

Social Questions Bulletin

Seeking Global Justice through the United Methodist Church

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Old Answers New Questions

by Kathryn Johnson,
Editor

Our nation has been deeply traumatized in recent months and we all yearn, understandably, for words of comfort and reassurance.

At the same time, times of upheaval offer precious opportunities for self-reflection, growth and new insights. Our world is turned upside down and suddenly the old answers don't fit the new questions.

Such times present the gift of an opportunity to grow in our understanding of the world in which we live and to deepen our faith as we struggle with how to respond as people of faith. I've decided, therefore, to print articles that speak a challenging word.

In "How to Lose a War", Walden Bello gives a scathing critique of current US policy. Speaking from Thailand, he gives us a glimpse of what the American "war or terrorism" looks like from Southern Asia. On page 6, Sandra Olewine admits that her October 21st letter is more hard-edged than usual as she speaks of the agony she feels as she walks with Palestinians. And on page 4, the Clergy Alliance, standing in solidarity with excluded members of our church, responds critically to a Judicial Council ruling.

At this time of questioning and seeking, I believe it is voices such as these to which we need to listen.

I wish everyone peace during this Advent season, the peace that comes from *new* understanding.

How to Lose a War

by Walden Bello*

After over two weeks of Anglo-American bombardment of Afghanistan, once one gets beyond the sound and fury of American bombs and the smokescreen of CNN propaganda, it appears that in the war between the United States and Osama bin Laden, the latter is coming out ahead.

Making the Rubble Bounce

It is doubtful if Washington has achieved anything of tactical or strategic value except to make the rubble bounce, as the consequences of multiple nuclear explosions in one area were cynically described during the Cold War. Indeed, the bombing, which has taken the lives of many civilians, has worsened the US's strategic position in Southwest and South Asia by eroding the stability of the pro-US regimes in the Muslim world. A radical fundamentalist regime is now a real possibility in Islamabad, while Washington faces the unpleasant prospect of having to serve ultimately as a police force between an increasingly isolated Saudi elite and a restive youthful population that regards bin Laden as a hero.

Meanwhile in the rest of the developing world, the shock over the September 11 assault is giving way to disapproval of the US bombing and, even more worrisome to Washington, to bin Laden's emergence in the public consciousness as a feisty underdog skillfully running circles around a big bully who only knows one response: massive retaliation. A telling sign of the times in Bangkok and many other cities in Southeast Asia is the way young people are snapping up bin Laden T-shirts, and not only for reasons of novelty.

Anglo-Saxon Brotherhood

CNN images of US President George Bush, Prime Minister Tony Blair, and US Secretary of State Colin Powell ticking off the latest statement of support for the US mask the reality that Washington and London are losing the propaganda war. Their effort to paint the military campaign as a conflict between civilization and terrorists has instead come across as a crusade of the Anglo-Saxon brotherhood against the Islamic world. So jarring has British Prime Minister Tony Blair's public relations drive to make Britain an equal partner in the war effort that the foreign minister of Belgium, which currently holds the presidency of the European Union, has felt compelled to criticize Blair for compromising the interests of the EU.

In the aftermath of the Sept. 11 assault, a number of writers wrote about the possibility that that move could have been a bait to get the US bogged down in a war of intervention in the Middle East that would inflame the Muslim world against it. Whether or not that was indeed bin Laden's strategic objective, the US bombing of Afghanistan has created precisely such a situation. Moderate leaders of Thailand's normally sedate Muslim community now openly express support for bin Laden.

In Indonesia, once regarded as a model of tolerant Islam, a recent survey revealed that half of the respondents regard bin Laden as a fighter for justice and less than 35% regard him as a terrorist.

The global support that US President George Bush has flaunted is deceptive. Of course, a lot of governments would express their support for the UN Security Council's

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Hundreds of United Methodists Sign Petition Opposing the War in Afghanistan

Shortly after the tragic events of September 11th, MFSA members across the country began signing a petition to President Bush urging him to pursue legal means rather than military means to bring the perpetrators of the heinous crimes of that day to justice.

The letter to President Bush, along with the petitions and signatures, read in part:

Enclosed you will find the names of hundreds of fellow United Methodists from every region of the country who believe that the current war against terrorism in Afghanistan is wrong. It will not accomplish the goals that we all share: justice for the victims of the terrorist attacks of September 11th and security for American citizens in a more secure world.

You will note that we first began to gather signatures on the enclosed letter in September. Thus, the letter that people initially signed expressed our support for the restraint being shown at that time for not launching military strikes.

In the weeks since, we have watched with deep dismay as the U.S. has engaged in war, furthering the spiral of violence that we do not believe will lead to the peace that we all seek. Just as we continue to agonize over the death of innocent persons in New York and Washington, we now agonize over the deaths of innocent civilians in Afghanistan, of property and lives further destroyed in an already ravaged country.

We pray that you will reconsider the course you have set and turn instead to the paths we recommend in the enclosed Call to Act Justly.

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As active church members across our nation, we hold you and other leaders of government in our prayers at this most difficult time. The challenges of the day are tremendous. We pray that you may be granted wisdom and courage in the days and weeks ahead.

A CALL TO ACT JUSTLY

TO: President George W. Bush
FROM: United Methodists Across our Nation

We share your desire to bring those responsible for the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon to justice, but we are also concerned that our response not target innocent civilians and further inflame anti-American anger in the Islamic world.

We applaud your calls to respect the rights and personhood of Arab Americans and Americans of the Islamic faith. We are encouraged by the restraint you have shown thus far in not launching military strikes. We urge you to work through judicial processes, international police work and a coalition organized in cooperation with the United Nations as the path to a just and lasting solution. Your support for the recent release of back UN dues is an important and positive step.

Finally, we urge a broad reexamination of US foreign policies, which however unintentionally, have enabled terrorists to fan the flames of anti-Americanism in the world community. In particular, we urge a shift from unilateral policies to a multilateral approach, leading to US support for existing treaties banning landmines and chemical or biological weapons, the adoption of a comprehensive nuclear test ban and US membership in the International Criminal Court.

Signed by over 600 United Methodists



MFSA Web Site to Debut in the New Year

For the past few months, the national staff of MFSA, with help from graphic artist Adam Murdoch and many web-wise sources from within the MFSA membership, have been developing a new web page design. We are in the final stages of editing the web site that will soon be found on the web at www.mfsaweb.org.

The changes we have made to the web page format and content are designed to better serve our members and chapters and foster more inter-chapter dialogue and sharing of information.

The new MFSA web site will be a resource for all MFSA members to find current information on MFSA news, press releases, a calendar for relevant church-wide events, MFSA staff visits, board meetings and chapter events.



The site will include a directory with contact information for each chapter as well as a link to the chapter website, newsletter or egroup. MFSA field organizer, Amy Stapleton, will be working in the coming year to provide resources to chapters who do not have a website or egroup and would like to develop that tool.

Another feature of the site will be chapter news, highlighting the great work that MFSA chapters are doing across the country and in the world. This section will enable chapters to share resources and find ideas for taking action on issues, Annual Conference legislation and retreat topics.

For those of you in Annual Conferences that do not yet have a chapter, take heart! The resources on the new MFSA web page will help you feel that much more connected to MFSAers around the country and give you resources to start a chapter when there are enough folks in your area interested in doing so.

The web site will be packed with resources like the Priority Action Guide, the Social Questions Bulletin and an article archives. There will be links to numerous organizations and agencies as well.

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To check out our "new look" you can go to our new site at www.mfsaweb.org. Stay tuned and we'll let you know when the full site is up.

Finally, no article on an MFSA web site would be complete without noting the tremendous contribution made by MFSA National Treasurer Larry Medsker. Years ago, when web sites were just becoming popular, Larry designed and maintained the original MFSA site. Dealing with MFSA staff who came late to understanding the potential of using the internet, Larry patiently nudged us into the computer age. Many thanks to Larry for all of his help and expertise in this important area of the life of MFSA.

UM Bishops Write Pastoral Letter

A Pastoral Letter to the Whole Church

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Grace and peace be to you in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

The sad and terrible events in the United States of America, on September 11, 2001, and beyond, compel us to speak words of hope and peace to United Methodist people in the 120 annual conferences in more than 50 countries of the world. Stunned and shattered by terrorist attacks in the United States and the threat of bioterrorism, we, your bishops, call upon the church to join us in seeking solidarity with victimized peoples throughout the world.

Our fervent and constant prayers are for those who grieve because they have lost companions and loved ones; for military chaplains and for those persons who are providing the ministry of presence, comfort, healing and hope; for public servants and countless volunteers who have demonstrated selfless generosity; for all who are redemptively reaching out to those persons who have been erroneously connected to terrorism; for the people who have been placed in harm's way and their loved ones; for President Bush and the leaders of all the nations that they may have wisdom and courage to lead people toward justice and peace. We pray for innocent victims who have experienced injuries, loss and death. We also pray for those who wish to do harm.

We pray that violence, terrorism and war will cease. We ask you to join us in prayer.

We are extremely concerned for the thousands of people who live in fear and terror and those displaced by war and poverty. We sincerely believe that every conceivable effort must be used to protect those who are innocent and most vulnerable. We are persuaded that we must use the spiritual and human resources of The United Methodist Church to respond in a loving and caring way. We commend churches around the world for their contribution to the appeal, *Love in the Midst of Tragedy*, and all other humanitarian offerings.

We, your bishops, believe that violence in all of its forms and expressions is contrary to God's purpose for the world. Violence creates fear, desperation, hopelessness and instability. We call upon the church to be a community of peace with justice and to support individuals and agencies all over the world who are working for the common good for all of God's children. We also call upon the church to study and work toward alleviating the root causes of poverty and the other social conditions that are exploited by terrorists.

As people of the resurrection, we believe that peace has been achieved in Christ; however, this peace is yet to be fully realized in human relationships. The message of the resurrection is that love is stronger than all the forces of evil. Furthermore, it is only sacrificial love, not war, which can reconcile people to God and to each other. We call upon the church, leaders, nations and individuals around the world to make room for love so that the patterns of our common life might reveal God's justice.

We offer this letter with the wondrous promise of Advent ringing in our ears: But the angel said to them, Do not be afraid; for see I am bringing to you good news of great joy for all the people. (Luke 2:10)

Peace,

Bishops of The United Methodist Church



One Response to the Bishops' Letter

by Kathryn Johnson

Struggling with how to speak to the needs of the United Methodists after the events of September 11th, the United Methodist Bishops crafted a pastoral letter during their recent meeting in Lake Junalusaka.

While understanding the forces tugging at the hearts of our Bishops, our times call out for a brave and clear word in response to the course of action being undertaken by our nation.

My response to the Bishops' letter follows:

The November 9th pastoral letter by the bishops of the United Methodist Church is deeply disappointing. At a time when the United States is unleashing its huge military might against the already ravaged country of Afghanistan, we desperately need a clear and compelling word from the bishops condemning war as a solution to terrorist acts.

The United Methodist New Service article accompanying the release of the bishops' letter reported a debate among the bishops as to whether the letter should be pastoral or prophetic in tone. Certainly the church must be fully both at times such as this.

Undeniably the September 11 terrorist attacks caused massive human suffering and these heinous crimes against humanity must be condemned in no uncertain terms. The United Methodist Church, and other communities of faith, responded quickly with both material and spiritual aid. We must continue to do so.

In the wake of the attacks, the government of the United States has declared war on terrorism and has unleashed sustained military attacks in Afghanistan. Just as the church has spoken the pastoral word of comfort to those who mourn, it is imperative that we speak a prophetic word about that which makes for lasting peace.

Grounding ourselves in the words and example of Jesus, we must proclaim that war is not the solution to acts of violence, including terrorism. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. made this point eloquently when he said, *The past is prophetic in that it*

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Response to Bishops continued from page 3

asserts loudly that wars are poor chisels for carving out peaceful tomorrows.

The United Methodist Church has spoken wisely through its resolution on terrorism adopted at the 1996 General Conference. This resolution states in part that it is important that we, as United Methodist Christians:

1. examine critically the causes of terrorism, including national and international involvement;
2. firmly support the United Nations as a agency for conflict resolution and as a viable alternative to resorting to war and/or terrorism;
3. stand against terrorist acts in the forms of retaliation or capital punishment;
4. urge the President of the United States to repudiate violence and killing and victimizing of innocent people;
5. oppose the use of indiscriminate military force to combat terrorism, especially where the use of such force results in casualties among noncombatant citizens who are not themselves perpetrators of terrorist acts, and urge support of United Nations Resolution 40-61, which addresses international cooperation regarding terrorist acts.

In their pastoral letter of November 9th, the bishops acknowledge that violence in all of its forms and expressions is contrary to God's purpose for the world. They fail, however, to hold our own country accountable for our current use of military violence in Afghanistan.

There are no easy answers in terms of what an appropriate U.S. response should be to the attacks of September 11th. But as followers of Christ it is incumbent upon the church to call upon the people and leaders of our country to turn the incredible resources, creativity and good will of the people of our nation toward finding non-military solutions in the current situation.

Our bishops speak of hope and peace. The hope of the Gospel rests in the belief that acts of justice and love, not violence, will lay the foundation for a lasting peace. ❖

Clergy Alliance Announces Mission to Change the UMC

The Clergy Alliance of Reconciling Ministries Network convened in Washington D.C. in early November to organize the newest branch of resistance to the United Methodist Church's discriminatory practices. Following on the heels of the Judicial Council ruling [against the appointment of self-avowed homosexuals in good standing as clergy], the 25 U M clergy in attendance detailed their mission, designated coordinators, and issued an open letter to the Judicial Council requesting review and revision of the JC ruling (see page 5).

The Clergy Alliance is comprised of persons called to ordained ministry within the United Methodist Church who summon the Church to a deeper level of spiritual and theological integrity in relationship to persons of all sexual orientations and gender identities and their full inclusion in all aspects of the Church's life. The network is dedicated to active forms of teaching, organizing, strategizing, and resistance to help the church become more faithful to the radical love of Christ, reads the new mission statement of the 67-member organization.

Reverends Karen Oliveto of Bethany UMC in San Francisco, and Don Fado, retired pastor from Sacramento, ask other clergy to summon the Church to this mission by joining the alliance and engaging in one or more of the following categories of activities:

- ✠ Seek to reform the Church through the mechanism of its polity
- ✠ Act in radical obedience to the Gospel
- ✠ Create within the Church an inclusive network with resources and structure, and/or
- ✠ Provide a theological framework that will provide spiritual grounding for this mission.

The Clergy Alliance is part of the Reconciling Ministries Network, a national network of United Methodist-focused organizations advocating for the full inclusion of persons of all sexual orientations and gender identities into the life of the Church.

To obtain information about joining the Clergy Alliance contact the Reconciling Ministries Office at 773-736-5526. ❖

Judicial Council Rules on PNW Question

Meeting October 24-26 in Nashville, Tennessee, the Judicial Council of the United Methodist Church ruled on a request from the Pacific Northwest Annual Conference for a declaratory decision on what they viewed as conflicting rules in the Book of Discipline: One states that self-avowed practicing homosexuals should not be ordained or appointed to serve in the church; the other requires that all clergy members in good standing receive appointments.

Summary of Decision No. 920

A statement by a clergywoman that she is living in a partnered, covenanted homosexual relationship with another woman is sufficient declaration to subject such person's membership in her ministerial office to review under f 359.1 of the Discipline.

If, in the course of such review, such person affirms that she is engaged in genital sexual activity with a person of the same gender, she would have openly acknowledged to one or more of the persons enumerated in footnote 1 to f 304.3 that she is a self-avowed practicing homosexual.

Par. 304.3 sets forth minimum standards for a clergy person to remain in good standing and to be appointed. However, the prohibition of appointment contained in f 304.4 must be exercised in compliance with the rights of all persons who are in full membership.

The last sentence of f 325.1 and f 304.3 are not in conflict. The annual conference must annually review the character and conference relations of all clergy persons holding membership in the annual conference. Absent change in conference relation, elders in full connection remain in good standing and shall be continued under appointment. f 325.1.

Where a clergy person makes a declaration such as that quoted above, a bishop may not take unilateral action not to appoint such a person. The annual conference must be informed of the declaration, and the annual conference, and/or the resident bishop or district superintendent must initiate proceedings to subject her member-

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ship in her ministerial office to review under f 359.1.

While proceedings are conducted to address the issues of character and conference relations according to fair and due process, the bishop, with the recommendation of the executive committee of the board of ordained ministry, shall place the clergy person on suspension under f 359.1 (c).

The clergy person shall be relieved of all clergy duties, but not from appointment during such suspension. If the process is not concluded with the period of suspension, then the clergy person should be placed on an involuntary leave of absence under f352.1.

At all times, the constitutional right of the clergy person to trial by a committee and an appeal shall be preserved, f 18 and f 56, and fair and due process shall be observed.

The annual conference, in reviewing and acting upon the conference relation of such person, may not legally negate, ignore or violate the provision of the Discipline, including, but not limited to, the provisions of f 304.3, f 259.2 and f 2701. ❖

Clergy Alliance Responds: An Open Letter -11/8/01

To: Members of the Judicial Council of the United Methodist Church
From: The Clergy Alliance of the Reconciling Ministries Network
Re: Judicial Council Decision #920

The Clergy Alliance wishes to commend the Judicial Council for its careful attention to the issue of fair process in Decision #920. We concur with the Council's decision at several points. We agree, for instance, that absent a change in conference relation, elders in full connection remain in good standing and should be continued under appointment.

We are deeply concerned, however, that there are several other aspects of the decision that undo critical aspects of the fair process protection afforded clergy members by the Discipline of the United Methodist Church. Therefore, on the basis of the following objections, we respectfully request the Judicial Council to review and revise Decision #920.

1. The decision radically curtails the discretionary function of the bishop in the

administration of fair process relating to suspension of a clergy member under review for the matter in question. Paragraph 359 c) specifies that it is the responsibility of the bishop to determine the appropriateness of suspension as a response to a complaint. Decision #920 removes this prerogative from the bishop. The Discipline specifies that the purpose of suspension is to protect the well being of the persons making

singles out one category of offense, and, therefore, one group of persons for exceptional treatment.

3. The recommendation of the Judicial Council that clergy persons under review for the offense in question should be placed on involuntary leave of absence if the review process is not completed within sixty days is a further erosion of fair process protection. The Discipline provides

The Discipline specifies that the purpose of suspension is to protect the well being of the persons making the complaint, the church, or the clergy person who is the object of the complaint. The Judicial Council has failed to demonstrate that the well being of any of these parties is automatically jeopardized by a clergy member's admission that he or she is living in a same sex partnered relationship.

the complaint, the church, or the clergy person who is the object of the complaint. The Judicial Council has failed to demonstrate that the well being of any of these parties is automatically jeopardized by a clergy member's admission that he or she is living in a same sex partnered relationship. The role of episcopal discretion in fair process has been to tailor the application of justice to the particular circumstances of each case. The Judicial Council's decision to, in effect, change the wording of paragraph 359 c) from may suspend to shall suspend, clearly exceeds the Council's authority. Only the General Conference can revise legislation. In Decision #803 the Judicial Council states it is a violation for the (Cal/Nevada sexual ethics) policy to change or regulate the disciplinary procedures, even by suggestions which limit discretionary decisions. Further, the Council's decision amounts to a kind of mandatory sentencing, a one size fits all model of administering fair process.

2. Decision #920 singles out one of twelve possible charges listed in paragraph 2702 for special procedural treatment. There is no basis established within the body of the decision for mandating the suspension of a member charged with engaging in practices declared by the United Methodist Church to be incompatible with Christian teaching, while those charged with crime, sexual misconduct, or even child abuse still fall within the discretionary guidelines of paragraph 359 c). This decision unfairly

options for the extension of suspension if necessary. Paragraph 2704, 2. b) gives the Committee on Investigation the authority to suspend the member pending the outcome of the judicial process. The recommendation to place a member automatically in the category of involuntary leave is unfair and extra-disciplinary.

4. The Clergy Alliance is deeply disturbed at the Judicial Council's decision to mandate the questioning of one group of members regarding their most intimate sexual practices. The focus upon genital sexual activity in Decision #920 as the measure of whether a person is a practicing homosexual is reductionist and misses completely critical and fundamental issues relating to a person's identity. Further, it is arbitrary and discriminatory to ask questions of one group of members that are not asked of all.

5. We are further concerned that the lack of guidance given to review bodies about how to proceed once the question of genital sexual activity has been introduced will lead to unequal, and therefore unfair, treatment across the church. Decision #920 only implies a course of action if the clergy member under review answers the questions of the review body in the affirmative. We believe that in light of the self-avowal provisions specified in paragraph 304.3 and its footnote, review bodies should be instructed that if a clergy member refuses to answer such questions, the matter is ended and the member continues in good standing. ❖

The Importance of Media in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

By Virginia Lapham, MFSA Consultant on the Middle East

We want to reach the world not just by confronting Israeli soldiers with our stones of defiance, but by confronting the world with our reality. Hannah Ashrawi

As the letter from Sandra Olewine, UM Liaison to Jerusalem, elsewhere on this page illustrates, the mainstream US media is not giving us a full picture of the reality of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. The reasons for this are many and complex. If we are to respond adequately to the conflict, and lend our voices and actions to finding a peaceful solution, we must insist that all forms of media do a responsible job in portraying the situation of both Israelis and Palestinians.

In recent years, several groups have formed to monitor US media sources and hold them accountable in their reporting. In my investigation of these groups I would recommend that MFSA members use, as one of these sources, a grassroots media watch group called the Palestine Media Watch at www.pmwatc.org.

In their own words, the purpose of this group is to fight anti-Palestinian bias in the US media and to call for giving Palestinian views greater room for expression and to work for a more balanced, more humane, and more informed portrayal of the Middle East conflict. Established on October 5, 2000, the Palestine Media Watch group gives information to help concerned persons take action through writing letters and making phone calls.

Current articles of interest on the Palestine Media Watch web page include one article about two major corporate donors withdrawing their support for a Boston public radio station because of what they per-



Virginia Lapham

ceived to be a persistent anti-Israeli bias in public radio. A second article reports on a lack of media coverage of an important story concerning an accusation by the Red Cross that Israel had violated the Fourth Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. ❖

UM Liaison in Jerusalem Writes of Her Experience

The Rev. Sandra Olewine, United Methodist Liaison in Jerusalem writes powerfully of the reality of living in the West Bank. Two of her recent letters are copied below.

Hospital in Beit Jala Comes Under Fire

For the love of God and humanity, we d better find a way to stop this soon....

Sunday, October 21, 2001

Dear Friends,

Today has seen an escalation of violence in the Bethlehem region. After a couple hours of quiet, heavy shooting began as the Israeli tanks again moved towards the Cinema region of Bethlehem (beginning of Paul VI Street) around 1 pm. The tanks seem to be driving around as if they are playing chess, although I m not sure anyone has a game plan.

Now, in the last 45 minutes, the hospital in Beit Jala, the main hospital for the area, has come under attack 4 times. About an hour ago, a man was killed inside the hospital when it came under fire. Just now, an anesthesiology technician has been wounded. The director has reported major damage to the building and that tanks are at the entrance. This is not the first time shots have been directed there. Yesterday, when the director was being interviewed on television, a window behind him shattered from gunfire as he spoke. And early this morning doctors reported looking out the window and seeing a tank drive into the opening of the complex.

About an hour ago for the first time, a shell or missile landed in or near Manger Square according to residents nearby. Beit Sahour has also now come under shelling. And as I m writing this, heavy shelling has just hit the area somewhere near the Wi am

Palestinian Conflict Resolution Center and is continuing. Bethlehem University has been suspended until further notice, as have all the schools in the area.

Israel seems to be upset that Palestinians are shooting at their tanks and soldiers. Which, I have to admit, at this point, I find absurd. Not only are their soldiers continuing to occupy Palestinian land in general, but they are currently in the process of re-invading Palestinian-controlled areas, firing tank shells and missiles into towns and villages, terrorizing everyone. What do they think Palestinians are going to do? Serve them tea and biscuits?

Sharon evidently stated this afternoon that they ll leave the Palestinian cities when the terror is stopped. And, exactly how does he expect that to happen while Israel is terrorizing with machine guns, tanks and helicopters over 70% of the population?

I m sorry if this sounds a bit hard-edged and not particularly rationale, but what is happening right now is pure insanity.

For the love of God and humanity, we d better find a way to stop this soon....

*Rev. Sandra Olewine,
United Methodist Liaison — Jerusalem*

Thursday, November 8, 2001

Dear Friends,

...below is a joint Palestinian-Israeli declaration which was published on 30 October. This seems clearly the only real way forward. You are encouraged to share this with your elected officials...

*Rev. Sandra Olewine,
United Methodist Liaison — Jerusalem*

ISRAELI PALESTINIAN DECLARATION

The window of opportunity created by the international desire to unite against terror following the criminal acts of September 11th is in danger of closing. Our region is being dragged to the brink of an unnecessary war by the acts of extremists on both sides.

We, the undersigned, believe that we represent the majority on each side in our rejection of terror in all its forms.

We demand the immediate implementation of the Mitchell Report and in particular:

- *an immediate end to all violence and assassinations

- * an immediate cessation of all settlement activity

- * return to permanent status negotiations based on UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 and building on the progress achieved in previous negotiation rounds.

In the current climate of mistrust and mutual hostility, we believe that the above goals can be achieved only with the support of the international community and through international monitoring.

Despite the violence of the last year, we still believe that a peace agreement can be reached in the near future, ending the occupation and the conflict between our two peoples, and realizing the solution of two states living side by side based on the June 4th, 1967 borders.

Eighteen Palestinian Signatories

including:

Yasser Abed Rabbo, Minister of Culture and Information

Tayyeb Abdul Rahim, Secretary-General of the President's Office

Nabil Amr, Minister of Parliamentary Affairs

Hisham Abdul-Razek, Minister of Detainees and Freed Detainees Affairs

Ziad Abdul-Fattah, Chairman of Wafa (Palestinian News Agency)

Saman Khouri, Director-General, Palestine Media Center

Jamal Zaqout, Director-General, Ministry of Civil Affairs

Mafez al-Barghouti, Chief Editor, al-Hayat al-Jadida daily

Ghassan al-Khatib, Head, Jerusalem Media and Communication Center

Samir Rantisi, Advisor to the Minister of Information

Twenty-Nine Israeli Signatories

including:

Prof. Arie Arnon, Peace Now

Daniel Levy, Economic Cooperation Foundation

Prof. Galia Golan, Peace Now

Gavri Bargil, The Kibbutz Movement

Janet Aviad, Peace Now

Mordechai Baron, Historian

Ron Pundak, Peres Peace Center

Shulamit Aloni, Advocate

Prof. Yuli Tamir

Rabbi Yitzhak Frenkental, Bereaved

Parents Circle ❖

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call for a global campaign against terrorism. Far fewer countries, however, are actually actively cooperating in intelligence and police surveillance activities.

Even fewer have endorsed the military campaign and opened up their territory to transit by US planes on the way to Southwest Asia. And when one gets down to the decisive test of offering troops and weapons to fight alongside the British and the Americans in the harsh plains and icy mountains of Afghanistan, one is down to the hardcore of the Western Cold War alliance.

Translating Guerrilla War to a Global Setting

Bin Laden's terrorist methods are despicable, but one must grant the devil his due. Whether through study or practice, he has absorbed the lessons of guerrilla warfare in a national, Afghan setting and translated it to a global setting. Serving as the international correlate of the national popular base is the youth of the global Muslim community, among whom feelings of resentment against Western domination were a volatile mix that was simply waiting to be ignited.

The September 11 attacks were horrific and heinous, but from one angle, what were they except a variant of Che Guevara's foco theory? According to Guevara, the aim of a bold guerrilla action is twofold: to demoralize the enemy and to empower your popular base by getting them to participate in an action that shows that the all-powerful government is indeed vulnerable. The enemy is then provoked into a military response that further saps his credibility in what is basically a political and ideological battle. For bin Laden, terrorism is not the end but a means to an end. And that end is something that none of Bush's rhetoric about defending civilization through revenge bombing can compete with: a vision of Muslim Asia rid of Ameri-

can economic and military power, Israel, and corrupt surrogate elites, and returned to justice and Islamic sanctity.

Lost Opportunity

Yet Washington was not exactly without weapons in this ideological war.

In the aftermath of September 11, it could have responded in a way that could have blunted bin Laden's political and ideological appeal and opened up a new era in US-Arab relations.

First, it could have foresworn unilateral military action and announced to the world that it would go the legal route in pursuing justice, no matter how long this took. It could have announced its pursuit of a process combining patient multinational investigation, diplomacy, and the employment of accepted international mechanisms like the International Court of Justice.

These methods may take time but they work, and they ensure that justice and fairness are served. For instance, patient diplomacy secured the extradition from Libya of suspects in the 1988 bombing of a Pan Am jumbo jet over Lockerbie, Scotland, and their successful prosecution under an especially constituted court in the Hague.

Likewise, the International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia, set up under the auspices of the ICJ, has successfully prosecuted some wartime Croat and Serbian terrorists and is currently prosecuting former Serbian strongman Slobodan Milosevic, though of course much remains to be done.

The second prong of a progressive US response could have been Washington's announcing a fundamental change in its policies in the Middle East, the main points of which would be the withdrawal of troops from Saudi Arabia, the ending of sanctions and military action against Iraq, decisive support for the immediate establishment of a Palestinian state, and ordering Israel to immediately refrain from attacks on Palestinian communities.

Foreign policy realists will say that this strategy is impossible to sell to the American people, but they have been wrong before. Had the US taken this route, instead of taking the law as usual in its own hands, it could have emerged as an example of a great power showing restraint and paved the way to a new era of relations among people and nations.

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How to Lose a War

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The instincts of a unilateral, imperial past, however, have prevailed, and they have now run rampage to such an extent that, even on the home front, the rights of dissent and democratic diversity that have been one of the powerful ideological attractions of US society are fundamentally threatened. by the draconian legislation being pushed

No Win Situation

As things now stand, Washington has painted itself into a no-win situation.

If it kills bin Laden, he becomes a martyr, a source of never-ending inspiration, especially to young Muslims.

If it captures him alive, freeing him will become a massive focus of resistance that will prevent the imposition of capital punishment without triggering massive revolts throughout the Islamic world.

If it fails to kill or capture him, he will secure an aura of invincibility, as somebody favored by God, and whose cause is therefore just.

September 11 was an unspeakable crime against humanity, but the US response has converted the equation in many people's minds into a war between vision and power, righteousness and might, and, perverse as this may sound, spirit versus matter. You

won't get this from CNN and the New York Times, but Washington has stumbled into bin Laden's preferred terrain of battle.

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