 million prize there must be 1,612,902 losing tickets -- not good odds.

For decades, gambling was outlawed in all but two states, Nevada and New Jersey. Why? Because it was recognized that gambling was addictive for many folks, and was harmful for many families, to say nothing of the potential for criminal involvement at privately run casinos.

Get the facts, figure the odds, and be smart.

Gordon Sondker

Longview

It's not peace that terrorists seek

After tolerating hundreds of Hamas rockets fired on its citizens from Gaza despite the "cease fire," Israel has responded with force.

Like Islamic terrorists in Afghanistan and around the world, it's not peace the terrorists seek but dominion over all religions.

Islamic jihadists destroyed two ancient Buddhist statues in Afghanistan, considering them an affront to Islam. If Islamic radicals gain control over any part of Israel, it is likely that ancient Christian and Jewish monuments there will also be destroyed.

Should they gain power in Europe, we will likely see ancient cathedrals, churches and synagogues destroyed as well.

To do battle with an enemy who uses women, children, schools and hospitals as shields, who inflicts heinous torture on both military and civilian captives, and who views his own suicide as an expedited pathway to heaven -- this is a battle that the West has no stomach for. And Islamic terrorists know it.

Sandra S. Bennett

La Center

Stand against blanket pardons

During my first 45 years, the demons and shadows were projected onto the Soviet Union.

Then we experienced a brief and wonderful period of peace. Incredibly, in 2000, we woke up to a stolen presidential administration.

What followed, week after week, was a constant brutalizing attack on our civil rights and beloved democracy.

Blow after blow, there was no opportunity to catch our collective breath. We witnessed that the demons and shadows had sprung up within our own borders, chipping away, the rubble at the base of our republic grew ever higher. We had almost lost hope.

Those who willingly desecrate the soul of our nation cannot be allowed to just walk away. Together as responsible citizens, we must stand firmly against the slinking approach of the President Bush blanket pardons.

Mike Sinjem

Vancouver

We are one world -- all chosen

One of the great philosophers once wrote, "The God of horses, would be a horse." It would stand to reason, therefore, the horses would be the "chosen ones."

Until we break the barrier of ego, and realize that there is no single chosen people singled out by their individual "sky person" to rule the Earth, we are doomed to lie to each other, cheat each other, steal from each other, kill each other, etc., in the name of our prospective "God."

Figure it out. The "Earth" was chosen, that means that everything on this rock in space, was "chosen," by whatever means is out there.

We are one world, chosen to have life, respect all of it, cherish all of it, worship all of it.

John Clapp

Woodland

Load-Date: January 8, 2009

Letters

Sydney Morning Herald (Australia)

December 31, 2008 Wednesday

First Edition

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Section: NEWS AND FEATURES; Letters; Pg. 8

Length: 1003 words

Body

Bloody cost of Israel repeating past mistakes

Israelis want their government to take action against the rocket attacks from Gaza. But it is exacting an enormous price from the Palestinians in the blood of many innocent bystanders.

Unless international action prevents it, there will be a new cycle of violence. Israel has chosen a bloody and dangerous path, the outcome of which may well be to its political and security detriment, just as happened two years ago with its incursion into Lebanon.

It has been so inevitable, and so pointless. Israel has virtually imprisoned more than a million Palestinians in Gaza under conditions that have created immense deprivation and desperation. It refuses to negotiate with their leaders, although it did manage to get a ceasefire some six months ago, which was needlessly broken by Israel.

We don't have a simple solution. The road back to sanity will be a long one. But every time Israel demonstrates its overwhelming military superiority, every time Israel pulls the noose around Gaza tighter, the problem becomes even more intractable.

Steve Brook Australian Jewish Democratic Society, Melbourne

Raffe Gold (Letters, December 30) says Hamas refused to renew a truce and preferred violence to diplomacy. This is a highly selective account of very recent history. During this so-called truce, Israel made several military strikes into Gaza, killing scores of Palestinians, while not one Israeli was killed. The problem for Israel is that most reasonably minded souls find it hard to believe that killing hundreds of people, including many women and children, constitutes legitimate self-defence. This is grist for Osama bin Laden's mill.

Alexander Lane Thornleigh

From Australia and beyond we keep hearing from political leaders that Israel has a right to defend itself. After 60 years of occupation, when will the Palestinians be given this same right?

Ahmed Kilani Lugarno

Wealth and greed

Letters

Oliver Hartwich attempts to defend what most of the public - not just some nebulous "global intellectual elite" - recognise as excessive greed in the corporate sector, using the example of the self-made billionaire and inventive businessperson ("Defending greed is an indulgence of its own", December 30). There is a gigantic chasm between the deserved wealth of men such as the founders of Aldi, or of Westfield, and the sleazy claim of incompetent executives to undeserved millions.

The chief executives at most of these investment giants did not create them, and have often played a critical hand in destroying them, yet they still award themselves obscene sums of money, often as compensation for leaving a company they have dragged into the ground. This is greed.

Anthony Don Kensington

Keep calm, keep left

Don Matthews (Letters, December 30) answers his own question when he states that drivers who ignore the "keep left" rule create frustration among other road users intent on breaking the speed limit. The last thing we need is more frustration on our roads. It leads to road rage and potentially dangerous behaviour. I do not wish to condone speeding but it is not the role of motorists to police the driving of fellow motorists. Leave that to the relevant authorities.

Tony Leto Padstow Heights

Some of your correspondents fail to acknowledge the first rule of the road: keep left. Many drivers seem to regard the left-hand lane on three-lane roads as mere decoration. This week I drove for many unhindered kilometres in the left lane, within the speed limit, passing scores of slower cars in the middle lane. These selfish individuals, along with the speedsters, are the ones adding to the frustrations and dangers on our freeways.

David Mansford Canterbury

I can think of a couple of reasons for Don Matthews to observe the keep left rule. A clear right lane can provide a better run for emergency vehicles and can also be used as an escape route for a driver confronted by a sudden obstruction blocking the lane.

Martin Trainor North Ryde

All an allusion

Gerard Henderson appears to disregard the literary concepts of allusion and metaphor ("History wars and hysterical bores", December 30). To make a metaphorical statement that certain types of surveillance are "like Stasiland" is not a statement that Australia has become the same as East Germany. Nor is drawing an analogy between the protests against the building of an Islamic school in Camden and Nazi attacks on Jews a statement that Australia has become the same as Nazi Germany.

Henderson's commentary has a disquieting subtext. It says: do not protest, do not worry. If we are not murdering Jews, we are tolerant; if we are not denouncing our neighbours, the state is benign.

Democracy is a continuous dialogue between rulers and ruled. Commentary and dissent should not be condemned.

Andrew Dillon Curtin (ACT)

Code blue

Get used to it, Blue Mountains residents ("No room at inpatients for mums-to-be", December 30). All areas of the Blue Mountains Hospital have been in decline for the past 10 years. Strangely, however, most of the buildings are nearly new. Maternity, children's ward, dental clinic, operating theatres and the casualty department are all less than 10 years old, but all work with reduced staffing levels.

Letters

If you present with anything more than a bad bruise or a nasty rash you will be shipped off to a Sydney hospital. And if you call triple-0 and require an emergency ambulance, you could be in for a long wait because the local paramedics may well be driving to Sydney with yet another patient.

This is not progress. We spend millions of dollars on a raft of questionable exercises and yet we let the important stuff slide.

Stuart Greenshields Wentworth Falls

Becalmed

My Skandia pension fund is frozen. How many other retirees are outraged to see the maxi yacht Skandia still racing, expensively no doubt, when we are faced with the threat that Skandia may stop paying any pension? They can keep losing our money, but we can't draw it out, so we can't even abandon the sinking ship.

Elizabeth Sayers Wentworth Falls

Graphic

CARTOON: By John Shakespeare.

Load-Date: December 30, 2008

End of Document

We need an all-out assault on inequality

Cape Argus (South Africa)

January 02, 2009 Friday

e1 Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 9

Length: 1033 words

Body

Fellow South Africans. As we stand at the threshold of time to bid farewell to 2008 and to wade into the New Year, a deep sense of ambivalence takes grip of us because our immediate circumstances are likely to change for the better or for worse.

We celebrate our blessings and bemoan our misfortunes. Many among us have experienced losses of innocence, health, physique, property and life while many others scored victories, achieved commendable results in their endeavours and the realisation of their full potentialities as well as attaining fulfilment in life.

Throughout 2008 our country continued to fight against poverty and unemployment, to tackle HIV and Aids and other communicable diseases, to attack crime and corruption, to promote education and health, to strengthen the institutions for supporting democracy, as well as cementing social cohesion.

Our government is aware that to attain social cohesion we must continue to improve the economic situation of all our people.

This includes, among others, narrowing the income gap among all South Africans and launching an all-out assault on inequality and poverty.

Accordingly, I would like to appeal to all South Africans to treat each other with respect.

This includes tolerance towards foreign nationals who, for one reason or the other, have made South Africa their home.

Let us work towards building a united, democratic, non-sexist, non-racial and prosperous nation that derives strength from the diversity of its people.

Importantly, all of us, including the private sector and government departments, must act together to reduce inefficient use of electricity and develop alternative sources of renewable energy.

Like many years before, this year has also had its fair share of road fatalities. Nevertheless, it is encouraging to note that the number of road fatalities, regrettable as they are, is smaller than it was this time last year.

Government has intensified efforts to eradicate the scourge of crime in our country. It is also important that we guard against and report crime.

We need an all-out assault on inequality

We remain committed to rooting out crime, especially high-priority categories. These include violent crimes against women and children, house robberies, organised crime and corruption as well as illegal firearms, which continue to terrorise our people.

Our infrastructure and systems for hosting the Fifa World Cup are nearing satisfactory completion.

In addition, our nation will be hosting the Fifa Confederation Cup in June 2009.

This is a very important barometer of not only how our national team will perform during the 2010 Fifa World Cup Competition, but also of how hospitable we are as a nation. I am confident that in the event, we will succeed!

Let me take this opportunity to congratulate matriculants who sat for and passed their matric in the new education system, the National Curriculum Statement that we adopted some years back.

The challenges that you and your teachers went through will be instructive for the future as we seek the best ways to make our education system fully functional and responsive to the national and global challenges.

To those who did not pass their matriculation examinations, do not despair. Try again with more determination in the New Year.

The scourge of HIV and Aids is still a concern to this country. Our partnership against HIV and Aids, geared to mobilise the entire nation against this disease, is continuing apace.

From its side, the government will continue to explore many ways of fighting this pandemic, and all of us must take preventive measures such as abstinence and the use of condoms, to prevent the spread of this scourge.

On the sporting front our nation has seen numerous noteworthy achievements of which we are proud. In this regard, our under-performance at the Beijing Olympic Games has been offset by our glorious achievements at the Paralympics.

Both our national rugby and cricket teams are riding the crest of the waves in the arena. They are awesome and have made us proud.

I am hopeful that the relevant sporting authorities will address whatever shortcomings there are in our sporting system to ensure that from 2009 onwards we improve in all these areas to be internationally competitive.

Right now our country is preparing for our fourth democratic elections, which will be held sometime this year.

I want to thank all those who registered as voters and to encourage those who have not registered, and those who will qualify later, to continue registering at the various municipalities and other outlets that will be provided by the IEC.

Let us once more relish this moment of deepening our democracy by exercising our choice freely in the elections, and help create a peaceful climate where each and every one of us will exercise his or her choice without intimidation and fear.

Let us respect the right of all to campaign in all the regions of South Africa.

As a country we will continue to strive for and meet our obligations of realising a better life for all our people, irrespective of race or gender.

We stand for peace and stability in our country and the entire world. The recent spate of undemocratic usurpation of political power through military means needs to be condemned by all peace loving nations of the world.

Our government joined the UN Secretary General in calling for the immediate cessation of the attacks and retaliations between Israel and Hamas.

We need an all-out assault on inequality

The sheer savagery of the attacks launched by Israel against the residents of Gaza serves to conceal the fact that underlying this conflict is the reasonable demand for both peoples (Palestinians and Israelis) to live together in peace and prosperity within their internationally recognised homelands.

The current Israeli aggression proves the folly of the notion of "waging the war to end all wars". War begets war. The UN Security Council must act now to save lives and to create peace.

Peace means more than absence of war ... peace means the right of self-determination, it means eradication of hunger and poverty, it means free trade. It means the right to life.

Once again, I wish all of you a happy and successful 2009 and a safe and enjoyable passage through the remaining period of the festive season. Thank you.

Load-Date: January 2, 2009

Lebanon as seen through a warped looking glass

The Daily Star (Lebanon)

December 8, 2008 Monday

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THE DAILY STAR

LEBANON

Length: 982 words

Byline: Marc J. Sirois

Body

Much as it rankles when historic events take place here in Lebanon and CNN spends its day serving our great messy dollops of some congressman's sexual escapades, this diminutive country definitely punches above its weight when it comes to the amount of attention it attracts from the international media.

First person by Marc J. Sirois

Much as it rankles when historic events take place here in Lebanon and CNN spends its day serving our great messy dollops of some congressman's sexual escapades, this diminutive country definitely punches above its weight when it comes to the amount of attention it attracts from the international media. That's not always a good thing, of course, but it raises an interesting question: Why do so many people around the world occasionally become transfixed by what goes on in Lebanon?

We all know the anecdotal answers, some of which are quite contradictory: Lebanon's diversity is captivating to outsiders because it's not something they associate with the Arab and Islamic worlds; the Lebanese diaspora is so huge (by some measures three or four times the population of the country itself) and so far-flung that it cannot help but to foster some degree of global awareness and interest; Lebanon is so often afflicted with one form or another of crisis that the media is never able to ignore it for long; etc.

All of these are at least partly true, especially the factors associated with diversity, which contribute to just about everything else that keeps Lebanon in the headlines. When things are going well, Western media editors lap up the usual features and photos about veiled and mini-skirted women walking arm-in-arm down a street in Beirut, or about wineries thriving in what is otherwise (we are told) the dark and spooky Bekaa Valley. More frequently, especially when the situation gets rocky, these same decision-makers resort to apocalyptic warnings about the precariousness of coexistence, and about the meddlings of some foreign powers (but not those of certain others).

In good times and in bad, the result is an imagined image of Lebanon built not just on stereotypes, some of which happen to be rooted in fact, but on wildly exaggerated versions of these. There are several reasons for this.

One is the fact that dichotomies are interesting subjects that the editors back home are frequently willing to run with, causing reporters here, whatever their nationality, to go looking for such topics - even when they are not representative of Lebanese society.

Lebanon as seen through a warped looking glass

Another is the fact that so many media companies have taken to saving money by relying more on enthusiastic youngsters than on experienced professionals. Too often, this produces ignorant journalists who then infect audiences in the West with sweeping assumptions and unfounded judgments about this country. Never mind that the Lebanese, understandably, are still struggling to define themselves and their country: The supremely confident foreigner will do it for them, even if he or she ignores or disdains the differences between Parliament and Cabinet, between Hizbullah and Hamas, and/or between Lebanon and Libya.

As is the case with Lebanon's poisonous politics, however, it would not be fair to blame all of this country's image problems on the foreigner. There are plenty of Lebanese who are only too happy to indulge their guests' fetish for stereotype, ranging from the enterprising sorts who offer camel rides to (thoroughly disoriented) tourists to the troublemakers who try to advance their own interests by feeding Western suspicions about all things Muslim (especially those of the Shiite variety). Yours truly admits to rage bordering on apoplexy when his pathetic attempts to understand something new about this endlessly fascinating country are answered by hackneyed slanders - usually confession-based - honed by generations of telling the Westerner what, it is believed, he wants to hear.

This habit is often accompanied by a marked tendency to rule out the very possibility that the "other" - as defined by faith and/or politics - might have something relevant to say. It has been made even more fashionable, I think, by the habits of the Bush administration, whose "with us or against us" approach has dovetailed very nicely with that of certain Lebanese political parties - including some that claim to champion democratic ideals - whose goal is not to defeat their rivals but to eliminate them as factors.

It is natural, in a sense, for people in far-off lands to be relatively ignorant about what Lebanon is and is not. For some Lebanese, however, it has required a consistent (even if unconscious) effort to remain so ill-, mis- and uninformed about their neighbors - even about those things that they have in common. This week's Muslim holiday of Eid of al-Adha, for example, celebrates the power of faith felt by Abraham, who is also revered as a prophet by Christians (and, incidentally, by Jews). I am not a religious man myself, but even the shared heritage and cultural kinship of Lebanese Christians and Muslims should be more than enough to overcome medieval-style prejudices. Sadly, for many it is not.

And yet despite all this, many Lebanese - especially those who care little for politics - do not even think of such matters, let alone feel a need to rise above them. That might be the real feature that so entrances outsiders, even if they don't know it: that despite the never-ending pressure applied by a political system that encourages economic exploitation, ethnic and religious hatred, and striking regional disparities, most Lebanese still get along with each other. They just don't talk to the press as much - or maybe the editors back home aren't interested in what they have to say because they'd rather sacrifice principle and feast on conflict.

Marc J. Sirois is managing editor of THE DAILY STAR. His email address is marc.sirois@dailystar.com.lb

Load-Date: December 7, 2008

Letters

The Jerusalem Post

November 2, 2008 Sunday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 14

Length: 928 words

Byline: Avi Hein, Fred Casden, Seymour Brodsky, Judy Prager, E. Ognall

Highlight: Readers' Letters

Body

Egged & Saudi Arabia

Sir, - Jerusalemites must wake up and speak out against the Egged bus company's cowering before a religious fundamentalism that has more in common with Saudi Arabia or the Taliban than modern Israel or the Jewish value of kavod labriyot - respect for every human being.

The revelation that Egged's advertising company rejected an ad for the joint religious-secular Wake Up Jerusalem-Yerushalmim list running for the city council because it featured two (modestly dressed) women is a subversion of democracy that must impel us to act today ("Portraits of women running for Jerusalem city council not allowed on city buses," October 30).

It's time for all Jerusalemites, whether secular, traditional or religious, to say "No more" to this discriminatory practice; as well as to segregated buses that relegate women to the back. They are not required by Jewish law and have no place in a modern society.

As a religious Jew, I'm particularly offended by the perversion this fundamentalism makes of the Jewish tradition and particularly urge the religious community to speak out and say "Not in our name!"

Just as Americans boycotted public buses until they stopped discriminating against African-Americans during the horrible days of Jim Crow, we must boycott Egged until it stops discriminating against women. We must end this hillul Hashem, this desecration of God's name, once and for all.

AVI HEIN

Jerusalem

Appreciate, yes. Agree, no

Sir, - While I can appreciate David Benkof's point about protecting minority rights, I cannot agree with his "Defending haredi power" (October 30).

He states that there is a trade-off in that the haredi parties' focus on funding and "status-quo" issues prevents them from having an important say on issues of foreign policy, defense, energy, infrastructure and the environment. I am not convinced that the average haredi-in-the-street has a strong opinion on many of these topics.

Letters

However, most of us would agree that the haredi power structure does have a strong opinion on the role of women, as evidenced by "Shas blocks vote on pro-woman divorce bill" and "Portraits of women running for Jerusalem city council not allowed on city buses" (both October 30).

While it is true, as Mr. Benkof says, that the majority must be prevented from coercing minority groups, there is no corollary that minority groups have the right to distort the rule of law in ways that the rest of us, including many Orthodox Jews, consider intolerable.

FRED CASDEN

Ma'aleh Adumim

Olden, more golden days

Sir, - As an early member of the Jewish Defense League and a personal acquaintance of Rabbi Meir Kahane, I clearly remember when, in June 1978, neo-Nazis planned to march through the highly Jewish-populated town of Skokie, Illinois. The JDL and other Jewish organizations totally opposed the march - the JDL was willing to get physically involved even though thousands of police were scheduled to "protect the marchers."

The then mayor of Chicago, in order to avoid wounded participants and police and destroyed property, offered the neo-Nazis a quiet march through Chicago. Facing physical opposition, they quickly changed their march area.

The situations in Skokie on June 23, 1978 and in Umm el-Fahm 30 years later are the same, except that those who opposed fascism in 1978 now find their descendants copying it.

How would Itamar Ben-Gvir and Baruch Marzel feel if a group of people from Umm el-Fahm decided to march through Petah Tikva?

Each Shabbat, I ask God to "renew our days of old." I used to wonder why we pray for that; now I understand ("Far-right march in Umm el-Fahm approved," October 30).

SEYMOUR BRODSKY

Jerusalem

Big talk, little action

Sir, - When are our leaders going to have the courage of their convictions?

First, there was big talk of stopping the "Peace Boat" entering Gaza waters. But, lo and behold, nothing happened - so we are again the world's laughing stock. I was always told that you don't make threats unless you are prepared to back them with action ("Olmert reverses course again, lets boat 'break the blockade' by docking in Gaza," October 30).

Second, MK Avigdor Lieberman remarked on President Hosni Mubarak never coming to Israel except, very briefly, for Yitzhak Rabin's funeral. Lieberman only verbalized what many, many people think - so why did our prime minister and president run to apologize? ("Lieberman: Mubarak can 'go to hell,'" October 30.)

Mubarak is no friend of Israel as he turns a blind eye to all of Hamas's shenanigans. Were he a true ally, he would first of all stop the incitement against Israel in the Egyptian press.

JUDY PRAGER

Petah Tikva

Delighted to say you are wrong

Letters

Sir, - In reply to Batya Medad's letter (October 29) lamenting that not a single politician has said that his priority is the Jewish people, secure and sovereign in the Land of Israel, I am delighted to be able to tell her that she is wrong.

Moshe Feiglin of the Manhigut Yehudit (Jewish Leadership) part of the Likud is that rare politician who is not looking for accolades from the goyim. He is not afraid to speak the truth, which is that Eretz Yisrael belongs to the Jewish people, and neither George Bush nor Condi Rice, nor anyone else has the right to tell us where we should live in our own land.

Only he, with God's help, can once again make us a proud people secure in our beliefs that what we have is worth fighting for, and that we will win because our cause is just.

No more giving in to our enemies, no more empty words, no more flattering our foes in exchange for a kind word and a pat on the back.

E. OGNALL

Netanya

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

PEACE CHAIR: PROFESSORSHIP IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION COMING TO ASU

East Valley Tribune (Mesa, Arizona)

October 4, 2008 Saturday

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Section: ENTERTAINMENT NEWS

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Byline: Lawn Griffiths, The Tribune, Mesa, Ariz.

Body

Oct. 4--American parks and squares feature plenty of statues of generals and war heroes.

Ann Hardt wonders where are the pantheons for champions of peace?

The Quaker, who taught 22 years at Arizona State University, is reveling in the newly announced creation of a faculty chair in peace studies at ASU. It is named for her and her late husband, Anthony "Tony" Nickachos. They were the major donors to get it established.

A search will begin for a scholar for the Hardt-Nickachos Chair in Peace Studies, who will oversee research and instruction working toward sustainable peace. The faculty chair will be at ASU's Center for the Study of Religion and Conflict, one of the first initiatives at ASU after President Michael Crow took the helm in 2002. It is the culmination of years of effort by Hardt, who strived to develop ways peace could be part of the academic landscape.

The former president of ASU's emeritus professors association taught 1968 to 1990 in the ASU College of Education. She led classes in such areas as multicultural education, school and society, peace and conflict, and cooperative learning. "I taught some classes on peace and conflict studies, but I didn't see much happening along the lines anywhere on campus, or in other places," she said. "Many universities and colleges had the program."

Hardt, a longtime Quaker representative on the Arizona Ecumenical Council, has worked well over 50 years from the local to the international level in numerous dimensions of peace, reconciliation and multicultural understanding.

The daughter of a Methodist pastor, Hardt served six years on the national board of Fellowship of Reconciliation, four years as president of Church **Women** United in Arizona, worked for the International Peace Research Association, was president of the Tempe Friends Meeting and has served law courts in family counseling and reconciliation.

During her years on the faculty, Hardt initiated programs and conferences to stimulate peace. She directed conferences on "Alternatives to Violence" and "The Meaning and Control of Conflict." She launched the Initiative in Religion, Conflict and Peace Studies and made a number of trips to the Middle East in peace work, including developing religious education plans for the Friends School of Ramallah on the Palestinian West Bank.

PEACE CHAIR: PROFESSORSHIP IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION COMING TO ASU

"I was born in the mission field, and my parents kept thinking, 'what is the church doing about peace?' ... They didn't see much being done," said Hardt, who holds a doctorate in social and philosophical foundations of education from the University of Texas. Years ago, she set up the Southwest Texas Conference of the United Methodist Church Peace Fund to generate income for peace work.

Hardt and Nickachos, a retired U.S. Navy lieutenant commander and former Roosevelt School District teacher, had been close friends for 35 years. They were married in a hospital in Athens, Greece, about six weeks before he died on Sept. 30, 2006, from an aortic aneurism at age 86. She calls him the "man in my life" who talked to her every night at 10 p.m. on issues that mattered.

"We had grown very close together," Hardt said, "even though we had been opposites in nearly every way. He was military and I was working for peace. He was Republican, I was a Democrat. He considered himself agnostic ... I was Methodist and became a Quaker." Through the years, Hardt fostered a growing interest in Nickachos for her peace passion. Nickachos would donate \$25,000 for a three-year lecture series and for student scholarships. One student, for example, researched the Hamas movement in the Middle East, while another examined the peace work of President Jimmy Carter. They also funded a symposium last spring called "The Rhetoric for Peace," which brought together faculty from a host of ASU departments. One goal would be to develop an interdisciplinary program leading to issuing a certificate in peace studies.

Hardt's lifetime of peace advocacy was saluted by Terri Mansfield, executive director and co-founder of the Arizona Department of Peace Campaign.

"In the United States alone, there are over 300 university and college programs on peace studies," she noted. Some have four-year and graduate degrees, she said.

"What I would like to see happening is bringing the professors who focus on mediation and resolution, restorative justice, truth and reconciliation and all those focuses going on globally," she said. Mansfield sits on the advisory board seeking to create a National Peace Academy as an alternative to military academies. Arizona could be the right place for it, she said.

"I would actually like to see Arizona be the leader in the country for mediation and conflict resolution at the college level," she said.

Linell Cady, director of the Center for the Study of Religion and Conflict, said the Hardt-Nickachos chair gives new dimension to the center. "We have always been interested in the containment of conflict, for its minimization," she said. With the gift, the center will search and find someone "who really comes at the issue of religion and violence from the perspective of peace, and that is a different angle," Cady said. She hopes someone is in place by next fall after a thorough search. A scholar with skills in reconciliation, restorative justice and repairing societies after conflict will be sought.

In its five years of operations, the center has hosted two or three lectures, featuring national voices and attracting about 400 each time, plus numerous conferences.

It will be launching an undergraduate certificate program in religion and conflict. "As we move forward with peace studies, we hope to include that in the curriculum, too," Cady said. It will be helped by a Ford Foundation grant that has been renewed for two years.

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PEACE CHAIR: PROFESSORSHIP IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION COMING TO ASU

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Meade High students tackle homeland security issues

The Maryland Gazette

October 15, 2008 Wednesday

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Section: FRONT; Pg. A1

Length: 1003 words

Byline: JOSHUA STEWART Staff Writer

Body

It's a little after 7 a.m. and 14-year-old Matthew Thomas is sitting at a beige desk, trying to "climb inside" the mind of a **female** suicide bomber.

"I can't believe it, that people would do such a thing. I, I, I just ... "

"People do strange things," his classmate Mike Vietor said.

"I wonder if people ever thought about that, if God created them just to do that," Matthew responded.

It was first period on a Friday at Meade High School and Mike, Matt and 14 classmates were in Tina Edler's Homeland Security Explorations class, a part of the Homeland Security Signature Program that is new to the school this year.

For 86 minutes every other day they learn about numerous homeland security topics, including Kalashnikov assault rifles, as well as Delaware Sen. Joe Biden's reference to Hezbollah and **Hamas** in the vice presidential debate the day before.

They discuss rocket-propelled grenades, the Aryan Nation and al-Qaida in Iraq in lessons pulled more from national newspapers than textbooks, among other issues.

"It's kind of like another history class, but with different subjects, like terrorists," said student Justen Hobdy.

While the homeland security industry is nothing new to the area - Fort George G. Meade is the state's largest employer, and a litany of defense agencies and contractors speckle the region - this class has witnessed the significance of the field; they were about 7-years-old during the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

"These are things that are happening now, in their lifetime," Ms. Edler said.

Students in the program are freshmen, and they're guinea pigs of sorts. They're the first class to experience the program.

Matthew said that, in comparison to other classes, his homeland security class is more in-depth. It has a narrower focus than others, giving the chance to take a more thorough look at the subject.

Meade High students tackle homeland security issues

In a school of 2,250 students, about 80 students have enrolled in a homeland security course. Eight of the roughly 100 members of the faculty and staff are involved and the interest of those who work at the school seems to be growing.

This year there are only courses for freshmen, but as those students become sophomores, new courses will be added.

Any students can choose to enroll or leave the program - both classes and homeland security clubs. So any students in the school can be a part of the program if they want, said William Sheppard, the administrator who runs it.

The signature program, the first in the county and one of a few related to homeland security in the country, is designed as a first step to a career in myriad jobs devoted to protecting the country - jobs that some of the state's largest employers struggle to fill with qualified workers.

For example, such an education could lead to a position writing computer programs for the National Security Agency, located just a few miles from the school, or a job as an engineer with Northrop Grumman.

"The whole intent of the overall program is to build a work force pipeline. (Job openings) are so numerous on the domestic front that we can't fill them now, let alone in 10 years with baby boomers retiring," said Maureen McMahon, coordinator for the county school system's Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Office.

And as the country devotes more of its defense strategy to asymmetrical warfare - fighting a smaller, less-equipped, poorly-funded but particularly creative and resourceful enemy - the need for a work force with a homeland security background increases, education and defense contractor officials said.

The need for employees who have backgrounds in homeland security is apparent as Fort Meade prepares for an influx of 22,000 new jobs on the post, many requiring advanced science degrees and analytical skills to fight terrorism.

"We talked about terrorists and them not being dumb people. They're very well-educated," Ms. Edler said.

Students at Meade High aren't learning how to find carefully concealed knives by waving hand-held metal detectors over airline passengers, or how to fill sandbags to brace for hurricanes like employees in agencies under the Department of Homeland Security.

Rather, they are learning advanced physics, law and engineering, skills that are the fundamentals for college and post-graduate programs.

"When they get to 12th grade, they will be able to decide if they go to a two-year or a four-year institution," Mr. Sheppard said.

Real world practice

The teachers and administrators running the homeland security program are career-educators.

Ms. Edler doesn't come from a defense background - she's a teacher through and through. But she is in the middle of a homeland security certificate program at the University of Maryland University College and is a self-proclaimed news junkie. Mr. Sheppard is in a similar situation - he's a teacher by trade and has experience starting programs.

Simply put, a few years ago they knew nothing about homeland security.

So they brought in government agencies and defense contractors to help design the program.

"If an educator does it, you may get one product that may be adequate, but it might not reflect the true needs of the community," said retired Col. Kenneth O. McCreedy, the former installation commander of Fort Meade who helped bring the program to the school.

Meade High students tackle homeland security issues

"What also attracted me was this notion of community involvement in the creation of the curriculum and the community being invested and having a stake in the output," he said.

When the program was first announced, about 200 organizations swarmed to the school to become involved. But that number has dwindled to about 20.

Northrop Grumman is one of the companies involved. And like many other defense contractors, it is struggling to fill job openings with qualified candidates, said Ted Imes, who worked for 29 years as an electrical engineer and is now director of community and education outreach.

"It's a national problem that there aren't a lot of kids going into the engineering field. This is a long pipeline problem," he said.

jstewart@capitalgazette.com

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End of Document

Letters to the Editor

Canberra Times (Australia)

January 11, 2009 Sunday

Final Edition

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Section: A; Pg. 20

Length: 1163 words

Byline: The Canberra Times

Body

Bullied now the bullies HOW CAN we not be outraged at the invasion of Gaza? Let us remember it is Israel that invaded Palestine in 1966 (sic) and has illegally occupied it, despite United Nations resolutions.

As a result tens of thousands of Palestinians have had to live in cramped temporary camps for 42 years. How do we expect a besieged people to react? This outrageous invasion is fuelled by United States weaponry but only supported by 16 per cent of Israelis. The other 84 per cent can see that invasion is not the long-term answer. The same sympathy and efforts after World War II should be provided to the Palestinians, but it seems the bullied are now the bullies.

Colin Handley, Lyneham Here's an idea APPALLED like everyone about Gaza, I tried outside-the-loop thinking and came up with two suggestions.

One: residents of this battered enclave should ironically adopt the World War II Warsaw ghetto end-game and men, women and children die fighting the invader/oppressor.

Two: which I support, the ineffectual motor-mouths of the United Nations and the equally empty solution-talking princes, potentates, presidents and prime ministers of the First, Second and Third worlds hasten to Gaza and take up residence in the target area.

Who is going to threaten such money-providing VIPs? How about it, important ladies and gentlemen?

Greg Cornwell, Yarralumla Headlines say it all THE HEADLINES tell the story: "UN Security Council calls for immediate Gaza truce", "20 Gaza rockets strike Negev, lightly wounding one person", "Palestinians: Israel attacks 30 Gaza targets, killing at least 10". Is the United Nations Security Council relevant any more?

"Livni, on Gaza truce resolution: Israel will act in own interests" and "Hamas seeks Gaza war of attrition ending in IDF pullout". Do Israeli or Palestinian politicians care at all about the welfare of their citizens, and the burdens citizens shoulder for the politicians' and fighters' self-aggrandisement?

Do Israelis or Palestinians care about the welfare of each other any more, or just blasting each other into vapor? Maybe we should let them destroy each other and get it over with ...

Letters to the Editor

Judy Bamberger, O'Connor ACT A 'Nats alternative WHETHER Summernats closes down, moves elsewhere or continues in Canberra, this city could do with an alternative-vehicle festival. Not one designed to glorify burning tyres, noise and gleaming chrome but one to promote ecologically light-footprinted, quiet vehicles for regular use.

Let's say we call this festival "Wintergreens". It would be held yearly, about six months after Summernats.

Where Summernats is fast and furious, Wintergreens is deliberate and gentle. While fossil-fuel use and climate change are of little concern to the former, they inspire a problem-solving attitude in the latter. The event would be a Mecca for the environmentally minded public, technological wizards and innovators those seeking to reduce and eliminate the environmental impact of motor vehicles. It would be a kind of environmental atonement or catharsis a Canberra winter of green content.

Jorge Gapella, Kaleen Minimise the harm I DON'T know what more we can do, ambulance services operations manager Paul Holman said after 10 people needed hospital treatment after taking illicit drugs at a rave party in Melbourne ("Ten overdose on drugs at dance party", January 3, p8). Despite all the advice, media warnings and threats of jail, it is clear some people will continue to take banned drugs. The priority should then be to do all we can to keep these people alive and ensure they survive the experience with the least possible harm. But governments, although they espouse harm minimisation, are timid. If they were fully committed, they would: sanction and financially support pill and drug testing at rave parties, remove criminal sanctions for the personal use of illegal drugs, and open up the debate so ideas like these are not dismissed.

B. McConnell, Higgins Taste of their medicine IF THE Government thinks the efficiency dividend is such a good idea it should be applied to Parliament.

An annual 3.25 per cent cut in the number of polities would make the remaining ones more efficient, to say nothing of the savings in salaries, official cars, allowances, on-costs and rhetoric. Consistency, like charity, begins at home.

Ray Edmondson, Kambah A costly climate GARNAUT report costs taxpayers thrice! I was pleasantly surprised when an Opposition politician understated the warranted criticism of a government.

Liberal senator Simon Birmingham pointed out the Rudd Government had paid only twice for the Garnaut report on climate change, once for the report work, \$2million, and then to actually buy the reports, at \$65,000 on top. Apparently the publishing rights had not been covered in the contract between Ross Garnaut and the Department of Climate Change an appalling bureaucratic stuff up.

I suggest taxpayers have paid three times: for the report work, the reports and for the Rudd Government to ignore the report in close to its entirety.

The ALP has played the public for fools. Having beaten up the issue, its response is so ineffectual you wonder why they bothered to commission Garnaut or even announce an emissions trading scheme when it is so ineffectual to be an embarrassment to release.

M. Gordon, Flynn Back to the source IT SEEMS to me that Ruth Weaver's water problems (Letters, January 9) come from its source. Googong Dam water comes in part from a catchment containing a lot of open country, from which the run-off obtains calcium carbonate.

The stains should come off rubbed with a sprinkle of baking soda. Ruth should rejoice that she doesn't live in parts of south-east England where water pumped from chalk aquifers bungs up kettles in no time.

Basil Johnson, Weston A waste solution I BELIEVE we could significantly reduce illegal dumping if the ACT adopted a policy I observed in a West Australian location. There, when a resident pays their rates they receive four vouchers for the free disposal of refuse at the tip. These are valid for the current year.

In this way, only commercial operators or citizens who have excessive refuse would have to pay tip fees. It might also be a good idea if people tried to be less wasteful. M. Pietersen, Kambah Try a new tack SEAN O'GRADY of

Letters to the Editor

The Independent wonders who and where the next socio- economic gurus are ("Capricious mistress of capitalism twists and squirms again", January 2, p15).

Maybe modern capitalism is all played out. Maybe we should do something about our natural revulsion of its main drivers exploitation and greed, even interest and find a way to install the real creators of prosperity and wellbeing scientists, mathematicians, philosophers, poets, artists and the like as navigators of a sustainable and more benevolent capital-based system. Many traders, bankers and salesmen will contest the feasibility of that. We need them, but not calling the shots their track record is abysmal.

Jack Kershaw, Kambah

Load-Date: January 10, 2009

End of Document

Israel's path will alienate allies

USA TODAY

January 9, 2009 Friday

FINAL EDITION

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 10A

Length: 1078 words

Body

A recent report on the tragic situation in Gaza was pushed to the back of the News section. I found it curious that a photo of two people visiting a Holocaust Memorial in Berlin appeared in a weather update directly next to the article and a picture of the recent destruction in Gaza by Israeli bombings ("Israel resists calls for immediate cease-fire," Tuesday).

This unique combination seemed intended to soften the message about the violence in Gaza. It's as if the reminder of the Holocaust would somehow justify Israel's incursion.

One would think that after what happened to innocent Jews under Nazi Germany, the Israelis would be more sympathetic to the outcry that accompanies the killing of innocent Palestinians. If we have learned anything, it would be that genocide should not be repeated.

If Israel continues on this destructive path, soon it will not have many friends left.

Israel has placed all its bets on U.S. support, but even here the opinion is shifting. Israel can no longer deflect world focus from the real issue: a brutal occupation that has lasted 60 years with no sign of ending.

Tanvir Hasan

Cincinnati

Retaliation was overdue

With news reports of protests and outrage over Israel's actions in the Gaza Strip, one can only wonder where the protests and outrage were as Israeli civilians were subjected to indiscriminate bombardment these past several years.

The United Nations secretary-general and a host of world leaders repeat the mantra of calling for a cease-fire, but where was their concern for the Israeli citizens of Sderot and other towns and villages of southern Israel? The real dilemma is how the Western world can cope with an enemy that sees no dishonor in hiding behind women and children while attacking someone else's women and children.

And though the world expects Israel to cringe in fear of its opinions, in reality the only opinion that matters is that of the residents of southern Israel who have been targets of Hamas for far too long.

Israel 's path will alienate allies

Scott David Lippe

Fair Lawn, N.J.

Banned substances are easily available

This week, Major League Baseball issued 50-game suspensions to two players for taking substances banned by the league ("Suspension roils Romero," Sports, Wednesday).

These performance-enhancing products were not, however, mixed up in some secretive laboratory or smuggled across the border. They were purchased over the counter from vitamin stores.

So while our professional sports programs finally got the message and are cracking down on performance-enhancing drugs, we now find that every high school athlete can purchase them easily from their neighborhood stores.

Our government should demand an immediate withdrawal of all over-the-counter products that contain any substance banned by organized sports such as MLB, the Olympics or the NFL.

In addition, stiff fines should be imposed on any company that puts this stuff on the shelf.

Americans correctly demanded that our government put pressure on professional sports programs to crack down on illegal steroid use. We need to demand more vehemently that such substances do not become as commonplace as daily vitamins to our high school athletes.

Rob Castagna

Milford, N.J.

Study credentials

What do President-elect Barack Obama, Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, Arizona Gov. Janet Napolitano and Leon Panetta have in common? A thin resume for the jobs they will or could be filling ("Panetta criticized as choice for CIA," News, Tuesday).

It would be far more reassuring if Obama, with his limited experience to be president during these very dangerous and challenging times, had selected individuals with strong credentials for the jobs to which he nominated them.

One can only hope the candidates will be thoroughly questioned on their credentials.

The threat of terrorism and our security are such that there can be no provision for on-the-job training.

Dennis Brady

Exeter, N.H.

CIA director's importance

A breakdown of intelligence was said to be at fault in the failure to prevent the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks and in the misguided invasion of Iraq.

So the thought of Leon Panetta as a CIA director doing on-the-job training is a scary one.

Daniel B. Jeffs

Apple Valley, Calif.

Unregulated private companies fueled subprime lending

Israel 's path will alienate allies

A USA TODAY editorial doled out lumps of coal to those the editorial board believes should be blamed for the financial crisis. By including us in your roundup, the board demonstrated a gross misunderstanding of the role we played in regard to the government-sponsored enterprises (GSE) and the role of affordable housing ("Who's to blame for economy?," Dec. 17).

First, it will be hard to justify that Democratic "members supported virtually any program that provided credit to low-income purchasers and inner cities, regardless of whether this lending was prudent," when in fact we have been trying to pass a national anti-predatory lending legislation for years. But we were thwarted by a deregulation-loving Republican Congress that wanted to allow the "free" market to work its magic.

It was the Republicans who pushed homeownership at all costs, except that we all now have to pay the price for their exuberance. We are also tireless advocates of affordable rental housing, and we know full well that we want homeownership for those who can afford it, but we should also help people with good, decent, affordable rental housing.

Despite overwhelming evidence implicating lax regulatory oversight and bad lending practices, USA TODAY has joined the Republican Party in choosing Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac as the scapegoats in a calculated political strategy.

A look at the facts will tell you otherwise: Unregulated private sector companies -- not Fannie and Freddie -- were behind the soaring subprime lending at the core of this crisis. Fannie and Freddie lagged in this market because they were subject to tougher underwriting standards than those rogue private lenders.

From 1995 to 2006, only one vote was taken in the House of Representatives or the Senate to reform the GSEs, and the Republican 12-year hold on Congress failed to advance any reform. It took the Democratic Congress to get this done.

Pointing a finger is hardly a useful gesture when the economic crisis facing our nation is so grave and the suffering of our people so great. We should instead come together to solve the problems before us, no matter who or what caused them.

Sen. Christopher J. Dodd, D-Conn.

Rep. Barney Frank, D-Mass.

Washington

Graphic

PHOTO, B/W, Nayef Hashlamoun, Reuters

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Stumbling along, in harmony with history

The Australian

December 29, 2008 Monday

1 - All-round Country Edition

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Byline: DAVID BURCHELL

Body

A truly awful year, 2008 laboured under the heavy baggage of events from 40 years ago

ALL in all -- despite the intoxicating but temporary effluvium of Obamamania -- 2008 has been a truly dreadful year. The long global economic boom, which vaulted tens of millions out of poverty and even threatened to revive the economies of sub-Saharan Africa, has collapsed like a distended water balloon hitting the footpath.

The Beijing Olympic Games offered for our viewing pleasure one of the grandest displays of dictatorial charisma since their lovingly filmed equivalent in Berlin 70 years earlier. In turn, partly under the influence of Beijing's thoroughly cynical foreign policies, large portions of Central Africa have descended into political and social disaster.

Meanwhile, Islamist-inspired nihilism has gained strength across what used to be called the Near East and Central Asia, dragging Afghanistan and Pakistan back into chaos and spilling their misery into peaceful and prosperous Mumbai.

When ancient Romans looked out on to the disintegrating lineaments of their civitas, it must have looked something like this.

No wonder they -- as we do -- turned to otherworldly philosophies for their solace.

This year was supposed to be a year of memorials and anniversaries, yet these too failed to offer succour or illumination.

The 40th anniversary of the Prague Spring was commemorated by the spectacle of Russian tanks clattering into another former satellite state, as if in a grainy, colourised re-enactment. A delayed anniversary of the 1968 Paris riots saw large parts of Athens reduced to burnt metal and broken glass in a spirit of nihilistic youthful rebellion. And the 60th anniversary of Israel was completed in the now time-honoured fashion, with operatic condemnation of Israel's supposed massacre of the innocents in Hamas's armed camps.

Indeed, at times it seemed current events and the anniversaries were operating in a kind of ironic harmony, as if, following the ancients, the gods truly do have a sense of humour.

To the best of my knowledge, nobody yet has noticed the coincidence that while the stylishly clad militants of Lashkar-e-Toiba darted around Mumbai's main railway station, mowing down civilians at random like avenging

Stumbling along, in harmony with history

deities, a fashionably dark, chic and amoral re-enactment of the crimes and adventures of the Baader-Meinhof terror group, that most repellent of all the confused legacies of 1968, was premiering in European cinemas to polite applause and respectful reviews.

The Baader-Meinhof Complex won't be released in cinemas here until 2009, and yet in many respects it seems to provide a fitting bookend to the debacles and delusions of 2008. The European reviews have carefully emphasised the film's studious implied criticisms of the terrorist group's actions and ideologies.

Then, in the next breath, they generally observe how exhilarating it is to view a group of glamorous young women mowing down portly middle-aged businessmen with glistening automatic weapons, all in the name of some undefined spirit of human liberation and set to a gratifyingly pulse-racing soundtrack.

This seems only fitting. After all, Byron wouldn't have been such an erotically charged romantic hero if he hadn't been mad, bad and dangerous to know. And Che Guevara would have made a thoroughly unsexy social democrat. The cult of the Red Army Faction has been so lovingly sustained because many of its chroniclers seem never to have really grown up.

Writing in The Guardian, venerable British journalist and 1968 romantic Neal Ascherson launched into a barely repressed erotic rhapsody about his youthful encounters with the "tender and vulnerable" Ulrike Meinhof, the confused young woman who was paraded as the group's sexual symbol.

In a thoroughly clever manoeuvre, at once condemnatory and celebratory, one German critic claimed the film "brings to light a repressed truth about the allure of the RAF. Girls with guns are the ultimate desire and fear fantasy of a patriarchal, inhibited society." And there you have it: Meinhof as Barbarella.

Of course, we know as matters of historical fact that the Baader-Meinhof group was originally funded by the East German Stasi; that its alumni were caught up in the 1973 Entebbe hijacking in which the passengers were systematically divided into Jews and gentiles; and that Andreas Baader hailed the 1972 Munich Olympics massacre as a model for revolutionary action.

We also know that one of the group's founders, released from prison in the 1980s, has reinvented himself as a neo-Nazi, maintaining that his basic ideals are unchanged.

Indeed, often it seems that the main distinction between the far Left and the far Right was their level of education. The former developed its half-baked messianic theories out of bibs-and-bobs of theory culled from university degrees, while the latter focused its hatreds on more immediate physical attributes such as skin colour and ethnicity.

And yet while the mystique of one group has been more or less completely extinguished, the mystique of the other continues, seemingly undimmed, through our present traumas.

In turn, the present vogue of Islamist radicalism contrives to fuse the messianic outlooks of far Right and far Left into a kind of synthesis dressed up in the mantle of theology. Anti-capitalism, anti-Semitism, social revolutionism and personal ultra-conservatism, all stirred into a heady eclectic brew. No wonder it seems to produce the same intrigued ambivalence among some infidels that it does among some believers.

As it happens, there is one chronicler of 1968's dark side who knows better than to romanticise it. Her name is Bettina Rohr, and she's the orphaned daughter of Meinhof.

For most of the past decade she has been struggling to craft a portrait of her mother as a physically and mentally ill dupe rather than a glamorous revolutionary murderer, in the process, it seems, hoping to lay to rest the ghost of the RAF. For her troubles she has attracted little other than contempt and innuendo.

In a sense, Rohr is a little like the daughter out of that old BBC television series Absolutely Fabulous: the young woman who realises that it has been left to her to clean up the mess left by her parents' enthusiasms (and those of their generation).

Stumbling along, in harmony with history

In a recent documentary Rohr recounted a childhood visit to her mother's prison. ``It's strenuous when children have to -- if you like -- comfort their mother," she recalled.

Not long after that visit Meinhof was found hanging from the ceiling, in an early instance of the now familiar cult of terror-suicide.

Her supporters gleefully presented her as a martyr to ``state terror". Perhaps it's not surprising Rohr feels the presence of dismal historical shadows behind our present troubles.

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End of Document

New light on the Israeli side of the conflict; FILM: 1982 Massacre Rendered Through Dark, Distorted Lens

IPS (Latin America)

January 8, 2009 Thursday

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Byline: Ali Gharib

Body

'Waltz With Bashir', already an award-winning documentary and the official Israeli submission for best foreign language film to the U.S. Academy Awards, gives the perspective of Israeli Defence Force (IDF) soldiers and their involvement in the events in West Beirut in 1982.

It's a harrowing tale of post-traumatic stress disorder. And while the events of Sabra and Shatila are distinctly different than the current situation in Gaza, there are lessons to be learned from a quarter-century ago.

The film opens with pack of 26 snarling dogs running down a street. They collect below a balcony with a lone figure smoking -- Folman's friend and fellow IDF veteran, Boaz Rein-Buskila.

Cut to a bar in Israel in 2006. Folman is chatting with Rein-Buskila over drinks. The conversation and the nightmare shown moments before are rendered in dark and brooding animated sequences.

The viewer quickly learns the modus operandi of Folman's creative documentary: audio interviews are animated, as are the recollections and flashbacks described. (All the interviews are real, though Beiz-Buskila and another of Folman's friends elected to have theirs re-voiced.)

Rein-Buskila connects his nightmare to another animated memory from his participation in the Israeli occupation of West Beirut in 1982, where he was assigned to shoot barking neighbourhood dogs as Israeli troops silently moved into Lebanese villages under the cover of night.

Listening to his friend, Folman realises that he remembers nothing about the events, and Rein-Buskila only remembers in bits. Driving back from the meeting, however, Folman has his first flashback of the Sabra and Shatila massacre, though he even can't be sure if the visions are real flashbacks or hallucinations.

Named for the West Beirut Palestinian refugee camps where the slaughter took place, the Sabra and Shatila massacre saw the occupying Israeli forces surround and seal off the camps before allowing Phalangist militias through their checkpoints.

Most versions say that hundreds, if not thousands, of refugees were murdered by the Phalangists, who may have been exacting misplaced revenge for the assassination of the Maronite Lebanese President Bashir Gamayel. (The film takes its name from a scene of Folman's IDF pal spinning around in circles blindly firing a machine gun, while surrounded by Gamayel posters.)

New light on the Israeli side of the conflict FILM: 1982 Massacre Rendered Through Dark, Distorted Lens

Public outrage led the Israeli government to form the Kahan Commission. The report found Israel bore 'indirect responsibility' and personally blamed and called for the removal of, among others, then-Israeli Defence Minister and later-Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, who is portrayed in an unflattering light in the film.

According to the report, while Israelis did not carry out the killings themselves, the choice to allow Phalangists into the camps was clearly too risky given the recent political atmosphere surrounding the loss of their leader.

But Folman and his buddies remember little of it. They all have bits and pieces, but, for the most part, the memories of Sabra and Shatila have been repressed. The film then turns into a journey to put the memories, or some semblance of them, together again.

Folman begins to reconstruct his entry into Lebanon; the wild shooting from the backs of tanks while aiming at no one in particular and everyone around at the same time.

But again and again, Folman returns to his flashback of Sabra and Shatila. He doesn't know what happened, and he's not even sure if his memories are real or hallucinations.

He and several fellow soldiers are bathing nude in the Mediterranean at night. They emerge from the water looking Zombie-like with sunken eyes and slumped shoulders, and get slowly dressed and walk away from the sea with their guns.

In front of them are the slums, completely lit up by flares fired by the Israelis. Later, the same flares would be used to place blame for the massacres on the IDF, which illuminated the camps for the Phalangists.

The director sets out to interview more friends from the IDF, sees a psychologist, a professor who specialises in post-traumatic stress, and gets hold of a video reporter who was there on the scene.

None of the pictures the audience gets from any of the sources is complete, but together they provide a portrait of the Israeli side of the events -- although only the Israeli side. That's because the film is more about remembering the events surrounding those atrocities rather than the massacres themselves.

Finally, after searching, Folman does create a composite picture. And, eventually, a real picture as well. In a Wizard of Oz-like moment, the drab animation suddenly gives way to real video from the checkpoints surrounding the camps.

It happens just at the end of the film: as Folman and his fellow nude-bathers approach the camp, they round a corner and are -- suddenly in real video -- in front of a crowd of screaming and grieving Palestinian women.

Because of the events of recent weeks, comparisons are inevitable between the film and the current crisis. Gaza has been reduced to a glorified refugee camp, and again the Palestinian camp is under siege by the IDF.

Video of IDF tanks readying for the ground assault on Gaza aired on Al Jazeera English last Friday are eerily similar to reconstituted images of the siege of Sabra and Shatila as shown in Waltz.

The notion of going in on the ground to root out fighters from one group was done in Sabra and Shatila as well -- the goal is to wipe out Hamas 'terrorists' now, and then it was the Palestinian Liberation Organisation, though in that case it was Phalangists aided and abetted by Israel rather than the IDF. Nonetheless, the result of that assault doesn't bode well for the similar one today.

But Folman's perspective is still an enlightening one.

It serves two functions for observers of the ongoing conflict today: one is a fair reckoning of history and the other is showing a rarely divulged side of Israeli scars of their own acts within that history.

The film lends credibility to calls from pro-peace Jewish and Israeli groups who insist that this latest assault is not only bad for Palestinians, but also bad for Israel.

New light on the Israeli side of the conflict FILM: 1982 Massacre Rendered Through Dark, Distorted Lens

Watching 'Waltz With Bashir', one wonders whether today's 19-year old IDF soldiers will be dealing with post-traumatic stress in 25 years as they try to piece together their memories of the Gaza invasion of 2009.</ © 2009 NoticiasFinancieras - IPS - All rights reserved

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End of Document

Focus: Middle East Crisis: 'Does it make pilots happy to kill Palestinian children and women?': Fida Qishta, in her diary of a week in Gaza, tells of life under a rain of fire

The Observer (London) (England)

January 4, 2009

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TheObserver

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Byline: Fida Qishta

Body

Saturday 27 December

I visit friends in the Block J neighbourhood in Rafah in the south of the Gaza Strip. While I am in a friend's house, my phone rings. It's a friend from Gaza City, calling for a chat. Suddenly I hear the sound of an explosion at his end. At the same time I hear an explosion in Rafah too. Just outside. My friend says: "Fida, they are attacking nearby." I say: "They are attacking here too."

Everybody is running, all looking to see if their relatives and friends are alive. Naama is aged 13. This is what she tells me: "I was sitting in the classroom with my friends when the attack happened. We were scared and we ran out of our school. We saw fire everywhere."

Later I am at home with my family. The Israeli defence ministry says any house that has guns or weapons will be targeted next, without warning. Just to let you know, we don't have any weapons in our house. If we die, please defend my family.

Sunday 28 December

I wake up at 7am after an Israeli F-16 attack. Our house is shaking. We all try to imagine what has happened, but want to at least know where the attack was. It is so scary. We try to open the main door to our flat, but it's stuck shut. I have to climb out of the window. I am shocked when I find out our neighbour's pharmacy was the target. It is just 60 metres from our house. They targeted a pharmacy.

Om Mohammed says: "They [Israeli forces] attack everywhere. They have gone crazy. The Gaza Strip is just going to die. We were sleeping. Suddenly we heard a bomb. We woke up and didn't know where to go. We couldn't see through the dust. We thought our house had been hit, not the street. What is our guilt? Are we terrorists? I don't carry a gun, neither does my girl."

Focus: Middle East Crisis: 'Does it make pilots happy to kill Palestinian children and women?': Fida Qishta, in her diary of a week in Gaza, tells of life under....

"There's no medicine. No drinks, no water, no gas. We are suffering from hunger. They attack us. What does Israel want? Look at the children. What are they guilty of? They were sleeping at 7am. This child was traumatised during the attack. Do they have rockets to attack with?"

Monday 29 December

The Israeli army is destroying the tunnels from Rafah into Egypt. For the past year and a half the Israeli government has intensified the economic blockade by closing all the border crossings that allow aid and essential supplies to reach Palestinians in Gaza. This forced Palestinians to dig tunnels to Egypt to survive. At night we can't go out. If you go out you will risk your life. You don't know where the bombs will fall. My mother watches me writing my reports and says: "Will it make any difference?"

Before the attack started we got some food aid from the EU. It's not much, but enough, we're not starving. But some of our friends have nothing. My mum warns me: "Fida, don't leave the house, it's too dangerous outside." Then she goes out to share our food with the neighbours who have nothing.

Wednesday 31 December

11.40pm: a powerful air strike. I was sleeping but the blast wakes me. I see my mum looking from the window. She points at one of the refugee camps. "The attack was there," she said. I went back to sleep, not because I don't care, but because I can't deal with it. If the attack was really aimed at one of the camps that means hundreds are going to be injured or even killed.

Thursday 1 January

I get up early and call a friend in Alshabora camp. He confirms the attack had hit there and I go to meet him. It looks like an earthquake. Many houses have been damaged, and many people have been wounded. The people who had escaped injury were trying to clean the place up - they have nowhere else to go. But the biggest shock is when I ask about the target. It was the children's playground.

"We heard a strong explosion happen, but with all the smoke and the dust we couldn't see well, and the electricity was off," I am told by a small child.

"We saw everything fall down - the window broke on us. We went downstairs, and people were saying that the playground's been targeted. This park is not a member of Hamas, it's for playing. It's for civilians - so why did they attack it?," asks one 12-year-old.

The target was a civilian area - but there was no warning, not one phone call from the Israeli army to tell civilians to beware.

I visit the main hospital in Rafah. There are so many injured, most of them children. In one ward, I meet four children aged five or six. They can't speak, they just look at you.

There is a 16-year-old girl also suffering from shrapnel injuries. Three of her brothers were killed; all her family were injured. She looks like a zombie and says nothing at all. Her mother is dying in the intensive care unit.

The hospital manger gives the statistics for 1 January: two dead - a man aged 22 and a woman aged 33; 59 injured - 16 children, 18 women, the rest old people. Most had been sleeping when the bombs dropped.

A message to the pilots in the Israeli F-16s: does it make you feel happy to kill Palestinian children and women? Do you feel it's your duty? Killing every child and woman, man and teenager in Gaza? Please think of your mother and sister, your son and daughter.

Friday 2 January

Focus: Middle East Crisis: 'Does it make pilots happy to kill Palestinian children and women?': Fida Qishta, in her diary of a week in Gaza, tells of life under....

I am in the hospital again. An ambulance crew has been called out to help an injured man near the ruins of the old Gaza airport. He's one of the bedouin who tend their sheep in that area. Four shepherds saw an explosion and went to investigate. When they arrived there was a second bomb and they were injured. An ambulance managed to rescue three of them. But one of their friends is still there, bleeding. The ambulance crew are afraid to go back for him. He is just 50 metres from the green line so they are afraid the Israeli soldiers will target them. There are still planes in the air. I have just heard a big explosion on the border area.

Fida Qishta is a freelance Palestinian television producer and writer based in Gaza's southern township of Rafah

A fuller version of the diary appears at guardian.co.uk/palestinians

Load-Date: January 5, 2009

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UPDATE: Charity contacts speak of desperate situation

Asian Image

January 6, 2009

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Section: WORLD NEWS (WORLD)

Length: 1053 words

Byline: Asian Image reporter

Body

A charity says reports from inside Gaza tell of a desperate and dangerous situation.

Christian Aid was deeply concerned about the humanitarian emergency in the Gaza Strip even before the current wave of hostilities.

Israel's 18-month blockade had already left Gazan hospitals desperately short of emergency medical supplies and spare parts for vital equipment.

Mr Abdalhadi Abu Khousa of the Palestinian Medical Relief Society (PMRS) told us PMRS are continuing to operate mobile health services, but are desperately short of medicine.

There are particular restrictions in the north of Gaza and around Rafah which means they can't provide services directly there. Permits for operating in Beit Hanoun have been denied.

Dr Abdalhadi is worried about the coming days as movement restrictions and lack of supplies get worse. There is also the shortage of electricity and water to contend with.

They are able to work in the open area of Jabaylia, but where there are Israeli operations they are not even allowed to pick up injured people. It is impossible to send medications and other supplies between parts of the Strip as it has been divided into three by Israeli forces.

Within each area ambulances are still being used, despite every journey being a grave risk to the drivers.

He said: "It's very difficult for first aiders to move from one place to another. It's war. All the time, everyone is under fire in all of Gaza.

"First we need pressure from outside to stop the Israeli war. We follow the marches and demonstrations in other countries and that gives us some hope. When the war stops, we will be able to cope."

Mr Abu Khousa had to flee from his home after it was shelled, but he says he, like all of Gaza's first-aiders, he "will continue to work and to help up the very last minute".

Miri Weingarten of Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) -(a Christian Aid partner based in Jerusalem but operating on the ground in Gaza) said attacks on medical crews are making it extremely difficult to treat and evacuate the wounded.

UPDATE: Charity contacts speak of desperate situation

After calling for international intervention for an immediate ceasefire, PHR-Israel today sent two urgent requests to the Israeli Military Chief of staff regarding protection of medical teams, internal evacuation of the wounded, and evacuation of the wounded to external medical care.

They have also logged the following incidents.

- December 31, 2008: Helicopter fires on medical crew evacuating wounded: in Jabal Kashif in northeast Gaza a crew set out to offer assistance. While approaching the bleeding victim on foot, they were hit by helicopter fire. Dr. Ihab Madhun, medic Muhammad Abu Hasireh, as well as the injured victim, were killed.
- January 3, 2009: Second attack on a house after medical crews enter to evacuate the wounded: The house of the Dabbabish family in Sheikh Radwan had already been bombarded. As a crew of medics dressed in medical vests arrived on the scene to tend to the wounded the house was bombarded for a second time. One person was critically wounded: Ayyad Ahmad.
- January 4, 2009: Ambulance belonging to the Al Awda Hospital in Beit Lahiya was hit by helicopter fire. Arfa Abd al Daim, a senior volunteer medic was killed and two other medical personnel were critically injured.
- January 4, 2009: Tank fires on ambulance during attempts to evacuate a family in Tel Alhawa. Inass Fadil Naim, Yassir Shabir and Rifaat Abdel Al were killed.

The Near Council Of Churches (NECC) run drop-in primary care clinics supported by Christian Aid.

During the crisis the clinics had been operating as emergency medical centres, but have had to suspend activities in the last 24 hours because staff can't travel to work in safety and patients who need care can't get to the health centres because they are situated in areas which have been evacuated due to Israeli operations.

NECC say if the security situation changed - if the fighting stopped - the clinics could operate and provide essential medical care straight away.

One NECC staff member, who is available for interview, but doesn't wish to be named for fear of reprisal, said: "The weather is cold, and there has been no electricity for 3 days: 'All Gaza is dark'. No electricity, therefore no heating. It is the coldest time of year and after 4:30pm it is dark. It is frightening and it is not safe to walk outside.

Can you imagine 1.5 million people living in the dark and cold?"

"You have to wait three hours to buy bread at the ovens in the shops. There are queues of 700 people for bread. I can't remember a time like this. We are human beings- children and women are under the bombing; we don't have any defences. We are in a hopeless situation; we need anyone to help us. " "My family had a permit to celebrate Christmas in Bethlehem. I had to return home on Friday so didn't make it to join my wife in the West Bank, and we are apart for Christmas and New Year for the first time ever. She is not able to join me now and I cannot leave Gaza, all because of the bombing."

Ahmad Sourani, Gaza director of the Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committee (PARC) said: "Families are trapped in their houses. It is only possible to move outside in the dark; we expect an escalation in violence.

There are no services operating; PARC- like other NGOs- cannot work properly because we cannot move around. It is a very frightening and frustrating situation.

There has been no electricity for many days; the little food people have in fridges has gone bad."

Whether Palestinians or Israelis, we are all suffering. For people who are suffering, it is normal to search for hope, it is not normal to suffer violence continually. " Reem Al Naraib of the Women's Affairs Centre (WAC) in north Gaza is six months pregnant. She had to leave her home after Israeli tanks began bombing the area.

In the rush to escape her family left behind all their possessions and ID cards.

UPDATE: Charity contacts speak of desperate situation

They moved to another house in the middle of Gaza city but Reem says that **Hamas** have started firing rockets from this new area and she fears they will come under attack again. She or her other children haven't had a drink of water in two days. She says her blood pressure is high and she has a constant headache caused by dehydration. She fears that she is going to loose her baby.

Her 9 year old son is vomiting with fear, and is dehydrated but she has no water to give him.

Load-Date: January 6, 2009

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International: Gaza: Anatomy of an attack: 'Some were decapitated. My cousin and his son died in front of me'

The Guardian - Final Edition

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the **guardian**

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Byline: Rory McCarthy Jerusalem, Hazem Balousha, Gaza City

Body

In the houses at the edge of Zeitoun, a rundown neighbourhood on the outskirts of Gaza City, dozens of Palestinian families woke to discover that Israel's invasion had brought troops and tanks to their doorstep.

In the darkness the military had set up a position in the rubble of a former Jewish settlement. The soldiers ordered out residents from higher buildings and those closest to the former Netzarim settlement. The soldiers then took up positions on the upper floors.

In one case around 110 Palestinians were moved into a single-residence house. Half were children; all were told to stay indoors. Yesterday the United Nations Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs described what happened next: "Twenty-four hours later, Israeli forces shelled the home repeatedly, killing approximately 30." Many more bodies may still be hidden in the rubble of that building.

The killings at Zeitoun happened on Monday but it was only yesterday that the full horror became clear. According to accounts the strongest among the survivors carried injured children for more than a mile until they found drivers willing to take them to the Shifa hospital in Gaza City. By the time they arrived, three of the children were dead.

Israel's ground invasion has been littered with many deadly incidents but the UN described Zeitoun as "one of the gravest" and one which the UN's top human rights official said appears to have "all the elements of war crimes".

There has been a rapid increase in the number of children killed, which as of late Thursday stood at 257 - but could be many more. Already the death toll on the Palestinian side stands at 760, nearly half **women** and children - a far higher rate of death even than Israel's devastating war in southern Lebanon two years ago. On the Israeli side 13 have died, three of them civilians.

One of most compelling accounts of the Zeitoun killings comes from Meysa Samouni, 19. She told the Israeli human rights group B'Tselem that she and 13 others from her family were ordered at gunpoint out of their home at 9am on Sunday morning by Israeli soldiers who eventually took them to join others in a concrete warehouse. Around 70 neighbours and relatives were in the building, without food or drink.

International: Gaza: Anatomy of an attack: 'Some were decapitated. My cousin and his son died in front of me'

At around 6am on Monday, she said, four of the men left to bring other relatives to the shelter. "The moment they left the house, a missile or shell hit them," she said. One was killed instantly, the others were injured.

"My husband went over to them to help and then a shell or missile was fired on to the roof of the warehouse," she said. She believed from the size of the strike that it was a bomb dropped by a fighter jet.

"When the missile struck, I lay down with my daughter under me. Everything filled up with smoke and dust and I heard screams and crying." She said 20 to 30 people were killed - among them her husband Tawfiq, 21, and both her husband's parents, Rashed, 41, and Rabab, 38. Another 20 were injured, some severely. A piece of shrapnel had sliced off the thumb and two fingers from the left hand of her nine-month-old daughter, Jumana.

Eventually, after two of the men with her were detained and blindfolded by soldiers, she and her daughter made it to hospital. "As far as I know, the dead and wounded who were under the ruins are still there," she said.

Nafaz Samouni, 42, estimated there were around 50 people in the house. "When the shelling started more than half of the people in the house were killed," he said from al-Ahli hospital in Gaza City, where he was recovering from leg wounds. "Some were decapitated. My cousin and his son died in front of me."

His son Ahmad, 12, was shot in the arm and the chest - doctors said the bullet hit his heart. The boy was due to be transferred to hospital in Egypt.

But Nafaz Samouni could not leave the house until medics from the International Committee of the Red Cross arrived on Wednesday afternoon, when Israel for the first time paused its fighting for three hours to allow in desperately needed aid. "We spent four days without food. We had just a kerosene lamp and very little water," he said. "As we left we saw dead bodies around us. Dogs were eating them."

The Red Cross described the Zeitoun killing as "a shocking incident" and recounted how its staff found children too weak to stand and sitting by the dead bodies of their mothers. It was "unacceptable," it said, that the military prevented earlier access by ambulances.

The Israeli military said it would investigate "once such a complaint is received formally, within the constraints of the current military operation." The military did not address the details of the killings, but said: "The Israel Defence Forces is engaged in a battle with the Hamas terrorist organisation that has deliberately used Palestinian civilians as human shields . . .

"The IDF in no way intentionally targets civilians and has demonstrated its willingness to abort operations to save civilian lives and to risk injury in order to assist innocent civilians."

However there is little doubt Israeli forces are using intense fire power. Even the soldiers admit this. "We do not balk at any means to protect the lives of our soldiers," one unnamed unit commander told the Ha'aretz newspaper.

About 20,000 Gazans in the north have fled their homes and several thousand more have fled in Rafah on the Egyptian border. But even they are not safe. In the second major incident of the week, at least 43 Palestinians were killed in a UN school in Jabalia on Tuesday.

At least three mortar rounds landed in the compound, even though the UN had given Israel the co-ordinates of all its installations in Gaza to prevent any such attack. It was one of several times UN staff or buildings were hit this week, forcing the UN Relief and Works Agency to suspend all movement of its staff.

The Israeli military said an initial inquiry had shown that several mortar shells were fired at Israeli forces from within the school. It released a video on YouTube of a mortar being fired from a UN school to support its case - but the footage dated back to October 2007.

However, the UN insisted the Israeli account was wrong. "I am very confident now that there was no militant activity. If anybody has evidence to the contrary, then let's bring it forward," said John Ging, director of Gaza operations for UNRWA.

International: Gaza: Anatomy of an attack: 'Some were decapitated. My cousin and his son died in front of me'

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