

# MARYLAND UNITED FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE, INC.

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**Note: All opinions expressed in this publication are those solely of their authors and do not necessarily reflect those of MUPJ and/or its members...as usual! Many thanks to Carol Solomon, Ron Solomon, and Paulette Hammond for help with this issue.**



### Highlights of Coordinating Body Meeting 12/17

**Membership Committee Report:** 8 organizations and 32 individuals renewed this year. We may have to think about raising dues because our expenses have increased. Ron actually printed out a membership and friend list (MUPJ Contact List.). Dan raised the idea of grants: we have gotten grants from R.E.S.I.S.T. in Massachusetts in the past (for our conferences), and Tony and Ron are applying for one from Adelphi Friends (\$500). Dan volunteered to explore this idea when it is less a hectic time of year.

### Caucus Reports

**MoCo:** MUPJ will be a sponsor of a Candidates Forum in Montgomery County, date tba.

**Frederick County:** is showing peace films with follow-up discussions

**Healthy Air for Maryland:** we agreed to sign-on and ask MaryPIRG to do a work action session. Paulette will send it in.

### Committee Reports

Benjamin Peace Awards 2006: the flyer was sent to 430 principals and 84 teachers—every high school—public, private and parochial—in Maryland. Three choices of topics were offered for the first time.

**Next Coordinating Body meeting**  
 Sunday, March 12, 2006 3 - 6 pm  
 (at the site of the Peace Conference TBA) Pot Luck dinner; please bring a dish to share.



### Update on the 21st Annual Maryland Peace Conference

Scheduled for Saturday, 4/29 in Baltimore, starting with a panel discussion on the theme of the conference: "**Creating a Culture of Peace**":

**The confirmed panelists** are:

Ray McGovern, anti-war activist, former CIA employee  
 Mac Legerton on coalition building  
 Pat Elder, Montgomery County Counter-recruiting activist

Michael Mohammed, Nation of Islam, Exec Dir, Abundant Life Clinic, Committee on Reorganizing to Promote Inclusiveness

Philip Jenkins, Washington Buddhist Peace Fellowship

**Confirmed workshops** include

Sarah Craft on the Death Penalty  
 Nancy Fayer on Non-violence  
 John Judge on counter-recruiting  
 Aparigraha: Victor Landis and the Global Coalition for Peace on the new economic paradigm

Mac Legerton, coalition-building  
 Chuck Michaels on the USA PATRIOT ACT and the assault on civil liberties

Ray McGovern on anti-war activities

Josh Kulkin on Global Warming  
**Confirmed Action Planning Sessions**

Chuck Michaels on the PATRIOT Acts

Action Planning on Counter-recruiting: John Judge and others  
 Schedule: 4/28 -- Pot Luck dinner at the venue to set up.  
 4/29 -- Panel

Workshop session I  
 Workshop Session II / Action Planning session  
 Lunch, as usual, will be vegetarian (or perhaps vegan)  
 Snacks bagels and cream cheese  
 Entertainment at lunch  
**We'll need volunteers for facilitating sessions, set-up and take-down.**

The co-sponsor letter will be sent as soon as a venue is secured.

We hope to have a Proclamation from the local jurisdiction (state or county), proclaiming Peace and Justice Day.



### "A Life, Wasted: Let's Stop This War Before More Heroes Are Killed"

By Paul E. Schroeder

Washington Post - January 3, 2006

Early on Aug. 3, 2005, we heard that 14 Marines had been killed in Haditha, Iraq. Our son, Lance Cpl. Edward "Augie" Schroeder II, was stationed there. At 10:45 a.m. two Marines showed up at our door. After collecting himself for what was clearly painful duty, the lieutenant colonel said, "Your son is a true American hero."

Since then, two reactions to Augie's death have compounded the sadness.

At times like this, people say, "He died a hero." I know this is meant with great sincerity. We appreciate the many condolences we have received and how helpful they have been. But when heard repeatedly, the phrases "he died a hero" or "he died a patriot" or "he died for his country" rub raw.

"People think that if they say that, somehow it makes it okay that he died," our daughter, Amanda, has said. "He was a hero before he died, not just because he went to Iraq. I was proud of him before, and being a patriot doesn't make his death okay. I'm glad he got so much respect at his funeral, but that didn't make it okay either."

The words "hero" and "patriot" focus on the death, not the life. They are a flag-draped mask covering the truth that few want to acknowledge openly: Death in battle is tragic no matter what the reasons for the war. The tragedy is

the life that was lost, not the manner of death. Families of dead soldiers on both sides of the battle line know this. Those without family in the war don't appreciate the difference.

This leads to the second reaction. Since August we have witnessed growing opposition to the Iraq war, but it is often whispered, hands covering mouths, as if it is dangerous to speak too loudly. Others discuss the never-ending cycle of death in places such as Haditha in academic and sometimes clinical fashion, as in "the increasing lethality of improvised explosive devices."

Listen to the kinds of things that most Americans don't have to experience: The day Augie's unit returned from Iraq to Camp Lejeune, we received a box with his notebooks, DVDs and clothes from his locker in Iraq. The day his unit returned home to waiting families, we received the second urn of ashes. This lad of promise, of easy charm and readiness to help, whose highest high was saving someone using CPR as a first aid squad volunteer, came home in one coffin and two urns. We buried him in three places that he loved, a fitting irony, I suppose, but just as rough each time.

I am outraged at what I see as the cause of his death. For nearly three years, the Bush administration has pursued a policy that makes our troops sitting ducks. While Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that our policy is to "clear, hold and build" Iraqi towns, there aren't enough troops to do that.

In our last conversation, Augie complained that the cost in lives to clear insurgents was "less and less worth it," because Marines have to keep coming back to clear the same places. Marine commanders in the field say the same thing. Without sufficient troops, they can't hold the towns. Augie was killed on his fifth mission to clear Haditha.

At Augie's grave, the lieutenant colonel knelt in front of my wife and, with tears in his eyes, handed her the folded flag. He said the only thing he could say openly: "Your son was a true American hero." Perhaps. But

I felt no glory, no honor. Doing your duty when you don't know whether you will see the end of the day is certainly heroic. But even more, being a hero comes from respecting your parents and all others, from helping your neighbors and strangers, from loving your spouse, your children, your neighbors and your enemies, from honesty and integrity, from knowing when to fight and when to walk away, and from understanding and respecting the differences among the people of the world.

Two painful questions remain for all of us. Are the lives of Americans being killed in Iraq wasted? Are they dying in vain? President Bush says those who criticize staying the course are not honoring the dead. That is twisted logic: honor the fallen by killing another 2,000 troops in a broken policy?

I choose to honor our fallen hero by remembering who he was in life, not how he died. A picture of a smiling Augie in Iraq, sunglasses turned upside down, shows his essence -- a joyous kid who could use any prop to make others feel the same way.

Though it hurts, I believe that his death -- and that of the other Americans who have died in Iraq -- was a waste. They were wasted in a belief that democracy would grow simply by removing a dictator -- a careless misunderstanding of what democracy requires. They were wasted by not sending enough troops to do the job needed in the resulting occupation -- a careless disregard for professional military counsel.

But their deaths will not be in vain if Americans stop hiding behind flag-draped hero masks and stop whispering their opposition to this war. Until then, the lives of other sons, daughters, husbands, wives, fathers and mothers may be wasted as well.

This is very painful to acknowledge, and I have to live with it. So does President Bush.

*The writer is managing director of a trade development firm in Cleveland.*



## **Peace on Earth? Increasingly, Yes.**

*By Andrew Mack, 12/ 28, 2005*

Seen through the eyes of the media, the world appears an evermore dangerous place. Iraq is sliding toward civil war, the slaughter in Darfur appears unending, violent insurgencies are brewing in Thailand and a dozen other countries, and terrorism strikes again in Bali. It is not surprising that most people believe global violence is increasing.

However, most people, including many leading policymakers and scholars, are wrong. The reality is that, since the end of the Cold War, armed conflict and nearly all other forms of political violence have decreased. The world is far more peaceful than it was. Why has this change attracted so little attention? In part because the global media give far more coverage to wars that start than to those that quietly end, but also because no international agency collects global or regional data on any form of political violence.

The Human Security Report, an independent study funded by five countries and published by Oxford University Press, draws on a wide range of little publicized scholarly data, plus specially commissioned research to present a portrait of global security that is sharply at odds with conventional wisdom. The report reveals that after five decades of inexorable increase, the number of armed conflicts started to fall worldwide in the early 1990s. The decline has continued.

By 2003, there were 40 percent fewer conflicts than in 1992. The deadliest conflicts -- those with 1,000 or more battle-deaths -- fell by some 80 percent. The number of genocides and other mass slaughters of civilians also dropped by 80 percent, while core human rights abuses have declined in five out of six regions of the developing world since the mid-1990s. International terrorism is the only type of political violence that has increased. Although the death toll has jumped sharply over the past three years, terrorists kill only a fraction of the number who die in wars.

What accounts for the extraordinary and counterintuitive improvement in global security over the past dozen

years? The end of the Cold War, which had driven at least a third of all conflicts since World War II, appears to have been the single most critical factor.

In the late 1980s, Washington and Moscow stopped fueling "proxy wars" in the developing world, and the United Nations was liberated to play the global security role its founders intended. Freed from the paralyzing stasis of Cold War geopolitics, the Security Council initiated an unprecedented, though sometimes inchoate, explosion of international activism designed to stop ongoing wars and prevent new ones.

Other international agencies, donor governments and nongovernmental organizations also played a critical role, but it was the United Nations that took the lead, pushing a range of conflict-prevention and peace-building initiatives on a scale never before attempted. The number of U.N. peacekeeping operations and missions to prevent and stop wars have increased by more than 400 percent since the end of the Cold War. As this upsurge of international activism grew in scope and intensity through the 1990s, the number of crises, wars and genocides declined.

There have been some horrific and much publicized failures, of course -- the failures to stop genocide in Rwanda, Srebrenica and Darfur being the most egregious. But the quiet successes -- in Namibia, El Salvador, Mozambique, Eastern Slovenia, East Timor and elsewhere went largely unheralded, as did the fact that the United Nations' expertise in handling difficult missions has grown dramatically.

A major study by the Rand Corp. published this year found that U.N. peace-building operations had a two-thirds success rate. They were also surprisingly cost-effective. In fact, the United Nations spends less running 17 peace operations around the world for an entire year than the United States spends in Iraq in a single month. What the United Nations calls "peacemaking" -- using diplomacy to end wars -- has been even more successful. About half of all the peace agreements negotiated between 1946 and 2003 have been

signed since the end of the Cold War.

With the Security Council often reluctant to act -- the abject failure to stop the Rwandan genocide remains a key example -- and with too many missions having been denied adequate resources, appropriate mandates or properly trained personnel, these successes are all the more remarkable.

In the wake of last month's global summit at the United Nations, many critics wrote the United Nations off as an institution so deeply flawed that it was beyond salvation. The analysis and the carefully collated data in the Human Security Report reveal something very different: an organization that, despite its failures and creaking bureaucracy, has played a critical role in enhancing global security.

*The writer directs the Human Security Center at the University of British Columbia. He was director of the Strategic Planning Unit in the executive office of U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan between 1998 and 2001.*



## 20 Amazing Facts About Voting in the USA

by *Angry Girl*

<http://nightweed.com/usavotefacts.html>

1. 80% of all votes in America are counted by only two companies: Diebold and ES&S.
2. There is no federal agency with regulatory authority or oversight of the U.S. voting machine industry.
3. The vice-president of Diebold and the president of ES&S are brothers.
4. The chairman and CEO of Diebold is a major Bush campaign organizer and donor who wrote in 2003 that he was "committed to helping Ohio deliver its electoral votes to the president next year."
5. Republican Senator Chuck Hagel used to be chairman of ES&S. He became Senator based on votes counted by ES&S machines.
6. Republican Senator Chuck Hagel, long-connected with the Bush family, was recently caught lying about his ownership of ES&S

by the Senate Ethics Committee.

7. Senator Chuck Hagel was on a short list of George W. Bush's vice-presidential candidates.

8. ES&S is the largest voting machine manufacturer in the U.S. and counts almost 60% of all U.S. votes.

9. Diebold's new touch screen voting machines have no paper trail of any votes. In other words, there is no way to verify that the data coming out of the machine is the same as what was legitimately put in by voters.

10. Diebold also makes ATMs, checkout scanners, and ticket machines, all of which log each transaction and can generate a paper trail.

11. Diebold is based in Ohio.

12. Diebold employed 5 convicted felons as consultants and developers to help write the central compiler computer code that counted 50% of the votes in 30 states.

13. Jeff Dean was Senior Vice-President of Global Election Systems when it was bought by Diebold. Even though he had been convicted of 23 counts of felony theft in the first degree, Jeff Dean was retained as a consultant by Diebold and was largely responsible for programming the optical scanning software now used in most of the United States.

14. Diebold consultant Jeff Dean was convicted of planting back doors in his software and using a "high degree of sophistication" to evade detection over a period of 2 years.

15. None of the international election observers were allowed in the polls in Ohio.

16. California banned the use of Diebold machines because the security was so bad. Despite Diebold's claims that the audit logs could not be hacked, a chimpanzee was able to do it! (See the movie here:

17. 30% of all U.S. votes are carried out on unverifiable touch screen voting machines with no paper trail.

18. All -- not some -- but all the voting machine errors detected and reported in Florida went in favor of Bush or Republican candidates.

19. The governor of the state of Florida, Jeb Bush, is the President's brother.

20. Serious voting anomalies in Florida -- again always favoring Bush -- have been mathematically demonstrated and

experts are recommending further investigation.

DECEMBER 2004 GALLUP POLLS

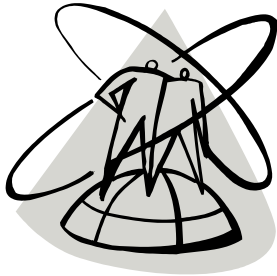
**1 in 5 Americans believe the elections were fraudulent.**

**That's over 41 Million Americans. You are NOT alone!**

To take action, check out True Vote Maryland at [www.truevotemd.org/](http://www.truevotemd.org/)

and the Center for Voting and Democracy at [www.fairvote.org/](http://www.fairvote.org/)

A cheap, fair, reliable, and efficient alternative already exists! Check out the Swiss Voting System at [www.swissvs.org](http://www.swissvs.org)



## More Than 470 Physicists Sign Petition To Oppose U.S. Policy On Nuclear Attack

By *Kim McDonald*

More than 470 physicists, including seven Nobel laureates, have signed a petition to oppose a new U.S. Defense Department proposal that allows the United States to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear states.

The petition was started by two physics professors at the University of California, San Diego, Kim Griest and Jorge Hirsch, who said they felt an obligation to speak out about the nuclear policy change because their profession brought nuclear weapons into the world 60 years ago.

They and other prominent physicists who signed the petition, which will be delivered to members of Congress, scientific professional societies and the news media, object to the new policy because it blurs the sharp line between nuclear weapons and

conventional, chemical and biological weapons.

"While it has long been a U.S. policy to use nuclear weapons in order to respond to a nuclear attack," said Hirsch, "the new policy allows the U.S. to use nuclear weapons against states that do not have nuclear weapons and for a host of new reasons, including rapid termination of a conflict on U.S. terms or to ensure success of the U.S. forces."

"Humanity has gone more than half a century without using nuclear weapons, in large part because of the success of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty," said Griest. "The U.S. use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear states will destroy the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and give strong incentive for other countries to develop and use nuclear weapons, thus making nuclear war more likely. As physicists we feel we need to bring this to the attention of policy makers and the public, in order to engender discussion, debate, and hopefully repudiation of the new policy."

The two physicists began their grass roots petition last month following reports in The New York Times and Washington Post that the federal government was in the final process of adopting a new U.S. policy that would permit the use of nuclear weapons against an adversary for the following reasons:

- \* For rapid and favorable war termination on U.S. terms.
- \* To ensure success of U.S. and multinational operations.
- \* To demonstrate U.S. intent and capability to use nuclear weapons to deter adversary use of weapons of mass destruction.
- \* Against an adversary intending to use weapons of mass destruction against US, multinational, or alliance forces.

Griest and Hirsch put their petition on the internet at [physics.ucsd.edu/petition/](http://physics.ucsd.edu/petition/), invited their colleagues to sign and quickly received an avalanche of responses.

The petition is signed by two

past presidents of the American Physical Society, the premier professional organization for U.S. physicists, George Trilling of UC Berkeley and Jerome Friedman of MIT. Friedman, who is also a Nobel laureate, was joined on the petition by six other Nobel Prizewinners in physics, Philip Anderson of Princeton University, Anthony Leggett of the University of Illinois, Douglas Osheroff of Stanford University, Daniel Tsui of Princeton University, Steven Weinberg of the University of Texas and Frank Wilczek of MIT.

Other prominent physicists on the petition include Fields Medal winner Edward Witten of the Institute for Advanced Study, Wolf Prize laureates Michael Fisher of the University of Maryland and Daniel Kleppner of MIT, and Leo Kadanoff of the University of Chicago, a recipient of the National Medal of Science and president-elect of the American Physical Society.

"We point out in the petition that nuclear weapons are on a completely different scale than other weapons of mass destruction and that the underlying principle of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty is that in exchange for other countries forgoing the development of nuclear weapons, the nuclear weapon states will pursue nuclear disarmament," said Hirsch. "Instead, this new U.S. policy dramatically increases the risk of nuclear proliferation and, ultimately, the risk that regional conflicts will explode into all-out nuclear war, with the potential to destroy our civilization."

The physicists hope to gain additional supporters before a meeting of the executive board of the American Physical Society on November 18 and a meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency on November 24.



## It's More Important Than Halting Nuclear Proliferation Let's Stop a US/Israeli War on Iran

By *BILL and KATHLEEN CHRISTISON, Former CIA analysts*

December 29, 2005

The peace movements of the entire world should be in crisis mode right now, working non-stop to prevent the U.S. and Israel from starting a war against Iran. (See the James Petras article in CounterPunch on December 24, 2005 titled Iran in the Crosshairs for the best summary of the present situation.

[www.counterpunch.org/petras12242005.html](http://www.counterpunch.org/petras12242005.html)) The reckless and unnecessary dangers arising from such a war are so obvious that one wonders why normal political forces in the two aggressor countries -- both of whom love to glorify themselves as democracies -- would not prevent such a war from happening.

But the "normal political forces" in both the U.S. and Israel have become badly distorted. Democracy has been seriously undermined in both. The cowboy-like personalities and aggressive tendencies of both countries' leaders tend to feed on each other. Domestic political difficulties and coming elections in both countries probably add to the macho inclination of the ruling elites to use force to remove any problems facing them. The glue binding these tendencies together is the ever-strengthening institutional link between defense establishments and military-industrial complexes in both countries, as well as, in the U.S., the growing power and influence of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) over both major political parties. The entire mix increases the probability, against all common sense, that this absurd war will actually happen.

Nothing else more dangerous to the world, to the Middle East, to the oppressed Palestinians, or to the true interests of the United States is happening today -- anywhere. Americans who do not want an eruption of a new world war, started by our own government, ought to be strongly lobbying the Bush administration and all members of Congress against supporting any military action by the U.S. and Israel against Iran. Globally, people who oppose such a war should be

lobbying their own governments in similar fashion.

**Background:** It is worthwhile to discuss briefly the broader context of why a war with Iran today seems a real possibility. During his all-out public relations effort in late 2005 to regain support for his policies in the Middle East, Bush has made it clear that he plans to continue his drive for complete victory in the "War on Terrorism," without making significant changes in his own, very aggressive, foreign policies. Those policies will make this planet a less safe, more unjust place to live for most people around the world, as well as for most of us living in the U.S. The special relationship between the U.S. and Israel has long played an important role in these aggressive policies.

Outside the United States, it is widely understood that one of the true motives -- not the exclusive motive but a real and significant one -- behind the Bush administration's 2003 invasion of Iraq was the desire of the neocons in Washington to conquer Iraq in order to benefit Israel. Although a few of the big-name neocons (Paul Wolfowitz, Richard Perle, Lewis "Scooter" Libby) have left high-visibility positions for various reasons, many remain, and it is clear that Bush himself, Cheney, Rumsfeld, and Rice have taken as their own the main tenets of neocon beliefs.

Inside the U.S., on the other hand, the pressure of the neocons for war on Israel's behalf, or any hint that Bush himself participates in that pressure, is hardly ever mentioned. This taboo on discussing the Israeli link to the war in Iraq, enforced by the threat of being labeled anti-Semitic, introduces major distortions into practically every effort to examine and change policies that are causing massive hatred of the U.S. around the world.

But right now, three of the long-existing "problems" in the Middle East (i.e., situations that have been made problems largely by our own actions) have reached critical stages that may, if Washington's policies do not change quite quickly, result in our losing even the remnants of stability and peace that

remain in that region today. The world could face instead nuclear warfare or, at a minimum, a practically unending "clash of civilizations" and conventional warfare at a much higher level than exists now. The first, and the most important right now, of the three problems is the main subject of this article: the problem that arises from the determined U.S. and Israeli policy of preventing Iran from ever acquiring nuclear weapons. The second and third problems, also situations brought on by the U.S. itself, have to do with Syria and the Palestinians. In the long run, they are also very important, but they are less urgent for now. These other problems will be considered briefly at the end of this article.

As was the case with the U.S. invasion of Iraq, one of the underlying causes of all these "problems" in the Middle East has been the success of the neocons in persuading the Bush administration to support aggressively the goals of the Israeli government throughout the area. And here again, the fear of being charged with anti-Semitism causes many Americans quietly to accept the taboo on discussing the Israeli link to the Bush administration's foreign policies. This is an absurd situation. Criticizing Israeli (or U.S.) policies and urging specific changes in those policies is not anti-Semitic (or anti-American). The arrogance of anyone who suggests the contrary is appalling. The following paragraphs contain suggestions on how we should work to remedy those aspects of this absurdity that bear on Iran and nuclear weapons.

### **What should be done to change U.S. policy on Iran's nuclear program?**

First of all, don't fall into the trap of accepting Iran's public claims that it is not attempting to acquire nuclear weapons. Many of the nations that now have such weapons made similar claims while they were developing the weapons. Israel did so throughout the first half of the 1960s, engaging in elaborate subterfuges even when dealing with U.S. inspectors who occasionally came looking for weapons work. The Israeli claims were so much garbage (see Israeli author Avner Cohen's book, *Israel and the Bomb*). Then, after it acquired its first nuclear explosive device almost 40 years ago now, Israel simply adopted a well

publicized policy of ambiguity and stopped talking publicly about whether it had any weapons. India and Pakistan also both claimed not to be working on weapons when in fact they were. Their claims were garbage too, which they quickly threw away once they joined the nuclear club and possessed their own deterrent. Iran almost certainly intends to do the same, and its public claims to the contrary are also almost certainly worthless.

The principal point to start with is that, unless the U.S. and Israel (and other nations as well) all agree to work seriously toward eliminating their own nuclear weapons, any Iranian government will consider that it has as much right as the rest of us to such weapons. Essentially, even if Iran, under pressure, were to sign new agreements, now or in the future, to forgo nuclear weapons, the new agreements would be meaningless unless the U.S., Israel, and other nuclear nations ended their own monumental hypocrisy of insisting that they can keep and expand their nuclear arsenals, while non-nuclear nations may not acquire such arsenals. In the eyes of most Muslims around the world and many other people too, Iran, with a population of close to 70 million, has at least as much right as Israel, with a population less than one-tenth as large, to have nuclear weapons.

Most supporters of the global peace movements by definition oppose the solving of international problems through warfare, and they also oppose the further proliferation of nuclear weapons. Most are also aware that the critical bargain reached in the 1970 Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) -- the bargain that made the treaty possible -- was a trade-off: the acceptance of continued non-nuclear-weapons status by states without those weapons, in return for the simultaneous agreement by states possessing nuclear weapons to pursue good-faith negotiations on nuclear, and complete and general, disarmament. This latter provision had no teeth, and certainly many "realists" in the U.S. foreign policy establishment expected that it would not and could not be enforced.

Nevertheless, the existence of this provision was necessary to the NPT's ratification by numerous countries, and it gives any state dissatisfied with progress toward nuclear disarmament an excuse to abrogate or ignore the treaty.

Most people will not bother to make the niceties of international law an issue in this matter, but the question of which is more important, stopping the further proliferation of nuclear weapons to Iran or stopping our own side from instigating a war against Iran, is vital. The answer should be clear: The single most urgent objective we should have right now is to prevent a war, possibly nuclear, from being started by the U.S. and/or Israel against Iran. To repeat, such a war would be disastrous, and we should be doing whatever we can, with the highest possible priority, to prevent it from ever happening.

Every peace activist on the globe ought to be in the streets and elsewhere lobbying in support of something very simple: do not attack Iran, even if this means allowing Iran to develop its own nuclear weapons. We should put out the message that it is simply not worth a war, with consequences impossible to foresee, to prevent Iran from obtaining such weapons. From 1945 until we invaded Iraq in 2003, we never once took military action to prevent other nations from developing nuclear weapons. We relied instead on deterrence and containment (to prevent other nations from using such weapons after they had been developed). These may not be perfect policies, but they have a successful track record and can probably be applied more successfully than other policies to subnational groups as well as nation-states. The point is that these are still better policies than the recklessness of preemption, and we should use these policies in lobbying against U.S. involvement of any kind in military actions or coup attempts against Iran. We should also very definitely support an effort to tie future U.S. aid to Israel to Israel's not engaging in military action against Iran.

We are talking here about supporting (by our silence), or opposing (by vociferous lobbying), what could become major, serious warfare -- warfare that could easily become global, and also could easily cause greater difficulties for the peoples of the Middle East than any they have yet faced from U.S. policies. With an election campaign intensifying the political volatilities of Israeli politics, with possibly fast-moving new uncertainties and vulnerabilities arising among both Republicans and Democrats jousting for advantage in a U.S. election year, and with a new, inexperienced president in Iran who, so far at least, believes aggressive speech strengthens his political position, the dangers in the situation are evident. As each week passes and no movement occurs anywhere -- particularly in Washington -- to reduce tensions by changing policies, the risk grows of a mistake that will lead to new hostilities, and possibly nuclear warfare. How many Iranians might we and the Israelis kill? How many Israelis might die? How many Americans?

#### **How should the U.S. change its policies with respect to Syria?**

The issues of Syria and Palestine are related to U.S. policy toward Iran. Policy on Syria today is to put constant pressure on that country's ruler, Bashar al-Assad, with the ultimate objective of ousting and replacing him with someone (not yet named by the Americans) who would be even more subservient to U.S. and Israeli desires. Assad himself has moved a considerable way toward subservience, giving the U.S. considerable help on intelligence matters and accepting certain U.S. prisoners "rendered" to his regime for purposes of torture, but the U.S., unsatisfied, keeps intensifying the pressure. The U.S. and Israel have succeeded in making it more difficult for Syria to provide support for the Palestinian resistance against Israel's occupation, but Damascus still provides some refuge for Hezbollah personnel.

The recent assassinations of anti-Syrian leaders in Lebanon have provided new opportunities for the Bush administration to ratchet up its criticism of Syria still further, although the evidence of Syrian involvement in the assassinations is weak. It is at least

possible that other groups, such as the Israel's Mossad or the CIA, are responsible.

Whatever the truth behind events in Lebanon, the events themselves could offer a U.S. president who is in some trouble at home the possibility of a low-cost, low-risk foreign policy victory if he could pull off, perhaps with the help of Mossad, a quick covert action that ousted Assad. Act II of a grand show might then proceed -- another U.S. occupation installed, another nation in the Middle East "democratized," elections held a year or two later and a puppet government set up, step-by-step takeovers of the economy implemented by U.S. and Israeli interests, further isolation of the Palestinians from other Arabs -- all in all, another great victory for the U.S.-Israeli partnership.

Or so Bush, at least, might believe. In reality, the situation might turn into another morass like Iraq. But months might pass and the U.S. congressional election of November 2006 might be history before we knew that for sure. Might not a man like Bush who revels in chance-taking consider this a pretty good gamble? Meanwhile, how many Syrians would we kill? How many badly wounded Americans would come home to a questionable quality of life because bulletproof vests saved their lives? If Israeli military units moved into Syria (to help us, of course), how many Israelis would die?

We should all be lobbying members of Congress not to cast any votes in favor of aggressive U.S. policies toward Syria. Such votes cannot help, and will only take resources from, a majority of the world's peoples and a majority of Americans. Syria (and Lebanon) are not places where the United States benefits in any way from being a global policeman. While the neocons and probably some present top Israeli officials do see benefits to be gained from U.S. intervention in Syria, other senior and many ordinary Israelis do not. We also should urge members of Congress to tie further aid to Israel to Israel's not becoming involved in any military actions against Syria.

**How should the U.S. change its policies with respect to the Palestinians?** We should make it as clear as we possibly can to members of Congress that the Palestine-Israel problem is the most central long-term issue to the peoples of the Middle East. Most Arab leaders have been so co-opted by the U.S. that they no longer object to our support for Israel's oppression of the Palestinians, but the peoples of the area are a different story. They do care about and object strenuously to that oppression.

Regardless of what happens anywhere in the Middle East, we will never end the "War on Terrorism" without, first, a solution to the Palestine-Israel issue that provides as much justice to the Palestinians as to the Israelis. Although many supporters of Israel try to compare the several-centuries-long U.S. conquest of American Indians to the Israeli attempt to conquer the Palestinians, there is no valid comparison. Quite apart from the immorality of any attempt to emulate the U.S. atrocity against its indigenous population, there are practical reasons why the comparison cannot be made. The population balances, for instance, are entirely different; there are proportionately far more Palestinians than there were American Indians.

Nevertheless, Israeli and U.S. policy in the West Bank, semi-hidden by a bogus withdrawal from Gaza, continues to seek permanent conquest of more and more territory. The daily injustices and cruelties imposed by Israel and the U.S. on Palestinians in the occupied West Bank are today worse than they have been in the previous 38 years of occupation. This is not only a major human rights issue facing the United States. It is also a very large cause of the hatred against the U.S. throughout the Arab and Muslim worlds.

What is new in the last few months is Israeli intensification of settlement activity in the West Bank, particularly in East Jerusalem; intensification of land-confiscation (with no recompense to

Palestinians); a speed-up in construction of the separation wall and of new "Israeli-citizens-only" roads, both of which also require more land-confiscation; more demolitions of Palestinian houses; and new, harsh Israeli measures of other types aimed specifically at forcing Palestinians out of areas, in which they have lived for generations, in and near Jerusalem.

All of this takes place with little Western media attention; the media devoted considerably more attention to the carefully televised "suffering" of the relatively few Israeli settlers forced to move from their luxurious homes in Gaza. The Israelis, with heavy U.S. financing, are busily establishing more "facts on the ground" that will make any peaceful solution providing equal justice to both sides less possible. That does not mean that Israel will "win." Given the determination and inexhaustibility (and large numbers) of Palestinians, it just means more terrorism, killing, and cruelty on both sides. It is a shocking waste of lives, and the U.S. is prolonging it by its one-sided support of Israel. Let's put it baldly. U.S. policy on Israel and Palestine is simply immoral in its one-sidedness. It should take no one who investigates what is actually happening to Palestinians in the West Bank more than 30 seconds to decide that the oppression and cruelties that can be seen there daily should be stopped. Here too, further U.S. aid to Israel should be directly tied to Israel's stopping the oppression and cruelties to Palestinians.

The position we should take in lobbying members of Congress is simple and obvious: Stop the one-sidedness. It is a blot that will stain all our other activities and policies in the Middle East, and probably elsewhere, for years to come. The longer we avoid changing this situation, the larger the blot will become.

**Conclusion:** All of these issues -- Iran, Syria, and Palestine-Israel -- are interrelated, and each issue enhances the perception around the world that the U.S. is hypocritical, oppressive, and interested only in advancing Israel's interests. All grow out of the one-sided U.S. support for Israel, and none will be resolved without a change in the U.S.-Israeli relationship. To put it baldly again, the widespread perception of the

U.S. as immoral and unjust interferes in a quite serious way with the conduct of U.S. foreign policy. Neither we nor Israel "wins" if U.S. policy continues on the same path.

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