

# UNITY

## THE NATIONAL PUBLICATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA

Compiled from Federal parliamentary and other sources relevant to Australia's obligations to the United Nations

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(NOTE: It is planned shortly to upgrade the UNity format and the new Contents Headings are part of the process to provide easier access to information. Until the new format is introduced, please note some links may continue to need to be copied and pasted into address space/browser).

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#### **A. HUMAN RIGHTS**

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##### **FORMER MINISTER'S 'EGREGIOUS ERROR' OVER VISA**

Federal Court judge Kevin Lindgren has found that the former immigration minister, Kevin Andrews, committed an "egregious failure" of Parliament by not making a decision on whether to grant a protection visa to an Iraqi asylum seeker and convicted people smuggler, the Sydney Morning Herald reported (18/1/08). The asylum seeker, Ali Al Jenabi, took the previous minister to court last November to force a decision on his drawn-out application for a protection visa. The application was lodged in July 2006 when Mr Al Jenabi was being held in prison in Darwin but was sent to the Villawood detention centre. He has been held there since.

ARTICLE: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/01/17/1200419974223.html>

##### **DR HANEEF WELCOME TO RETURN**

Queensland Health has approached Indian doctor Mohamed Haneef about coming back to work in one of the state's hospitals, but the Gold Coast Hospital, where Mohamed Haneef used to work, says it would understand if he were reluctant to return, the ABC reported on Thursday.

Dr Haneef's barrister reportedly said the doctor would seriously consider returning after the Federal Government decided not to appeal against re-issuing his visa yesterday. Dr Brian Bell, the executive director of medical services at the Gold Coast Hospital, says many hospitals would welcome Dr Haneef onto their staff. ARTICLE:

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/01/17/2140232.htm>

##### **HREOC: VILLAWOOD DETENTION CONDITIONS 'STILL A DISGRACE'**

Although improvements had been made for many people in detention in Australia, the conditions in Stage 1 of the Villawood immigration centre – where many long-term detainees are held –

remained a disgrace, said Human Rights Commissioner, Graeme Innes (9/1/08). He was releasing the annual inspection report on conditions in immigration detention centres by Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC).

"Last year HREOC recommended that Stage 1 be demolished – we make the same recommendation this year," Mr Innes said. "I also repeat HREOC's view that many people are still held in detention for too long." Saying indefinite detention had a seriously debilitating effect on the mental health of detainees, he said, "We need to get people out of detention faster in order to reduce the risk of causing long-term mental health damage." Summary of observations at [www.humanrights.gov.au/human\\_rights/idc](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/human_rights/idc)

**VILLAWOOD 'MUST BE CLOSED':** Protesters rallied outside Sydney's Villawood immigration detention centre following the death of a detainee, 7 News reported on Tuesday. The group renewed calls for the centre to be closed and for Australia's mandatory immigration detention laws repealed.

Refugee Action Coalition spokesman Mark Goudkamp said a 62-year-old Iranian male detainee died of a heart condition in hospital on Sunday after being taken there on Friday. Mr Pishehvar had been awaiting deportation for three months after serving five years in jail for trying to smuggle drugs into Australia, he said.

"Since December 2000 there had been at least 18 deaths in all forms of immigration detention in Australia and Nauru," said Pamela Curr, Campaign Coordinator for Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (ASRC). DETAILS: Pamela Curr, Asylum Seekers Resource Centre, on 0417 517 075 and [www.asrc.org.au](http://www.asrc.org.au); and Charandev Singh, Brimbank Melton Legal Centre, on 0403 659 431.

#### **INCREASING CHRISTMAS ISLAND DETENTIONS NO SOLUTION**

The release of Sri Lankan detainees on Nauru has been welcomed by the Federation of Ethnic Communities Council of Australia (FECCA). However, it believes the move to increase offshore processing on Christmas Island dilutes Australia's commitment to human rights (14/1/08).

It said Senator Evans' announcement last week to increase capacity for offshore processing on Christmas Island flew in the face of the government's commitment to wind down operations on Nauru.

FECCA senior deputy chairman John Gebhardt called for the dismantling of all offshore processing: "Dismantling of the 'Pacific Solution', while increasing offshore processing capacity on Christmas Island is like 'robbing Peter to pay Paul'. Offshore processing denied refugees' legal rights of appeal. DETAILS: John Gebhardt on 02 4929 5880; 0431 488584 or FECCA on 02 6282 5755.

#### **BRIDGE FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS WORKS**

Spelling out successes in assisting asylum seekers, the Bridge for Asylum Seekers Foundation also reported how a book, *Acting from the Heart*, which tells the stories of Australian advocates for asylum seekers, was short-listed for the 2007 HREOC Non-Fiction Award.

DETAILS: BRIDGE FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS FOUNDATION ON 02 9712 7784; PO BOX 829, FIVE DOCK NSW 2046 0418 261 160; [WWW.ASYLUMSEEKERSFOUNDATION.COM](http://WWW.ASYLUMSEEKERSFOUNDATION.COM).

#### **HREOC RECEIVED 1779 COMPLAINTS IN ONE YEAR**

HREOC carried out investigation and conciliation of complaints of alleged discrimination in the areas of sex, race, age and disability, as well as breaches, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission's (HREOC) 2006-07 annual report states.

HREOC received 16,606 inquiries, an increase on previous years of over 65%. There were 1,779 complaints, an increase on previous years of over 42%; 94% of matters were finalised within 12 months. COPIES: at <http://www.humanrights.gov.au/about/publications/>; or call HREOC

Publications Officer on 02 9284 9600 or email: [publications@humanrights.gov.au](mailto:publications@humanrights.gov.au)

### **DAME KIDU WINS US AWARD A SECOND TIME**

For the second time, Dame Carol Kidu, Member of Port Moresby South Electorate and Community Development minister, has won the US Department of States International Award for courage and leadership in advocating social justice and women's rights and advancement, the PNG National Weekender reported in December.

Dame Carol, described as a woman of exceptional courage who has stood up for social justice, women and children's issues in PNG, has been outspoken about police brutality towards young men, against sexual harassment of women in the workforce and about the future of school drop outs. Lady Kidu's nomination was recommended by the US Embassy.

### **IT'S TIME 'TO RE-FOCUS ON DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN'**

When author and journalist, Dr Anne Summers, delivered the Human Rights Oration to the Victorian Equal Opportunity & Human Rights Commission on United Nations Human Rights Day, she said women were still treated unequally in employment, both with the jobs they got (or, more accurately, didn't get) and the remuneration they received.

There were blatant breaches of both state and federal anti-discrimination laws and yet employers calculated that the risk of being prosecuted was so small they did it anyway. Yet, despite the persistence of discrimination against women, in recent years, the focus had shifted away from women. It was time to change that, she said.

ORATION: [2007 Human Rights Oration transcript - Word format \(109KB\)](#) and [2007 Human Rights Oration transcript - PDF format \(199KB\)](#)

### **CALL FOR TRANSPARENCY IN PREGNANCY ADVICE**

"With the failure of the Coalition's National Pregnancy Support Helpline, eight months after its launch, the Labor Party must now commit to a policy framework for both transparency in advertising and the regulation of pregnancy counselling services," Australian Democrats' spokesperson for the Status of Women, Senator Natasha Stott Despoja, said (9/1/08).

Senator Stott Despoja co-sponsored the Pregnancy Counselling (Truth in Advertising) Bill 2006, with ALP Senator Carol Brown, Liberal Senator Judith Troeth, and Greens Senator Kerry Nettle, which is based on the original Bill introduced by Senator Stott Despoja in 2005.  
DETAILS: Emily Johnson on 08 8232 7595.

### **REMOVING GAG CLAUSES WELCOME FIRST STEP**

The Federal Government has announced it would review contracts with non-government organisations to remove gagging clauses and this was welcomed by the Australian Greens.

"This is a great first step, but far more needs to be done to undo the legacy of John Howard," said Senator Rachel Siewert (9/1/08).

The Greens called on the Federal Government to:

- \* Ensure adequate and sustainable funding for a vibrant NGO sector in Australia;
- \* Remove all funding limitations on the ability of groups to engage in advocacy;
- \* Ensure that NGOs are able to engage in advocacy as well as service provision and retain charitable tax status for accepting donations;
- \* Provide funding for NGOs to engage with governments in policy development;
- \* Re-establish genuinely representative peak consultative bodies for the various sectors;
- \* Ensure that the NGO sector is represented on all relevant government consultation bodies; and
- \* Implement a major review of Freedom of Information legislation to ensure proper access to information about government programs and policies. DETAILS: Chris Twomey on 0407 725 025.

### **CONTRIBUTIONS SOUGHT FOR TRANSPORT DISABILITY STANDARDS REPORT**

A draft report on the review of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport has been released by the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government, Anthony Albanese, and Attorney-General, Robert McClelland. Interested stakeholders are invited to provide comments by the end of March.

"This draft report provides us with valuable information on the effect of the Transport Standard since it was introduced in 2002 and the degree to which the aim of significantly improving access to public transport has been realised," said Human Rights Commissioner Innes (11/1/08).

The draft contains a number of recommendations aimed at clarifying technical questions raised over the first five years of operation of the Standards and proposes a number of changes to extend their scope to cover transport systems, such as school bus services and community bus services. DETAILS: <http://www.ddatransportreview.com.au/>.

### **SIR EDMUND HILLARY DIES**

In his 88 years, Sir Edmund had known the worst of human misery, as well as the joy of conquest and triumph, the New Zealand Herald reported on Saturday. [Sir Edmund Hillary 1919-2008](#), died last week. A state funeral has been organised, the New Zealand Herald reported.

"In 1960, Sir Ed created the Himalayan Trust to fund aid and development work in Nepal, and he was working there when, in 1975, his wife Louise and 16-year-old daughter Belinda were killed in a plane crash," it stated.

ARTICLE: [http://www.nzherald.co.nz/section/1/story.cfm?c\\_id=1&objectid=10486490](http://www.nzherald.co.nz/section/1/story.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10486490).

### **TIME NOW TO PUSH MYANMAR TOWARD DEMOCRACY**

International pressure on Myanmar's military junta to stop abusing its people has slowed down after September's violent crackdown on peaceful demonstrators and the UN needed to keep firm diplomacy going, and China, India and other Asian countries should back the UN drive for human rights in Myanmar, says US official. ARTICLE: [The Washington Post](#) (8/1/08).

## **AFRICA**

### **UN ASKS FOR \$42 MILLION TO HELP KENYA**

Following the violence in Kenya, the UN has asked for \$42 million to provide some 500,000 people with food, water, shelter and other priority needs over the next six months. Approximately \$10 million is for food aid, followed by emergency shelter, early-recovery projects and protection of civilians, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs John Holmes said at the [launch](#) of the appeal in New York (16/1/08).

### **ZIMBABWE PROTEST PLANNED**

The head of the Movement for Democratic Change, Zimbabwe's largest opposition party, said it plans a protest march next week. Tendai Biti said supporters will air their grievances with the collapsing economy and urge a new constitution be installed to ensure elections scheduled for March are free and fair. [AlertNet.org/Reuters](#) (16/1/08).

The Sydney Morning Herald reported (17/1/08) that Robert Mugabe is to face a challenge from within his own ZANU-PF party at a presidential election in March. Mr Mugabe was unanimously endorsed as the ruling party's presidential candidate at a stage-managed congress last month, but senior party sources said dissident members would nominate Simba Makoni to stand against Mr Mugabe. ARTICLE: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/01/16/1200419886033.html>

### **ZIMBABWE'S ECONOMIC WOES DRIVE TRADE UNDERGROUND**

An order by Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe to businesses some months ago to slash their prices has left stores empty and Zimbabweans with little choice but to purchase their goods on the country's thriving underground economy. [Inter Press Service News Agency](#) (9/1/08).

## MIDDLE EAST

### **IRAN PUNISHMENTS DRAW FIRE FROM HUMAN RIGHTS ADVOCATES**

Iran has conducted more than 20 executions and five amputation punishments already in 2008, drawing fire from human rights activists who decry what they see as an increase in the application of inhumane penalties for criminals. "It doesn't matter how often these sentences are issued; even once is not acceptable, and our laws should change," Nobel-winning Iranian lawyer Dr Shirin Ebadi said. [The New York Times](#) (11/1/08).

### **NEW BLOGS ON IRAQI HUMAN RIGHTS AND ENVIRONMENT**

The president of CCER and director of MHRI – Iraq, Fallujah Muhamad Al-Daraji has announced that his organisations are putting out reports and activities on new blogs:

Monitoring net of human rights in Iraq (MHRI): <http://www.mhrinet.splinder.com>

and Conservation centre of environmental and reserves in Fallujah

(CCERF) : <http://ccerf.splinder.com>.

### **GABON MUZZLES GROUPS OVER POLITICS**

The activities of non-governmental groups in Gabon have been temporarily banned because the government said they have allegedly interfered with politics. The groups, which have criticised the government in the west central African country on alleged corruption and other issues, said they may challenge the ban in an international court. [BBC](#) (10/1/08).

## US OPERATIONS

### **US MILITARY BASE IN AFGHANISTAN NOW SIZEABLE PRISON**

Bagram prison at the US military base north of Kabul has received only a fraction of the attention given Guantanamo Bay, but the prison in Afghanistan reportedly has steadily increased its number of detained "enemy combatants" to 630, more than twice the 275 currently held at Guantanamo. UK [Independent Online](#) reports (8/1/08) or <http://news.independent.co.uk/world/asia/article3318028.ece>

### **GUANTANAMO HEARINGS LACK FULL JUSTICE, UN RIGHTS EXPERT WARNS**

The legal framework for prosecuting detainees at the Guantanamo Bay prison camp is not living up to international judicial standards, the UN independent investigator on human rights in the battle against terrorism reported. Martin Scheinin, who visited the camp, said legal hearings there "provided graphic illustrations of the practical difficulties in providing fair trials at a distant military base." [Seattle Post-Intelligencer/Associated Press](#) (12/12/07).

## B. PEACE AND SECURITY

### **RUDD ANNOUNCES SECURITY REVIEW AFTER KABUL EMBASSY ATTACK**

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd has ordered an immediate security assessment of the Australian Embassy in the Afghan capital Kabul, the ABC reported on Tuesday. At least six people died when Taliban militants attacked the Serena Hotel, which houses the embassy.

DETAILS: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/01/15/2138609.htm>

### **ASHDOWN FOR AFGHANISTAN?**

British politician and former soldier Paddy Ashdown, 66, is reported to have agreed to become the UN envoy to Afghanistan, Reuters reported (16/1/08). The role would put Mr Ashdown at the heart of international efforts to combat a Taliban insurgency and guide reconstruction. It is expected the UN will make an announcement shortly.

### **JAPANESE MOVE WELCOMED**

The decision by Japan to pass a new Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law, providing a legal basis for Japan's Self Defence Force to resume critical maritime re-fuelling in support of Coalition operations in Afghanistan, has been welcomed by Foreign Minister Stephen Smith (12/1/08).

“Japanese support in this area – and through its generous aid to reconstruction and development - has made a critical contribution to the international effort in Afghanistan,” he said. “The resumption of Japan’s re-fuelling operations is a very positive step and reinforces efforts to ensure sustained international commitment to Afghanistan. Australia itself remains committed to Afghanistan in partnership with Japan and other members of the international community.”  
DETAILS: [http://www.foreignminister.gov.au/releases/2008/fa-s012\\_08.html](http://www.foreignminister.gov.au/releases/2008/fa-s012_08.html)

## PAKISTAN

### **PAKISTAN DISMISSES ELBARADEI'S NUCLEAR CONCERNS**

Pakistan's foreign office has said that it rejects concerns raised by International Atomic Energy Agency chief Mohamed ElBaradei that the country's nuclear arsenal could end up in the hands of Islamic radicals. "Our nuclear weapons are as secure as that of any other nuclear weapon state," the office said after ElBaradei was reported fearful that the turmoil in Pakistan could eventually lead to extremists taking over. ARTICLE: [BBC](#) (9/1/08).

## SRI LANKA

### **BAN CONDEMNS RENEWED ATTACKS**

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has strongly condemned the attacks in Sri Lanka which coincided with the formal end of a truce between the government and Tamil rebels (17/1/08).

“The only way to stop further violence in Sri Lanka is through dialogue,” Mr Ban said in a [statement](#), urging the parties concerned “to undertake genuine efforts to achieve a peaceful negotiated solution.”

ARTICLE: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=25316&Cr=sri&Cr1=lanka>

### **HUMAN RIGHTS WARNING AS CEASEFIRE ENDS**

The UN human rights chief, Louise Arbour, has called on both parties to abide by their obligations under international law to protect civilians.

“An intensification of hostilities will likely have a devastating effect on the human rights of many Sri Lankans from all communities,” Louise Arbour stated and warned that “violations of these rules by any party could entail individual criminal responsibility under international criminal law, including by those in positions of command.”

ARTICLE: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=25297&Cr=sri&Cr1=lanka>

### **CONCERN OVER SRI LANKAN GOVERNMENT MOVE**

Australia is concerned about the Sri Lankan Government's announcement that it intended to withdraw from the 2002 ceasefire agreement with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. Foreign Affairs Minister Stephen Smith appealed to all parties to protect the human rights of all Sri Lankans and find a political solution. DETAILS:

[http://www.foreignminister.gov.au/releases/2008/fa-s008\\_08.html](http://www.foreignminister.gov.au/releases/2008/fa-s008_08.html)

### **NEPAL TRIES TO STEER TOWARD DEMOCRACY**

Nepal, trying to embrace some form of democracy after a controversial monarchy and decade-long civil war, is planning an April 10 election. A host of challenges await the impoverished country with officials - including Ian Martin, who heads the UN mission there - saying thorny issues such as integration of the former Maoist rebels must be taken care of before a proper election can be held. [The Christian Science Monitor](#) (16/1/08).

### **TIBETANS PLAN OLYMPIC PROTEST MARCH**

Five groups representing exiled Tibetans are planning a march from India into Tibet ahead of the 2008 Beijing Olympics to try to embarrass China into ending its rule in the region. ARTICLE: <http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/DEL331906.htm>

## MIDDLE EAST

### **IRAN TO ANSWER NUCLEAR QUERIES IN FEBRUARY**

Iran is seeking to answer all the UN nuclear watchdog's questions over its disputed atomic program by mid-February, the head of Iran's atomic energy organisation Gholam Reza Aghazadeh indicated, after a visit by the agency's director general, International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) chief Mohamed ElBaradei, the Australian reported (14/1/08). Mr ElBaradei is due to present a report in March to the IAEA Board of governors, a crucial moment in determining the future of Iran's six-year atomic standoff with the West.

Article: <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,23048269-12377,00.html>

### **CONGRATULATIONS OVER URANIUM DECISION**

The Australian Greens have congratulated Foreign Minister Stephen Smith for vetoing the previous government's decision to sell uranium to India, a country which has refused to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (16/1/08). DETAILS: Jon Edwards on 0428 213146.

### **GAZA: UN ENVOY CALLS FOR END TO VIOLENCE**

The UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process has appealed for an end to the violence in Gaza, calling the scale of the recent bloodshed alarming (15/1/08).

Following his visit to Gaza, Robert Serry said he had been informed that a major Israeli incursion into the area had left at least 14 people dead and over 40 injured, with civilians among those killed. Deploing the killing and wounding of civilians, he added that the scale of the recent bloodshed was deeply alarming. "I really appeal to all parties to end the violence and to find ways to de-escalate the present escalation of violence," he said.

### **IRAQ: UNHCR SEEKS FUNDING FOR DISPLACED PEOPLE**

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees has called on the international community to fund \$261 million of aid for Iraqis displaced by violence. The money will provide health care, financial support and other basic necessities for 2.2 million Iraqi refugees in neighbouring countries or displaced within Iraq. [IRINNews.org](http://IRINNews.org) (8/1/08).

### **NEW STUDY ESTIMATES 151 000 VIOLENT IRAQI DEATHS**

A large national household survey conducted by the Iraqi Government and the World Health Organisation estimates that 151 000 Iraqis died from violence between March 2003 and June 2006 (9/1/08).

The findings, published on the website of the *New England Journal of Medicine*, are based on information collected during a wider survey of family health in Iraq, designed to provide a basis for the Iraqi Government to develop and update health policies and plan services.

Co-author Mohamed Ali, a WHO statistician who provided technical assistance for the survey, said, "Our survey estimate is three times higher than the death toll detected through careful screening of media reports by the Iraq Body Count project and about four times lower than a smaller-scale household survey conducted earlier in 2006," added Naeema Al Gasseer, the WHO representative to Iraq.

DETAILS: Copy of the New England Journal of Medicine paper: [mediasupport@nejm.com](mailto:mediasupport@nejm.com) or Emma Ross, WHO Department of Communications, on +41 22 791 1492, +41 79 475 5534 and [rosse@who.int](mailto:rosse@who.int). All WHO Press Releases, Fact Sheets and Features: <http://www.who.int>.

## **BEIRUT ATTACK RAISES GHOSTS OF VIOLENT PAST**

A car bomb in Beirut that left four people dead and 20 wounded is the first attack aimed at U.S. officials in Lebanon since the end of the country's bloody civil war in 1990. The attack came as Lebanon continues to grapple with political and security turmoil that has raised fears of a return to widespread violence. [TIME](#) (15/1/08).

## **AFRICA - APPEAL FOR KENYA**

"For the sake of the people of Kenya, the East African region and indeed Africa in general, I appeal to the international community, including the African Union, the Commonwealth, the European Commission, the United Nations and other friends of Kenya like the United States and Japan, to put strong pressure on Messrs. Kibaki and Odinga - before this crisis escalates into an even greater tragedy," writes Wangari Maathai, 2004 Nobel Peace Laureate and a former member of Kenya's Parliament (2002-2007), in the Wall Street Journal (17/1/08), in an article entitled *Don't Ignore the Violence in Kenya*. "The leaders must put the welfare of Kenyans before their own ambitions, and enter immediately into a serious and sustained dialogue for a political and legal settlement."

ARTICLE: [http://online.wsj.com/article\\_email/SB120053336729696211-1MyQjAxMDI4MDEwNzUxMzczWj.html](http://online.wsj.com/article_email/SB120053336729696211-1MyQjAxMDI4MDEwNzUxMzczWj.html)

## **AUSTRALIA HELPS KENYA WITH \$1 MILLION**

Australia is providing \$1 million for immediate assistance to people affected by Kenyan violence. It will be directed through AusAID to the International and Kenyan Red Cross and the office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). DETAILS:

[http://www.foreignminister.gov.au/releases/2008/fa-s009\\_08.html](http://www.foreignminister.gov.au/releases/2008/fa-s009_08.html)

## **SUDANESE MILITARY LEADERS AND UN-AU DARFUR FORCE DISCUSS DEPLOYMENT**

Sudan's top military officer and his counterpart from the new United Nations-African Union (AU) hybrid mission ([UNAMID](#)) met to discuss the deployment of the joint peacekeeping force to end violence in the war-ravaged Darfur region, the UN News Centre reported (5/1/08).

In the talks between UNAMID General Martin Luther Agwai and Lieutenant General Ismat, Chief of the Sudanese Armed Forces, the government "expressed its commitment to facilitate the deployment of UNAMID and to avoid misunderstandings in future, by keeping the channels of communication open through regular meetings," UN spokesperson Michele Montas said.

The meeting was a follow-up to a decision – that the military leadership of the two sides should meet – reached during a meeting between Rodolphe Adada, the Joint AU-UN Special Representative for Darfur, and Mutrif Siddiq, Undersecretary in Sudan's Foreign Ministry.

The so-called Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) is among the unresolved issues that depend on the outcome of discussions with the Sudanese Government. Others include the final confirmation of the composition of the force and clearance to function 24 hours a day.

Mr Adada also conferred with the UN and AU Special Envoys for Darfur, Jan Eliasson and Salim Ahmed Salim – who have arrived on a weeklong mission to infuse new momentum into efforts to bring peace to Darfur – on progress.

UNAMID, which took over from an AU mission last month, has only 9,000 troops out of its mandated strength of 26,000 and lacks essential logistics and equipment, including helicopters. Top UN officials have repeatedly asked member states to speed up delivery of vital units and assets. More than 200,000 people have been killed and 2.2 million others forced to flee their homes since fighting began in 2003 in Darfur between Government forces and rebel groups.

ARTICLE: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=25300&Cr=darfur&Cr1=unamid>

## **SUDAN ADMITS FORCES ATTACKED UN CONVOY**

Sudan on Thursday retracted its denial that its forces had attacked a United Nations

peacekeeping convoy in Darfur, apologising for the shooting but also partly blaming the UN for the incident. Sudan's military spokesman said the UN had not given prior notice of the convoy's movements; the UN has said such requests by the government in Khartoum are improper attempts to tie the hands of the peacekeepers. [Chicago Tribune/Associated Press](#) (free registration) (10/1/08).

### **ALGERIA CRITICISES UN DECISION ON BOMB PROBE**

Algerian officials reacted negatively to an announcement from UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon that the UN had appointed an independent panel to investigate the December 11 bombings which left 17 UN staff dead. Algeria's government argues the country is addressing the issue, Algerian press reported. [AlertNet.org/Reuters](#) (16/1/08).

## **ASIA PACIFIC**

### **CALL TO CANCEL SUPER HORNET ORDER**

UNAA National President Professor John Langmore has called on the Federal Government to review the order for 24 Super Hornets because "Neither strategic considerations nor expenditure priorities justify the purchase," he said.

"There are no current or predicted external military threats to Australia which justify outlaying \$6.6 billion on fighter aircraft in the short or even medium term. Such weapons contribute nothing to protection against terrorists. It is 65 years since there has been a threat to Australian territory and none are predicted. The existing F111s are adequate at present.

"Opinion polls before and after the election showed that the priorities sought by most voters are improvements in health, education, reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and in security at work. Spending on unnecessary weapons reduce resources available to government for filling gaping holes in the provision of community services. The order of Super Hornets should be cancelled."

DETAILS: John Langmore on 03 9329 2216 or 041 9897 489; [langmore@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:langmore@unimelb.edu.au).

### **EAST TIMOR - NOAM CHOMSKY APPEALS FOR ETAN**

In an appeal to support the work of the East Timor and Indonesia Action Network (ETAN), Noam Chomsky, well-known US philosopher, activist and author, said while East Timor and Indonesia were mostly ignored by the mainstream media, the East Timor and Indonesia *Action* Network (ETAN) continued to campaign for the rights of the East Timorese and Indonesian people.

He said that in 2007, ETAN spearheaded an election observer mission to monitor East Timor's presidential election and run-off and its first-ever parliamentary election, initiated the Solidarity Observer Mission for East Timor (SOMET). It was the only international non-government observer group present in East Timor for all three elections:

<http://etan.org/etan/obproject/default.htm>.

"The still nascent nation of Timor-Leste needs our strong support," Noam Chomsky said. "Its newly-elected government is struggling to fulfill promises and meet expectations. Fledgling justice, education and health systems need attention. Those most responsible for the many human rights crimes perpetrated during the brutal Indonesian occupation have yet to be held accountable.

ETAN planned to organise future solidarity delegations, while continuing to advocate for justice and restrictions on military support for Indonesia. ETAN also plans to hold a conference in 2008 to bring activists, academics, religious and governmental leaders together to deepen understanding of the current situation and strengthen solidarity with the Timorese people.

ETAN states contributions can be sent safely through ETAN's website:

<http://etan.org/etan/donate.htm> or mail donations to: East Timor and Indonesia Action Network

(ETAN), PO Box 21873, Brooklyn, NY 11202-1873. FURTHER DETAILS:  
<http://www.etan.org/etanpdf/2007/etanchomskyappl.pdf>.

### **NORTH KOREA'S NEIGHBOURS LOOK TO THAW RELATIONS**

Efforts are increasing to bring North Korea in from the diplomatic cold in the wake of Pyongyang's moves to more effectively cooperate with the international community. Positive trends include a possible peace deal between North Korea and the US, high-level North-South Korean meetings, and growing commercial ties, TIME reports. [TIME](#) (9/1/08).

## **EUROPE**

### **POLAND IMPOSES CONDITIONS ON PLANNED US MISSILE SHIELD**

Poland's Prime Minister Donald Tusk said this week that the U.S. must help improve the Polish air defense system in exchange for being allowed to set up a missile defense shield on its soil. The governments in Poland and the Czech Republic are facing domestic public opposition to diplomatic pressure from the U.S. to build anti-missile installations on their soil. [Financial Times \(free registration\)](#) (10/1/08).

## **LATIN AMERICA**

### **ARMIES AND TENSIONS GROW IN LATIN AMERICA**

As Brazil, Ecuador and Venezuela recently have boosted their defence spending, some are seeing growing tensions and a possible arms race in the region. Latin America has not suffered a major war between countries for decades, but the new focus on acquiring arms "could become very dangerous," said Michael Shifter of the Inter-American Dialogue in Washington. [The Christian Science Monitor](#) (16/1/08).

## **C. UNITED NATIONS & AGENCIES**

### **BAN PRAISES POWER OF DIPLOMACY**

"Before I became the UN's Secretary-General, I was an Asian diplomat. While I was foreign minister of the Republic of Korea, my government and I strongly advocated detente with the North". (15/12/07) "When some called for sanctions and punitive action, South Korea pushed for dialogue. That requires listening as well as speaking. It means sticking to principles, but also attempting to understand the other side, however irrational or intransigent it may sometimes appear. This remains my style at the UN. I believe in the power of diplomacy and engagement. I prioritise dialogue over debate or declaration. Above all, I seek results. ARTICLE: <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,,22926085-28737,00.html>

### **QUIET WAY A DEPARTURE, BUT NOT WITHOUT RESULTS**

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has a quieter, less-public style of management that initially worried UN watchers, but his first year in office was not without positive results, according to the Economist. With progress on such major issues as Darfur and climate change, Ban has won over skeptics and earned respect. ARTICLE: [The Economist](#) (3/1/08).

### **'BETRAYAL OF OUR PLANET' HIT HOME**

Ban Ki-moon had left the climate-change conference in Bali, Indonesia, to visit UN Peacekeepers in East Timor when he received an urgent call to go back. Talks on a new global-warming treaty were deadlocked. The UN secretary-general returned on December 15 to deliver a message to delegates that their failure would be a "betrayal of our planet." Two hours later, with prodding from other leaders, negotiators worked out a compromise, reports Bloomberg. ARTICLE: <http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601087&sid=aykNdHUokpXE&refer=home>

### **BAN LAMENTS TERRIBLE TOLL OF INTOLERANCE**

Highlighting the terrible toll intolerance is taking around the world, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon [stressed](#) that fostering dialogue was the only sure way to counter extremism and build cross-cultural understanding (15/1/08).

"Never in our lifetime has there been a more desperate need for constructive and committed dialogue, among individuals, among communities, among cultures, among and between nations," he told the first [UN Alliance of Civilizations Forum](#) in Madrid.

The two-day meeting in the Spanish capital brings together political leaders, the media, corporate and film industry executives, and grassroots and civil society leaders to promote the global campaign launched by the UN to help overcome prejudices between nations and cultures and to promote interfaith dialogue.

ARTICLE: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=25295&Cr=civilization&Cr1=>

### **UN AGREES ON TWO-YEAR BUDGET OF \$4.17 BILLION**

The UN General Assembly approved a two-year UN budget of \$4.17 billion, with the United States casting the only "no" vote because of objections to funding for a follow-up to a conference it considered anti-Israel, the Washington Times reported (23/12/07). The 142-1 vote in the 192-member world body failed to reach consensus because of US objections that the budget included \$6.7 million for a follow-up to the 2001 World Conference Against Racism.

US Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad said the insistence of some members of Group of 77, which represents 132 mainly developing countries and China, to fund a follow-up conference from the regular UN budget made it impossible for the US to support the overall budget proposal. SEE: <http://www.washingtontimes.com/article/20071223/FOREIGN/914950549/1003>

### **BWC URGES US TO PAY UP ON UN DUES**

The Better World Campaign announced in December that the US Congress had agreed to increase the US contribution to UN peacekeeping by \$600 million more than President Bush originally requested as a result of BWC lobbying. Much of this increase would fund the UN life-saving peacekeeping mission to Darfur. Congress had also acted to lift an outdated budget cap on UN peacekeeping that had prevented the US State Department from paying the US full assessments for UN peacekeeping missions for the past three years.

BWC: "We look forward to continuing to work together in 2008 to ensure that the US honours its financial commitments to the United Nations. The US is still more than a billion dollars behind in its UN dues. This makes no sense — working with the international community is cheaper and smarter than going it alone. The Administration and Congress can help enhance America's reputation in the world by paying our back dues to the UN so that it can continue its important work on climate change, peacekeeping, poverty alleviation, and other global challenges." DETAILS: [BetterWorldCampaign.org](http://BetterWorldCampaign.org)

### **WORLD BANK OPENED WALLETS**

Despite a volatile and contentious year, the World Bank ended 2007 on a high note as it ended months of haggling with donors by securing \$25 billion in funds for the world's poorest countries over the next three years, The Economist says. More than three dozen countries pledged donations, including China, Egypt and Latvia. ARTICLE: [The Economist](#) (19/12/07) or [http://www.economist.com/world/international/displaystory.cfm?story\\_id=10329022](http://www.economist.com/world/international/displaystory.cfm?story_id=10329022)

### **WORLD LEADERS AT UN-BACKED FORUM LOOK FOR COOPERATION IN TERROR FIGHT**

Political leaders from 80 countries appealed for committed long-term dialogue as a way to meet the global terrorism challenges at the first forum of the Alliance for Civilization. "This is the other extreme: soft power, dialogue. It's a very clear way of marking in black and white two very different approaches to foreign policy," said Jose Ignacio Torreblanca, head of the European Council on Foreign Relations' Madrid offices. [The New York Times](#) (16/1/08).

### **UN: GLOBAL ECONOMY TO SLOW DOWN**

The world economy will cool down this year, in large part because of threats of a recession in the United States, according to a UN forecast. The annual report of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the UN Conference on Trade and Development also called on governments to ensure that the value of the dollar did not slide out of control, warning of serious consequences to the global economy. [Financial Times](#)

### **UN SECURITY TO BE BEEFED UP**

Saying 2008 would present a packed agenda, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said priorities included doing more for the poorest people, peace for Darfur, and boosting security for UN personnel around the world in light of the recent deadly Algiers bomb attack. ARTICLES: [Reuters](#) (8/1/08), [Seattle Post-Intelligencer/Associated Press](#) (7/1/08) and [CBC.ca](#) (7/1/08).

### **UN POWERS TO MEET ON POSSIBLE IRAN SANCTIONS**

The five permanent members on the UN Security Council and Germany plan to dispatch their foreign ministers to Berlin shortly to discuss whether more sanctions should be imposed on Iran. Russia and China are seen as unlikely to go along with new sanctions, but other members say Tehran has refused to comply with various demands by the council, such as halting its uranium enrichment. [USA TODAY/Associated Press](#) (15/1/08), [BBC](#) (15/1/08).

### **ISRAEL TO RAISE PROFILE AT UN**

Israel has long been unable to participate actively in many of the United Nations' key agencies and bodies because it does not affiliate itself with a particular region, but things have started to change with the country now set to play a key role in both the UN Environment Program and the UN Human Settlement Program, the Jerusalem Post reports. [The Jerusalem Post](#) (4/1/08).

### **SOUTH KOREA EYES BIGGER ROLE IN UN PEACEKEEPING**

South Korea is planning a 1,000-member strong rapid response force backed by transport equipment to support UN peacekeeping operations, the Ministry of National Defence said Sunday. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, a former foreign affairs and trade minister for the country, reportedly asked South Korea to bolster its peacekeeping role so that it aligns more with its level of financial support for UN operations. ARTICLE: [The Korea Times](#) (6/1/08).

### **UN NATURAL DISASTER TEAMS BUSY IN 2007**

The UN in 2007 sent 14 teams around the world to help locals recover from hurricanes, floods and other natural disasters, an unusually high number that the UN partly blamed on global warming. ARTICLE: [The Guardian \(London\)](#) (27/12/07).

### **WORLD BANK MEMO ON KENYA ELECTION SPARKS CONTROVERSY**

The World Bank is facing criticism for a briefing note written last week by its country director in Kenya that says President Mwai Kibaki's victory claim should be accepted because the UN supports that view based on UN Development Program election monitors. The UNDP says it did not monitor the controversial election nor has it offered any assessment of it, and Michele Montas, spokeswoman for Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, also rejected the idea that the UN has officially backed Kibaki's victory claim. [Financial Times \(free registration\)](#) (10/1/08).

### **PERU ASKS UN TO ADJUDICATE OVER MARITIME BOUNDARY**

Peru has asked the International Court of Justice ([ICJ](#)), the principal judicial organ of the United Nations, to adjudicate a maritime boundary dispute with Chile. In its application Peru claims that the maritime zones between Chile and Peru have never been delimited by agreement or otherwise, and accordingly delimitation should be determined by the ICJ in accordance with customary international law. Peru said its consistent endeavours to negotiate the various issues in dispute had constantly met with Chilean refusal.

UN NEWS CENTRE: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=25314&Cr=ICJ&Cr1=>

### **NZ PEACE CAMPAIGNER FOR UN ADVISORY BOARD ON DISARMAMENT**

Dr Kate Dewes, veteran peace and disarmament campaigner and coordinator of the Peace Foundation Disarmament & Security Centre in Christchurch, NZ, has been appointed by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to his advisory board on disarmament matters.

The board advises on arms limitation and disarmament; serves as the Board of Trustees of the UN Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), based in Geneva; and advises the Secretary-General on the implementation of the UN Disarmament Information Program.

Dr Dewes will attend her first meeting in New York from February 20-22, and then in Geneva in July. The current board membership of 19 includes ambassadors and officials from China, Egypt, France, Israel, Italy, Japan, Russia, South Korea, Sri Lanka and Sweden; academics from Brazil, Indonesia, Mexico, Philippines, Poland, the UK and US; and the Executive Director of the Movement against Small Arms in West Africa. based in Senegal.

Dr Dewes sees her two-year appointment as a wonderful opportunity to follow up on the work she did from 2000-2002 as the NZ Government expert on a UN Study on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Education and to draw upon her experience over more than 30 years of campaigning for peace and disarmament. DETAILS on 03 348 1353 or [kate@chch.planet.org.nz](mailto:kate@chch.planet.org.nz).

## **D. HEALTH & MEANS**

### **WFP GOES INTO ACTION IN KENYA**

UN agencies are bolstering their assistance to Kenyans in the aftermath of the deadly wave of violence which erupted after last month's disputed elections, claiming more than 500 lives and displacing hundreds of thousands (15/1/08).

A one-week supply of food – including cereals, pulses, high-energy biscuits, vegetable oil and corn-soya blend – provided by the UN World Food Program (WFP) and the Kenyan Government was distributed this week to nearly 77,000 people in four slums in Nairobi. Last week, WFP food was given out to 50,000 others in the same area.

Most residents depend on casual labour for survival and have been unable to work due to the recent unrest. Nearly 60 per cent of Nairobi's population of 2.75 million lives in the city's slums.

Schools nationwide re-opened yesterday, and WFP fed over 100 schools in the capital's slums. To date, [WFP](#) food aid has reached over 225,000 people in Nairobi, the Northern Rift Valley and the country's west.

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)) expected on Tuesday to finish distributing over 1,000 family kits – containing plastic sheeting for shelter, blankets, jerry cans, mosquito nets and kitchen sets – in Narok, 140km south-east of Nairobi.

### **AFGHAN DEATHS FROM TB DROP SHARPLY**

Over past months, the number of Afghans dying from TB has been halved, raising hopes that up to 10,000 lives a year can be saved. The World Health Organisation said however thousands still face infection each year and a big challenge remained. [IRINNews.org](#) (8/1/08).

### **DENGUE FEVER KILLS OVER 400 IN CAMBODIA**

Cambodia suffered its worst ever outbreak of dengue fever in 2007 which killed 407 people, most of them children, Reuters reported (4/1/08). Dengue, which causes fever, headaches and agonising muscle and joint pains, had infected nearly 40,000 people since the first outbreaks in May, Ngan Chantha, director of the health ministry's anti-dengue program, said. Thousands of sick children sought free treatment at four Swiss-funded hospitals, but doctors said they did not have enough resources to treat everyone.

The World Bank, the World Health Organisation and the Red Cross have provided pesticides to kill mosquitoes, while the Asian Development Bank (ADB) gave \$300,000 to the anti-dengue program. Cambodia, its health care system devastated by 30 years of civil war, spends about \$3 per person on health a year, according to the World Bank.

#### **AID FAMILY PLANNING GUIDELINES CRITICISED**

AusAID family planning guidelines should be abolished by the Labor Government, the Australian Democrats said this week. They claimed the guidelines effectively banned the use of aid funding for some contraceptives and for abortion advice and services.

These guidelines resulted from a conservative hold on the balance of power in the Senate years ago, Democrats spokesperson for Foreign Affairs Senator Natasha Stott Despoja said. It was ridiculous that abortion and contraception were legal here and in many of the countries we were assisting, AusAID was denied the opportunity to support these services because of a narrow ideology that once held sway. Illegal abortions accounted for around 13 percent of maternal deaths globally, she said. DETAILS: Emily Johnson on 08 8232 7595.

#### **WFP WARNS OF HURDLES TO FOOD AID IN MYANMAR**

Tight controls by Myanmar's military-ruled government have held back food assistance to poor people, the World Food Program says. Of late WFP has been freer to move about in the north-west, but access has been lacking in other parts. [Google/Associated Press](#) (10/1/08).

### **E. CLIMATE CHANGE & ENVIRONMENT**

#### **TRANSFER AFTER TWO HELD ON JAPANESE SHIP**

The Sea Shepherd organisation reported two of their members were back aboard the Steve Irwin vessel. They had been being held for two days on a Japanese whaling ship. ARTICLE: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/01/18/2141185.htm>

#### **AUSTRALIA'S STRONG OPPOSITION TO WHALE-HUNTING**

The Federal Government late last year announced a range of measures to put pressure on Japan to end whaling in the Southern Ocean. Foreign Minister Stephen Smith spoke with Japan's foreign minister to convey the Federal Government's strong opposition to Japan's scientific whaling program: <http://www.foreignminister.gov.au/releases/2007/fa-s040108.html>

#### **SHIPPING RULES NEEDED AS ARCTIC OCEAN OPENS**

As global warming chips away at the ice in the Arctic Ocean, the oil-rich region is slowly but steadily opening for international commerce and might "turn into a new economic frontier." As new opportunities open, a host of environmental and legal issues must be sorted out, such as implementing new shipping rules, London School of Economics professor Robert Wade writes. [Financial Times \(free registration\)](#) (15/1/08).

#### **ARCTIC WARMED BY NATURE AND MAN**

Humans do not bear sole responsibility for the warming of the Arctic, scientists say in a new report in *Nature*. They said a boost in natural and cyclical atmospheric energy was also contributing to climbing temperatures. [CBC.ca/Associated Press](#) (3/1/08).

#### **GREENLAND'S GLACIER MELT ACCELERATING**

Global warming is melting Greenland's glaciers at an accelerated pace, sending increasing amounts of ice and water towards the sea. Many scientists now worry the pace will outstrip the prediction made by the UN climate panel last year that the sea level will rise two feet this century. [The New York Times](#) (8/1/08).

#### **RESEARCHERS PREDICT ANOTHER HOT YEAR IN 2008**

This year will be one of the 10 hottest on record since 1850 even though projections show it will

be slightly cooler than last year, say British forecasters. [Environmental News Network/Reuters](#) (3/1/08).

### **RAIN FORESTS MAY BE TOUGHER THAN BELIEVED**

New research from Britain's Leeds University suggests that rain forests may be more resilient than generally assumed. A lot of cleared forests in Brazil and Indonesia have regrown, and suggests the long-term impact on climate change from deforestation may be less severe than believed, the report says. [The Guardian \(London\)](#) (8/1/08).

### **WHERE ARE YOU? INDONESIA ASKS**

Indonesia struck out at developed countries for presenting "empty propaganda" during climate change negotiations in Bali and stalling proposals to pay to protect the world's forests, the Sydney Morning Herald reported. The head of the Indonesian delegation, Emil Salim, launched the attack when Indonesia released its proposal to reduce its emissions from forestry, which account for about 8 per cent of the world's greenhouse emissions.

"When it comes to the negotiating table here in Bali, they only come with promises," Mr Salim said. "When it comes to the negotiating table here in Bali, developed countries are stingy." "Where are you?" Mr Salim asked of Australia, the United States and Britain.

ARTICLE: [Indonesia says West stingy - National - smh.com.au.mht](#)

### **DE BOER HONOURS IPCC SCIENTIST**

Yvo de Boer, Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, on the occasion of the death of IPCC scientist Professor Bert Bolin, said the professor had accompanied the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) from its infancy to prepare the panel's first and second Assessment Reports and by doing this, had placed climate change on the political agenda. Link to statement on <unfccc.int>: <http://unfccc.int/2860.php>  
Further information: John Hay, UNFCCC spokesman on +49-172 258-6944 or [press@unfccc.int](mailto:press@unfccc.int).

### **TROPICAL VISION OF ENERGY ISLAND**

From a distance it looks like an island paradise, but get closer and those tall structures that could be palm trees turn out to be wind turbines - and the surf laps against wave barrages, instead of sandy beaches, [The Guardian](#), reports (8/1/08). "Welcome to "Energy Island", a vision of how humans could help meet our future needs for energy, food and water using the power of nature in the tropics."

ARTICLE: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2008/jan/08/energy.renewableenergy>

### **CLIMATE CHANGE FIGHT MAY BE BIG WINNER IN US PRESIDENTIAL RACE**

No matter who ends up winning the US presidential contest, chances are good the next White House occupant will be a strong supporter of the country doing much more to tackle global warming, according to the League of Conservation Voters. The four candidates - Democrats Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama and Republicans John McCain and Mike Huckabee - all "support capping greenhouse gas emissions and solving the global warming crisis," the group said. [Environmental News Network/Reuters](#) (10/1/08).

### **NEW ECONOMY FORMING AROUND ENVIRONMENTAL TECHNOLOGIES**

A huge amount of innovation and investment is creating a whole new global economy centered around environmental technologies, a research group has said. "The most significant thing happening is that environmental technology is the hottest area for venture capital - it's really exciting," said Chris Flavin, president of the Worldwatch Institute. [BBC](#) (9/1/08).

### **TASMANIAN WIND COMPANY ROARS INTO CHINA**

Tasmanian renewable energy company, Roaring 40s, is building huge wind farms in China and around Asia and the Pacific, a Federal Government media release stated on Thursday.

Last year, Roaring 40s signed a joint development agreement with one of China's largest energy

generators, the China Datang Corporation, to construct one of the world's biggest on-shore wind farms in Jilin Province, north-eastern China.

A proposed 1000MW facility when fully developed, the 400MW first stage of this work – the Xiangyang project – starts construction soon near the city of Baicheng, Jilin province. DETAILS: <http://www.austrade.gov.au/tasmanian-expertise-used-for-wind-farms-in-china/default.aspx>

**Droplet No. 10** In this droplet, options for charging for water in times of plenty and times of scarcity are explored. Most systems are inequitable and inefficient, says Professor Mike Young, Research Chair, Water Economics and Management, University of Adelaide. Earlier droplets and reports related to water policy: [www.myoung.net.au](http://www.myoung.net.au). To subscribe to the droplet list, email [droplets@adelaide.edu.au](mailto:droplets@adelaide.edu.au) with "subscribe" in the subject line. Email: [Mike.Young@adelaide.edu.au](mailto:Mike.Young@adelaide.edu.au).

### **CONDOR TRIES TO SOAR AGAIN**

The Andean condor, one of the world's largest flying birds, has long been a source of pride throughout South America. Now a team of conservationists at the Buenos Aires Zoo are working to restore the bird's population, hoping it will once again be a common sight soaring in the skies. (29/12/07) [The Washington Post](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/12/28/AR2007122802623.html) or <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/12/28/AR2007122802623.html>

## **F. OTHER NEWS**

### **UK CLOSES BRITISH COUNCIL CENTRE IN RUSSIA**

Britain has been forced to close the British Council's centre in St Petersburg after Russian police detained the diplomat running the office and intelligence agents questioned local staff. The British Foreign Secretary, David Miliband, denounced the "intimidation and harassment of officials" as "completely unacceptable" and said the incident would damage the reputation of the Russian Government, the Sydney Morning Herald reported (18/1/08). Russia's ambassador in London, Yury Fedotov, was summoned to receive a formal protest from Sir Peter Ricketts, the permanent secretary at the Foreign Office. ARTICLE: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/01/17/1200419979602.html>

### **ONE LAPTOP PER CHILD PROJECT LOSES INTEL AS PARTNER**

Computer chipmaker Intel has withdrawn from the international project that aims to make inexpensive laptops widely available to children in the poor world. Intel cited "philosophical" differences as a reason for pulling out. [BBC](http://www.bbc.com/news/technology-41108) (4/1/08). However, in an analysis, the Chicago Tribune says mass production began last month and Negroponte says he expects at least 1.5 million machines to be sold by next November. ARTICLES: [http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/chi-laptop\\_webdec22,1,6878223.story](http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/chi-laptop_webdec22,1,6878223.story)

### **TRADE MINISTER IN INDIA FOR TALKS**

Minister for Trade Simon Crean was visiting Mumbai and New Delhi this week to pursue trade policy issues with Indian ministers, including the Minister for Commerce and Industry, Kamal Nath Minister for Finance, P Chidambaram Minister for Agriculture, Sharad Pawar and the Minister for Science and Technology, Kapil Sibal and to address a major conference on Australia's key trade priority and a successful outcome to the Doha Round of trade negotiations. DETAILS: [http://www.trademinister.gov.au/releases/2008/sc\\_007.html](http://www.trademinister.gov.au/releases/2008/sc_007.html)

### **HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR ACCRA**

The appointment of Billy Williams as Australia's new High Commissioner to the Republic of Ghana has been confirmed. The Australian mission in Accra was re-opened in mid-2004. Mr Williams will also have accreditation to a number of other West African countries including Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Senegal and Sierra Leone. He held a number of positions in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Canberra, and overseas served as Counsellor and Deputy Head of

Mission, Pretoria (2002-06) and as First Secretary (Public Affairs), Kuala Lumpur (1990-93).  
DETAILS: [http://www.foreignminister.gov.au/releases/2008/fa-s011\\_08.html](http://www.foreignminister.gov.au/releases/2008/fa-s011_08.html)

#### **NEW AMBASSADOR TO FRANCE**

David Alexander Ritchie has been appointed Australia's new ambassador to the French Republic and is expected to take up his appointment in March. Mr Ritchie is a senior career officer with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and was most recently First Assistant Secretary, Pacific Division. He has served as Deputy Head of Mission in London, High Commissioner in Colombo and High Commissioner in Apia. He is a fluent French speaker.

DETAILS: [http://www.foreignminister.gov.au/releases/2008/fa-s010\\_08.html](http://www.foreignminister.gov.au/releases/2008/fa-s010_08.html)

#### **CANOE GIFT 'TO PADDLE IN SAME DIRECTION'**

Solomon Islands High Commissioner Victor Ngele has presented the Rudd Government with a canoe, symbolising the Pacific nation's hope that the two countries may begin "paddling in the same direction", The Australian reported (17/1/08).

Labor's newly-appointed Parliamentary Secretary for Pacific Island Affairs, Duncan Kerr, received the gift from Mr Ngele in Canberra this week. Mr Kerr said it represented "a common approach to problem-solving. You all need to be paddling in the same direction."

ARTICLE: <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,23064671-16953,00.html>.

### **G. MEDIA MATTERS**

#### **IMPUNITY AGAINST THE MEDIA CONTINUES IN ASIA-PACIFIC REGION**

Pakistan is one of the three most dangerous countries for journalists, along with Somalia and Iraq, according to the IFJ's 2007 annual report, *Tragedy Unlimited*. Seven journalists and media personnel were murdered in Pakistan during the year. Despite IFJ international emergency missions to Pakistan in February and November, local and national authorities continued to display a disturbing lack of will to protect journalists and outright hostility toward the principles of independent and critical media. Political and civil unrest in Sri Lanka, Afghanistan and the Philippines had also resulted in multiple attacks.

The Asia-Pacific region continued to contend with a culture of impunity against the media, with the toll of all journalists killed in the region at 34, only one short of the 2006 toll, the report states. The alarming number of deaths as a result of bombings, cross-fire and murder were indicators of the region's heightened insecurity. Yet these figures did not reveal the even darker reality of journalists who are reported missing or abducted and whose whereabouts remained unknown.

DETAILS: [www.ifj.org](http://www.ifj.org)

#### **64 JOURNALISTS KILLED WORLDWIDE IN 2007**

The Committee to Protect Journalists has ranked Iraq as the deadliest country for journalists for the fifth consecutive year, where nearly half of journalists' deaths took place. ARTICLE: <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/12/18/world/18journalists.html?ex=1198645200&en=c6049ca20fdc9226&ei=5070&emc=eta1>

#### **AFGHAN JOURNALIST FACES DEATH PENALTY**

Afghanistan university student and journalist for the daily newspaper *Janan-e-Naw*, Syed Parvez, faces the death penalty at his upcoming trial, the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) reported (16/1/08). He is accused of "insolence to the Islam" after he allegedly downloaded an article from a Farsi-language website and distributed it among four friends. Parvez has also been accused of possessing anti-Islamic books and starting un-Islamic debates during university classes.

There are also calls for the release of former journalist and spokesman for Afghanistan's attorney general, Ghows Zalmay, who was arrested in November accused of the wrongful translation of the Quran into Dari, one of Afghanistan's two official languages. DETAILS: IFJ Asia-Pacific on +61 2 9333 0919.

Abdul Munir, the producer and presenter of Afghanistan Radio Television in Jawzjan (RTA-Jawzjan), was killed on December 28 while travelling on a bus which was attacked by an armed group at 2.30am near Mazar-e-Sharif. According to the Afghanistan Independent Journalists' Association (AIJA), Munir died on the way to hospital. DETAILS: [www.ifj-asia.org](http://www.ifj-asia.org).

### **NEPALESE EDITOR DIES AFTER SHOOTING**

The editor of local weekly newspapers *New Highway* and *New Season*, Pushkar Shrestha, was shot in his right shoulder on January 12 by a member of an armed group fighting for independence for the Terai region, southern Nepal, according to the National Union of Journalists, Nepal (NUJ-N). Mr Shrestha died while undergoing hospital treatment.

In a separate incident, Krishna Ojha, was attacked by an unknown group of assailants on the Ilam–Fidim Highway in eastern Nepal. A group stopped the car used by the Ojha and human rights workers but while the human rights workers were able to escape, Ojha was attacked and injured.

### **MISSION TO KATHMANDU**

The IFJ is due to join an international press freedom and freedom of expression mission to Nepal from January 13 to 17. The mission, organised by the Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ) and including about 15 international delegates, will meet political and civil society leaders, media organisations, different social groups and representatives of major international governments and donors in Kathmandu.

DETAILS: IFJ Asia-Pacific on +61 2 9333 0919 and [ifj@ifj-asia.org](mailto:ifj@ifj-asia.org).

### **DEMANDS SUSPENSION OF PAKISTAN MEDIA AUTHORITY PEMRA**

The Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ) has reported it was impossible for journalists to properly cover the February 18 elections in a free atmosphere unless the government revoked amendments to media laws, lifts all bans on broadcasters (including GEO-TV), and desisted from pressuring cable operators.

The IFJ and PFUJ are demanding the suspension of the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA), which has stepped up its efforts to restrict the media since President Musharraf imposed a six-week state of emergency in November.

DETAILS: IFJ Asia-Pacific on +61 2 9333 0919.

The PFUJ is calling for all political parties in Pakistan to sign a declaration that they will not support any move to pass or entrench anti-media laws after national elections, now postponed to mid-February. DETAILS: [www.pfuj.info](http://www.pfuj.info)

The PFUJ has launched an online petition campaign, **Fair Media for Fair Polls**, calling for the Pakistan Government to rescind the media-stifling ordinances and has asked the international press freedom community to support an online petition campaign on their own letterhead to send to [supportmedia@pfuj.info](mailto:supportmedia@pfuj.info).

List of demands and petition: <http://www.pfuj.info/contants/news/morenews96.htm>

### **CONCERNS MOUNT FOR SAFETY OF JOURNALISTS IN SRI LANKA**

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) General Secretary Aidan White has sent a letter to Sri Lanka's President Mahinda Rajapaksa (10/1/08), expressing the IFJ's grave concern about the escalation of attacks against journalists of all backgrounds in Sri Lanka. It called upon the president to enforce the UN Security Council Resolution to Protect Journalists Reporting in War Zones and Crisis Areas, which was adopted by the UN Security Council in 2006.

DETAILS: IFJ Asia-Pacific on +61 2 9333 0919.

Sri Lanka's Media Minister, Anura Priyadarshana Yapa, stated late last year that journalists would only be recognised as such if they obtained media accreditation cards issued by the government's Information Department. Comments can be sent to the Hon. Anura Priyadarshana Yapa, Minister for Mass Media and Information, Ministry of Mass Media and Information, 163, Kirulapona Road, Polhengoda, Colombo 05, Sri Lanka. DETAILS: IFJ Asia-Pacific on +61 2 9333 0919. DETAILS: [www.freemediasrilanka.org](http://www.freemediasrilanka.org).

#### **IFJ ASIA-PACIFIC REGIONAL MEETING IN KUALA LUMPUR**

Union leaders from the IFJ Asia-Pacific affiliates will gather in Kuala Lumpur for a regional meeting on February 2-3. Representatives will be involved in planning and developing strategies for increased regional solidarity and cooperation. The meeting will develop strategies to address challenges facing journalists' unions in the Asia-Pacific region, consider ways to strengthen unions, and assess regional training needs. DETAILS: [ifj@ifj-asia.org](mailto:ifj@ifj-asia.org).

#### **TWO MORE KILLED IN PHILIPPINES**

One journalist was shot dead and a former journalist's body was discovered in December, raising the 2007 death toll for journalists in the Philippines to five, according to the National Union of Journalists, Philippines (NUJP). In its 2007 report, *Confronting the Perils of Journalism in the Philippines*, the IFJ-NUJP Safety Office recorded 90 murders of journalists in the Philippines over the past 20 years. REPORT: [click here](#). DETAILS: [www.nujp.org](http://www.nujp.org)

#### **JOURNALISTS IN INDONESIA CONFRONT VIOLENCE**

Violence against media personnel in Indonesia has continued to rise and was concentrated in urban areas, according to Aliansi Jurnalis Independen (AJI), an IFJ affiliate. In its end-of-year statement, *Free the Indonesian Press from Threats of Violence and Prosecution*. AJI reported 75 attacks against journalists during 2007, 22 more than last year. Jakarta remained the most dangerous city followed by East Java and West Java. DETAILS: [www.ifj-asia.org](http://www.ifj-asia.org) or [www.ajiiindonesia.org](http://www.ajiiindonesia.org).

### **H. ARTICLES IN FOCUS**

#### **ISRAELIS DOING THEIR BLOCK OVER PUSH TO HALT SETTLEMENTS**

Dani Landesberg and teenage Jewish settlers began adding a second storey to their new home stole occasional glances down the road in case the police came by to evict them again, the Sydney Morning Herald reported (15/1/08). After a dozen settlers moved into the small stone house, Israeli security forces banished them for the first of eight times from land that a Palestinian family says is its property, a claim backed by legal documents and an Israeli human rights group. "They can drag us away a hundred times and we'll come back," said Mr Landesberg, 18."

ARTICLE: [Israelis doing their block over push to halt settlements - World - smh.com.au.mht](#)

#### **EVEN BYSTANDERS FEEL BUILDING WATCHDOG'S BITE**

An innocent witness to a minor scuffle, he was interrogated for hours but the law forbids him from telling his story. This is happening in Australia, the Sydney Morning Herald reported (15/1/08). The bystander was passing a building site when he witnessed a confrontation between a union official and a building manager. The man cannot be named and cannot discuss the details of his interrogation for fear of imprisonment. Building unions say the innocent citizen's experience proves the Australian Building and Construction Commission is out of control, wielding powers equal to those of anti-terrorism bodies, such as ASIO.

ARTICLE: [Even bystanders feel building watchdog's bite - National - smh.com.au.mht](#)

#### **OBSCURITY AND CONFINEMENT FOR MIGRANTS IN EUROPE**

Detention camps for foreigners have mushroomed across the European Union as the region has grown less and less welcoming to migrants, the International Herald Tribune reported (30/12/07).

"Detention is a very serious measure in a democratic society," said Katrine Camilleri, a refugee lawyer in Malta with the Jesuit Refugee Service, which on December 18 published a report on conditions in detention centres in the 10 newest EU states. Camilleri has recently been honoured by the UN refugee agency for her work.

[ARTICLE: Obscurity and confinement for migrants in Europe - International Herald Tribune.mht](#)

### **ANOTHER BUNDLE OF INTRUSIONS**

Over the past 12 months there was an impressive list of civil liberties violations in our relaxed and comfortable land, writes Richard Ackland in the Sydney Morning Herald (4/1/08). A year ago we published a list showing how our liberties had been whittled, starting with the sedition laws and ending with David Hicks. Now there is a fresh outcrop of abrasions to our rights, although, sadly, there is an eerie consistency about some of the players.

ARTICLE: <http://www.smh.com.au/news/opinion/another-bundle-of-intrusions/2008/01/03/1198949984164.html>

### **AUSTRALIA, THE UN, AND NUCLEAR WEAPONS**

The 2007 session of the UN General Assembly saw several significant new resolutions introduced alongside resolutions repeated from previous years. Nuclear resolutions stimulated a total of 315 statements and 52 draft texts. Every resolution was adopted either by consensus or by large majorities of countries, write [Moritz Kütt](#) and [John Langmore](#) On Line Opinion (14/1/08).

ARTICLE: <http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/view.asp?article=6859>

## **I. UNity, UN AND UNAA CONTACTS**

To access major United Nations websites, go to:

[United Nations.](#)

[Secretary-General.](#)

[UN News Centre.](#)

[Key UN Bodies, Agencies, Funds and Programs.](#)

[United Nations Information Centre for Australia,](#)

[New Zealand and the Pacific,](#) Level 1, 7 National Circuit, Barton ACT 2600, Canberra

or PO Box 5366, Kingston ACT 2604, and on 61 (2) 6273 8200.

The World Federation of United Nations is a global network of people linked through [United Nations Associations](#) in over 100 UN member states. Website available at <http://www.wfuna.org/who/> ; newsletter at <http://www.wfuna.org/news/newsletter/index.cfm>.

For more information about the United Nations Association of Australia in your state or if you want to join UNAA, access <http://www.unaa.org.au/> or contact:

UNAA ACT [unaaact@cyberone.com.au](mailto:unaaact@cyberone.com.au) on 02 6247 4499.

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UNAA WA [unaawa@tpg.com.au](mailto:unaawa@tpg.com.au) on 08 9221 9455 <http://www.unaa-wa.org.au/>.

UNAA NT (Darwin) <http://au.f313.mail.yahoo.com/ym/Compose?To=fletch44@bigpond.net.au> or on 0419 829509.

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