

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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A. UNITED NATIONS & AGENCIES

BAN TO LEAD TASK FORCE TO TACKLE GLOBAL FOOD CRISIS

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon announced that he would lead a high-powered task force to coordinate the efforts of the UN system to address the global crisis arising from the surge in food prices (29/4/08).

The Task Force on the Global Food Crisis will bring together the heads of UN agencies, funds and programs and the Bretton Woods institutions, as well as experts within the UN and leading international authorities.

The group's two coordinators – Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs John Holmes in New York and Senior UN System Influenza Coordinator David Nabarro in Geneva – expect to meet in the first week of May.

The announcement followed a meeting of the Chief Executive Board (CEB) – which brings together 27 heads of UN agencies, funds and programs – presided by Mr Ban in Bern. In a communiqué, the [CEB](#) called on the international community to urgently provide the \$755 million in emergency funds needed for the UN to feed millions of hungry people worldwide, as the first of a series of concrete measures to be taken.

"We see mounting hunger and increasing evidence of malnutrition which has severely strained the capacities of humanitarian agencies to meet humanitarian needs, especially as promised funding has not yet materialised," Mr. Ban [told a news conference](#).

REPORT: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=26491&Cr=food&Cr1=prices>

SEE also Health & Means page.

IMF CHANGES OFFER 'NEW LEGITIMACY'

Developing countries will get a little more voting power at the International Monetary Fund under a long-negotiated plan that has now won final approval. IMF Managing Director Dominique Strauss-Kahn said the change in voting rights marks "the beginning of the new legitimacy at the fund." [The Wall Street Journal](#) subscription required (30/4/08).

UN DISCOURAGED FROM ZIMBABWE ACTION

Despite diplomatic concern over the political stalemate and allegations of rights violations following Zimbabwe's March elections, the UN Security Council decided on Tuesday to refrain from endorsing UN involvement in the crisis, even as the US and European countries expressed support for sending in a fact-finding mission or special envoy. South Africa, which is heading the council this month, led the opposition to any UN intervention. [The New York Times](#) (30/4/08).

The UN Security Council heard what one official called a "sobering" account of electoral stalemate and violence in Zimbabwe, but ended up discouraging proposals for direct UN involvement in the crisis, the Sydney Morning Herald reported (1/5/08).

"There are a number of delegations that don't believe the council should be engaged on this, which is regrettable," said the official, Alejandro Wolff, Deputy US Ambassador. The briefing, to a closed session, by B. Lynn Pascoe, the under-secretary-general for political affairs, prompted calls from the US and its European allies to send in a fact-finding mission or special envoy.

Karen Pierce, UK Deputy Ambassador to the UN, said that Mr Pascoe had spoken of "a level of political intimidation and violence that I think many council members found quite chilling". But diplomats said the proposals ran into opposition led by South Africa. "It's their country; we don't need a special envoy," said Dumisani Kumalo, South African Ambassador.

REPORT: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/04/30/1209234954821.html>

Earlier UN political chief, B. Lynn Pascoe, said (29/4/08) that the UN Secretary-General was ready to work alongside the African Union (AU) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). He said political turmoil stopped some aid agencies delivering food.

US 'NOT KEEPING PROMISE TO UN PEACEKEEPERS'

The US will spend \$192 billion this year in Iraq and Afghanistan alone, on top of regular defence spending. By contrast, the United Nations is helping bring stability to 17 conflict areas around the world—from Sudan to Lebanon to Haiti—all for a budget of less than \$8 billion, the US Better World Campaign reported last week.

It said despite consistently supporting and voting for these peacekeeping missions at the UN, the US was not keeping its promise to UN peacekeepers. The US President's budget request this year falls more than [\\$600 million short of fully funding UN peacekeeping missions](#).

"The US already began the year \$2.8 billion in debt to the UN. A debt of this enormity should not go unnoticed." BWC said over 3,000 of its members wrote to Congress members asking them to fully fund UN peacekeeping and clear US debts.

Three senators later wrote to President Bush explicitly requesting increased US funding for UN peacekeeping. BWC also helped spearhead letters from 80 humanitarian, advocacy, and faith-based organisations urging Congress to pay back the UN debt and fully fund UN peacekeeping.

"Faced with an over-stretched military and conflicts around the world that are not likely to subside in the next eight months, the next president will need to rely on the important role of UN peacekeepers, BWC said. In [a recent paper](#) commissioned by the BWC, William Durch, senior associate at the Henry L. Stimson Center, offers key recommendations for the US to better support UN peacekeeping. DETAILS: <http://www.betterworldcampaign.org/>

MOVES OVER KOSOVO STILL AWAITED

The UN, due to hand over the administration of Kosovo to the European Union in June, but the head of the UN's mission there told the BBC details of the hand-over remained undetermined. "One thing is for sure. As long as [UN Security Council] Resolution 1244 is in place, we will always have a UN responsibility for Kosovo, and the exact shape and form of that UN mission is yet to be decided," Joachim Ruecker said. [BBC](#) (28/4/08). SEE also Peace & Security page.

UN URGED TO TACKLE SOMALI PIRATES

France and the US have introduced a draft resolution at the UN Security Council that would allow states to arrest pirates in Somalia's waters, the BBC reported (29/4/08). The document gives nations a six-month mandate to use "all necessary means" to fight piracy. But it says that countries taking such action should be co-operating with Somalia's embattled interim government.

Piracy is a huge problem off Somalia's coast - there have been more than a dozen attacks on ships this year. In the latest incident, pirates last week seized a Spanish fishing boat with 26 crew members in the region. They later released the hostages for a reported ransom of \$1.2m (£600,000). REPORT: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7372390.stm>

PEACE CORPS LOOKS TO OLDER VOLUNTEERS

The Peace Corps for decades has been dispatching mostly young, well-meaning volunteers around the world to teach English or help out in other ways in developing countries. But the US agency increasingly is tackling more complex issues, such as HIV and environmental problems, and so the corps has launched a fresh effort to attract older, more skilled volunteers, including retiring baby boomers. [The Christian Science Monitor](#) (25/4/08).

MR BAN – NOT MR MOON

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon may be famous as the world's top diplomat, but 16 months into his job many people, including some diplomats, still think his surname is Moon or Ki-moon. This prompted his chief of staff, Vijay Nambiar, recently to send out a memo to staff worldwide to encourage them to help clear up the confusion. [The Independent \(London\)](#) (25/4/08).

B. CLIMATE CHANGE & ENVIRONMENT

GLOBAL WARMING LINKED TO RAINFALL DECLINE IN SOUTH-EAST AUSTRALIA

There is growing evidence that lower rainfall and reduced runoff in the south-east of Australia is linked to global warming, according to one finding discussed at a science review for land and water resource managers in Melbourne on Wednesday.

Murray-Darling Basin Commission CEO Dr Wendy Craik said Bureau of Meteorology and CSIRO research for SEACI had generated increasing evidence of the impacts of global warming on rainfall in the south-east of Australia.

“The research shows there are firm signals in the current drought that correlate with future projections of reduced rainfall in southern Australia,” she said. “It also provides evidence of a clear north-south rainfall divide on either side of a naturally occurring band of high pressure (known as the sub-tropical ridge) roughly on a line running east to west through Adelaide and Canberra.”

The meeting was organised by the South-Eastern Australia Climate Initiative (SEACI). SEACI, which began in 2006, is a three-year \$7 million collaboration between six agencies to provide the most intensive analysis yet of factors responsible for the rainfall decline over the past decade and inflows into the Murray-Darling river systems.

Dr Craik said the meeting also discussed SEACI's work on an extensive review of a century of rainfall and temperature records and a refinement of climate models to deliver localised seasonal forecasts. DETAILS: http://www.mdbc.gov.au/subs/seaci/research_reports.html; Sam Leone, Murray-Darling Basin Commission on 02 6279 0141/0407 006 332; sam.leone@mdbc.gov.au.

RUSSIA SAYS NO PLANS TO CAP CARBON EMISSIONS

Russia will not accept binding caps on its greenhouse gas emissions under a new climate regime, currently being negotiated to succeed the Kyoto Protocol after 2012, top officials said on Monday, according to the Environment News Network (ENN) (29/4/08).

Kyoto puts a cap on the average, annual greenhouse gas emissions from 2008-12 for some 37 industrialised countries, including Russia. But former communist countries are well within their emissions targets, which are compared to 1990 levels, because their industries and carbon emissions subsequently collapsed after they struggled to adapt to free markets.

REPORT: <http://www.enn.com/business/article/35517>

WAR ALERT ON CLIMATE FLUX

Climate change could cause global conflicts as large as the two world wars, but lasting for centuries, unless the problem is controlled, a leading defence think tank says, according to the Sydney Morning Herald (24/4/08).

The Royal United Services Institute estimated that a tenfold increase in research spending, comparable to the amount spent on the Apollo space program, would be needed to avoid the effects of changing temperatures. However, the group said that the world's response to threats posed by climate change, such as rising sea levels and migration, had so far been "slow and inadequate", because nations had failed to prepare for the worst-case scenario.

REPORT: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/04/23/1208743039998.html>

C. PEACE & SECURITY

SMALL ARMS TRADE 'THREAT TO PEACE' SAYS UN OFFICIAL

The threat to international peace and security posed by the uncontrolled trade in small arms and their excessive accumulation and proliferation cannot be overemphasised, a senior UN official told the Security Council (30/4/08).

"We have all witnessed how these weapons have been used to maim and kill; plunder and rape; instill fear and insecurity; block humanitarian aid; hold communities at ransom; destroy the social fabric of entire countries; and how their excessive accumulation and misuse has hindered stability and development in every way possible," said Hannelore Hoppe, Deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs.

Opening the [debate](#), which heard from dozens of speakers, Ms. Hoppe presented Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's first-ever report on small arms to the council.

In the report, Mr Ban says currently most conflicts are fought using mainly small arms and light weapons, being widely used in inter-state conflicts as well as in civil wars, terrorism, organised crime and gang warfare. He stresses the need for collaboration between the council and the General Assembly to curb the illicit flows of arms and ammunition to crisis and conflict areas.
REPORT: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=26518&Cr=disarmament&Cr1=>

AUSTRALIA DELIVERS NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT STATEMENT

Australia delivered a statement on nuclear disarmament to the Non-Proliferation Treaty meeting in Geneva, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons reported (30/4/08) .

"It was much different from statements made in previous years. It even included a reference to the need for a nuclear weapons convention (NWC) for the first time ever. This is something which disarmament experts have described as quite significant. The reference is a cautious one, but using those words in this forum is rare. The only other countries so far to have mentioned an NWC at the meeting have been Costa Rica, Malaysia and Iran.

The statement read: 'Australia under a new government is fully committed to realising a world free from nuclear weapons ... A world free of nuclear weapons will require carefully calibrated steps that buttress international peace and security. Every state, whether holding nuclear weapons or not, must play a part in realising that world. And at an appropriate time, the international community will likely need to consider complementary legal frameworks, including a possible nuclear weapons convention, for the eventual abolition of nuclear weapons.'

The ICAN report said Australia welcomed reductions made by the nuclear weapon states in the size of their arsenals but said that "the international community, Australia included, remains hungry for further, irreversible reductions and greater transparency from states holding nuclear weapons. Concurrent with their warhead reductions, nuclear weapon states need to confirm a reduced role for their nuclear weapons in national security policies."

It concluded: 'We are making progress towards realising the vision of a world free from nuclear weapons, albeit neither as fast nor as consistently as we would wish. Yet one thing is for certain – that without a renewed global commitment to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation ... the vision will remain little more than that. Australia is ready to join such a renewed commitment.'
Posted by Tim Wright of ICAN at: <http://icanw.blogspot.com/2008/04/australia-acknowledges-possible-need.html>

The Australian statement was delivered by Caroline Miller, Ambassador for Disarmament, Permanent Representative to the UN. Dr Tilman Ruff, Vice-President of the Medical Association for Prevention of War (Australia), is a NGO representative on the official Australian delegation. Related reports: www.reachingcriticalwill.org/

ICAN MAKES GOOD PROGRESS IN FIRST YEAR

It has been little over a year since ICAN was launched, and much progress has been made since then, Tim Wright reported. "Active national campaigns have emerged in many countries, mainly European, and today a small number of us met in Geneva to share our ideas and enthusiasm for ICAN, in hopes of building on the momentum already generated.

"Tilman Ruff, from Australia, commenced discussions by describing his vision for the campaign as a vehicle that would allow different groups with their own specific agendas to work together for the ultimate goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world. That goal, he argued, is best achieved through a nuclear weapons convention (NWC)."

DETAILS: <http://icanw.blogspot.com/2008/04/momentum-of-ican-grows-internationally.html>

AFRICA

SEE items on UN & Agencies page

MIDDLE EAST

JUSTICE FOR PALESTINIAN REFUGEES 'FACTOR' FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACE

A sustainable peace in the Middle East will have to factor in a viable and just solution to the Palestinian refugee issue, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon told a UN meeting in Paris to assess the state of the refugees and how the UN could alleviate their plight (29/4/08).

"The Palestinian people's desire or right to live a normal daily life in their own sovereign land remains undiminished, as do the individual and collective rights of Palestine refugees," Mr Ban said in a [message](#), read out by Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs Angela Kane.

This year marked the 60th year of Palestinian dispossession, an anniversary that underlined the importance and urgency of a solution for Palestine and Palestinian refugees, he said.

The Secretary-General said that the peace process launched in the US city of Annapolis and the negotiations under way between the Israelis and Palestinians were the only way to settle the conflict and address all permanent status issues, including that of the refugees.

"Negotiations are the only means of realising the legitimate aspirations of both parties – Palestinian statehood and self-determination, and security for Israel," Mr. Ban stated, as he pledged the UN's continued support to the Palestinian and Israeli leaders as they seek to reach an agreement by the end of this year.

At the same time, he drew attention to the worrying situation on the ground, including the daily violence that besets the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and Israel, as well as the food and fuel shortages that are worsening the already dismal living conditions of those in Gaza.

The UN now provides assistance to approximately 75 per cent of the population of the Gaza Strip. He welcomed efforts to end violence and re-open the Gaza crossings, which would allow all legitimate and necessary humanitarian and commercial supplies to reach the population. He praised the efforts of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East ([UNRWA](#)), which has for the past 60 years been providing education, health care, social services and emergency aid to over 4.5 million refugees in Gaza, West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. REPORT: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=26498&Cr=palestin&Cr1=>

BAN PRESIDES AT QUARTET MEETING

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon was due to chair a meeting of the diplomatic Middle East Quartet – including the UN, the European Union, Russia and the US – this week in London.

The May 2 gathering will review all aspects of the peace process launched in the US city of Annapolis late last year and the situation on the ground. While in London Mr Ban is also scheduled to take part in an expanded Quartet meeting with Arab foreign ministers.

He will then participate in a meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Palestinian Authority, a Norwegian initiative set up in 1992 to ensure that development assistance is used efficiently to the peace process and to contribute to the development of Palestinian society.

The foreign ministers of Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Norway, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia and the United Arab Emirates are expected to attend to assess progress in Palestinian institutional and economic development since September.

In Geneva, Mr Ban had launched a new lecture series, 'Opportunity in crisis,' where he underscored how the current food crisis threatened to undo all the recent efforts to lift people out of poverty around the world and which could spark related economic, social and political crises. REPORT: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=26521&Cr=palestin&Cr1=>

BAN APPEALS TO ISRAELIS TO EXERCISE MAXIMUM CARE

Condemning loss of civilian life in the Gaza Strip – including the “tragic” deaths of a mother and four of her children – Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon appealed to Israel to exercise maximum care and restraint (28/4/08).

In a statement, Mr Ban reminded the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) “of its responsibility to protect civilians under international humanitarian law during its military operations.” He spoke out against the continuing attacks and rockets fired by Hamas against Israel, calling on it and other militant groups to end such acts of terrorism.

The Palestinian Petrol Association delivered 55,000 litres of diesel to the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), allowing UNRWA to re-start food supplies for about six days, after a three day stoppage. The lack of diesel impacted doctors' commutes to hospitals and for teachers and students to reach schools. Crops were also not being irrigated and cooking gas shortages had forced almost half of Gaza's 47 bakeries to shut down.

ISRAELI RESTRICTIONS 'SLOW DOWN UN WORK'

Israeli restrictions on movement between Jerusalem and the West Bank have caused more delays and lost man hours for United Nations staff in March 2008 than in all of 2007, according to UN humanitarian officials. Delays caused by vehicle searches are becoming daily occurrences, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said. IRINNews.org (30/4/08).

LEADERS URGED TO PUT LEBANON FIRST

Lebanon's people “have a unique opportunity to open a new chapter in their difficult history” and they and their political representatives must rise to the occasion and elect a president without any preconditions other than those outlined in the national constitution, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon says in his latest report on the troubled country (28/4/08).

“Such an election would signify a major milestone on the road towards the full re-assertion of Lebanon's sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and political independence, as is the goal of resolution 1559,” Mr Ban wrote, referring to the Security Council resolution from 2004 that calls for free and fair presidential elections without interference from foreign influences. The Lebanese Parliament, unable to agree on a president, has left the position vacant since November.

“I firmly believe that the leaders of Lebanon must think first and foremost about the future of their country and transcend sectarian and individual interests. Parliament, which has not met in more

than a year, must be allowed to convene urgently to fulfill its constitutional duties in order to elect a president without further delay," he said.

Mr Ban called for Lebanon and Syria to establish full diplomatic relations and delineate their shared border, especially in the Shab'a Farms area, and also to promote the normalization of relations including the issue of Lebanese detainees in Syrian custody.

Robin Vincent has commenced duties as Registrar of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon. He was appointed by the Secretary-General on March 10 and is the first official of the Special Tribunal to take up his functions. He will work closely with the Special Tribunal's Management Committee and the UN Secretariat.

SUPPORT OF INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY 'NEEDED' BY IRAQ

The international community has a duty and an interest in showing sustained commitment to helping to bring peace and prosperity to Iraq as the country undergoes "a painful transition," the senior United Nations political official told the Security Council (28/4/08).

"Iraq is going through a political transition," Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs B. Lynn Pascoe said. "The challenges of national reconciliation, reconstruction and development after decades of dictatorship and war are massive. I was impressed, however, by the seriousness and commitment of the Government of Iraq to address these challenges with a view to ending the suffering and achieving a tangible improvement in the lives of the Iraqi people. This is a long-term endeavour that requires the sustained support of the international community."

Briefing Council members on his recent visit to Iraq, said the UN presence in Baghdad had been increased to 140 and the number of international staff in Erbil to 40, while still taking strict measures to deal with the security situation.

The UN has also re-established its presence in Basra. Nine national liaison officers had been posted to a governor's office. UNAMI [the UN Assistance Mission in Iraq] and the Country Team have adopted an area-based approach and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was a "valuable presence" in the national capital. UN assistance included helping Iraqis resolve internal disputed territories, support for planning provincial elections in October and assistance to refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs).

Mr Pascoe commended the Secretary-General's Special Representative Staffan de Mistura and his staff for their dedication and esprit de corps. "Several times during my visit, I was reminded of the risks that our staff face when the alarm systems sounded and instructed staff to take cover from the threat of indirect fire."

SOUTH EAST ASIA

RAMOS-HORTA SHAKES HANDS WITH SURRENDERING REBELS

After they decided to surrender in Dili, East Timor President Jose Ramos-Horta shook hands with rebels who allegedly attempted to assassinate him and Prime Minister Xanana Gusmao in February, (29/4/08).

The UN Secretary-General's Special Representative there welcomed the peaceful surrender of armed fugitive Gastão Salsinha and his men but said the surrendered fugitives now must face justice. He said the people of Timor-Leste and their leaders deserved praise for the calm manner in which the events of these past few months had been handled.

A camp for internally displaced people in Dili closed this week after 173 families returned to their homes, which the head of the UN humanitarian office there described as a significant breakthrough. He saw it as a strong sign that the country was recovering from the 2006

violence and displacement of about 100,000 people. The UN is appealing to the international community to continue to contribute to the humanitarian appeal launched last month.

NORTH ASIA

SUICIDE BOMBING CONDEMNED

The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) has strongly condemned the suicide bombing that killed a number of civilians in the country's eastern Nangarhar province, just two days after terrorists struck a parade in Kabul that was attended by President Hamid Karzai and other dignitaries (29/4/08).

EUROPE

SERBIA MOVES TOWARDS EU

The European Union has signed an agreement with Serbia that will pave the way for membership of the bloc, the BBC reported (29/4/08). The accord went ahead after objections from Belgium and the Netherlands were overcome over Belgrade's failure to hand over war crimes suspects.

After the signing Serbian President Boris Tadic said Serbia "would like to become an official candidate by the end of the year". Under a compromise agreed by ministers from the EU's 27 member states, the pact known as a Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) will not be ratified nor its benefits become available to Serbia until it fully co-operates with the war crimes tribunal in The Hague.

MORE BRITISH TROOPS OFF TO KOSOVO

A battalion of 600 British troops will be sent to Kosovo, Defence Secretary Des Browne has announced, according to the BBC (29/4/08). It follows a NATO request for extra soldiers to maintain public order in the newly independent country. There are currently 150 British troops working in Kosovo.

D. HUMAN RIGHTS

HANEEF 'HASN'T RULED OUT' INQUIRY APPEARANCE

Lawyers for former terrorist suspect Dr Mohamed Haneef say their client has not ruled out returning to Australia to appear before an inquiry into his detention, the ABC reported (30/4/08). The Federal Government inquiry began in Canberra on Wednesday.

The Gold Coast-based Indian doctor was detained by Australian Federal Police (AFP) in connection with last year's UK bomb plots and had his visa cancelled, despite a charge against him later being dropped.

His lawyer Rod Hodgson says his client was hoping the inquiry would uncover the truth behind his detention and he was willing to give evidence. REPORT:

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/04/30/2231008.htm>

JUDGE ASSERTS CONFIDENCE IN POWERS

Lawyers for Dr Mohamed Haneef were rebuffed again in their efforts to get stronger powers for the inquiry into his treatment, the Sydney Morning Herald reported (1/5/08).

The former NSW Supreme Court judge heading the inquiry, John Clarke, QC, said he was satisfied by assurances of full co-operation from agencies, including the Australian Federal Police and the Immigration Department.

But he warned that if that cooperation was not forthcoming he would consider asking the Federal Government for royal commission powers to compel production of documents and appearance of witnesses. REPORT: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/04/30/1209234957367.html>

HICKS CASE FLAWED ALL ALONG: US PROSECUTOR

The Pentagon's former chief prosecutor has admitted he never wanted to pursue charges against Australian terrorism suspect David Hicks, the Sydney Morning Herald reported(30/4/08).

Phillip Coorey writes that Mr Hicks's family and lawyer claimed vindication after the US Air Force Colonel, Moe Davis - appearing as a witness at a pre-trial hearing for another Guantanamo Bay inmate - said the Australian was not worth charging because he was not considered as serious an offender as other inmates.

Colonel Davis was once a strident defender of the military commission process and a harsh critic of Mr Hicks and his military lawyer, Major Michael Mori, the report said. quoting Mr Hicks's Adelaide lawyer, David McLeod, saying "the worm has turned".REPORT: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/04/29/1209234862811.html>

ONLY THE SEXY CASES MAKE GUANTANAMO

A Pentagon legal adviser improperly influenced the Guantanamo war crimes prosecutions, dictating which cases would be tried based on how likely they were to pique US public interest, a military court has heard, the Sydney Morning Herald reported (1/5/08).

Military prosecutor Army Lieutenant Colonel William Britt said in an affidavit presented on Tuesday that the government- appointed lawyer, Air Force Brigadier General Thomas Hartmann, explained his selections this way: "This case is going to seize the imagination of the American public and that case won't." Navy Lieutenant-Commander Brian Mizer read the affidavit in court seeking the dismissal of charges against Yemeni Salim Hamdan, once Osama bin Laden's driver. REPORT: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/04/30/1209234954815.html>

LETTERS GIVE CIA TACTICS A LEGAL RATIONALE

The Justice Department has told Congress that American intelligence operatives attempting to thwart terrorist attacks can legally use interrogation methods that might otherwise be prohibited under international law, the New York Times reported (27/4/08).

The legal interpretation, outlined in recent letters, sheds new light on the still-secret rules for interrogations by the [Central Intelligence Agency](#). It shows that the administration is arguing that the boundaries for interrogations should be subject to some latitude, even under an executive order issued last summer that President Bush said meant that the CIA would comply with international strictures against harsh treatment of detainees. ARTICLE:

http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/27/washington/27intel.html?_r=1&th&emc=th&oref=slogin

AUSTRALIA

WOMEN 'STILL SIGNIFICANTLY OVERLOOKED'

The Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency's (EOWA) report, *Generation F: Attract, Engage, Retain*, sponsored by Hays, has identified that women aged between 16 and 65 - Generation F- remain significantly overlooked, under utilised and untapped (29/4/08).

The research released on Tuesday has uncovered a new generation of workers that will rival Generation Y as the solution to the nation's skills shortage.

Despite record education levels and rising numbers of women entering the labour market, the EOWA research shows that employers are failing to provide workplaces that enable women to fully participate and fuel the growth in the Australian economy.

It says over a third of women left their last job because of frustrations due to a lack of career development and progression which they rate as extremely important when choosing a workplace. A quarter of women surveyed do not feel that their current employers provide them with a career path and 16 per cent do not believe they are afforded sufficient learning and development opportunities. The research also debunks the myth that women are not as ambitious as men with the majority of both men and women indicating they aspire to a job involving more responsibility.

REPORT: <http://www.australianwomenonline.com/?p=444>

AUSTRALIA LAUNCHES REVIEW OF CITIZENSHIP TEST

The former head of the foreign affairs department, Richard Woolcott, will oversee a review of the citizenship test, which has been based on a knowledge of Australian history, culture and values. Immigration Minister Chris Evans said this week he had no plans to abolish the test but was open to making improvements: "The idea is to make sure that this is a positive pathway to citizenship."

NGOS PLAN ROUNDTABLE ON CHARTER OF RIGHTS

Civil Liberties Australia will attend a strategy roundtable in Sydney of government and non-government organisations (NGOs), called for June 2, to organise a concerted, cooperative effort in the coming national debate over introducing a charter of rights and responsibilities for Australia.

The Human Rights Equal Opportunity Commission is organising the meeting with the Gilbert and Tobin Centre of Public Law at UNSW at HREOC offices in Sydney. The sessions will include current state of Australian law and policy; lessons from the ACT, Victoria, WA and Tasmania; achieving a consistent message and use of the media; and building platforms for future cooperation and future pathways.

Address by Prof George Williams on why Australian needs and deserves a charter of rights and responsibilities, given at CLA's annual meeting: <http://www.cla.asn.au/rss08/080428001.php>

CONCERNS RAISED AS GOVERNMENT DEMANDS UNIVERSAL TAPPING

The Federal Government was pushing a Bill to force all telecommunications providers to facilitate lawful data interception across fixed and mobile telephone systems, Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP), Instant Messaging (IM) and chat room discussions, Civil Liberties Australia reported (!/5/08).

It said the new laws would enable police and security services to tap any number of communication devices based on taking out one solo warrant. Currently, they must seek a warrant for each device. The Senate Legal and Constitutional committee was due to report on May 1 to discuss the proposed changes to Telecommunications (Interception and Access) Amendment Bill 2008.

The amendments build on previous reforms by the Howard government which required Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to implement wiretapping provisions - basically, no-one in Australia can send or receive an email without ASIO and/or the Australian Federal Police being able to read it. Under separate Rudd Government plans, private organisations would be handed 'quasi-police' powers. Attorney-General Robert McClelland said business owners would be able to intercept.

IGIS CONGRATULATED FOR SPEAKING OUT

Civil Liberties Australia has written to congratulate the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security (IGIS), Ian Carnell, for calling on the Federal Government to make substantial changes to anti-terrorism laws.

"Civil liberties relies on you ... I write to congratulate you on your principled stand in calling for substantial changes to the anti-terrorism laws," CLA President Dr Kristine Klugman wrote to Mr Carnell, who is the only person in Australia allowed to pry into the doings of the secret services, ASIO domestically and ASIS internationally.

In an interview with the Sydney Morning Herald newspaper (12/4/08) he said: "My belief is that a key test for liberal democracies in the area of counter-terrorism is a willingness to revisit what was

introduced when there was a sense of urgency and, if necessary, modify the measures to ensure effectiveness, balance and proportionality.

"This is particularly so if some aspects may be counter-productive, such as adding to the sense of alienation and discrimination which members of the Muslim communities can suffer."

DETAILS: <http://www.smh.com.au/text/articles/2008/04/11/1207856832385.html>

DISABILITY CONVENTION BEGINS MAY 3

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities becomes operative on May 3 after being ratified by the UN (3/4/08). Australia has formally signed on to the convention but has yet to be ratified domestically, Civil Liberties Australia reported (1/5/08).

\$10M EXTRA TO HELP LEGAL SERVICES

The Federal Government has announced one-off, additional funding of \$10 million for the Commonwealth Community Legal Services Program. The money will be allocated on a needs basis focusing on a centre's current funding level, location and client demographics. The \$10 million adds to the normal \$22.6 million being provided by the to community legal centres. A further one-off allocation of \$7 million has also been made for legal aid to help meet the most pressing needs in the system, including services in the area of family law, according to Attorney-General Rob McClelland in an April media release.

SOUTH EAST ASIA

US SENATE HONOURS BURMA'S SUU KYI

The US Senate has voted to award Burmese pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi its highest honour - the Congressional Gold Medal, the BBC reported (25/4/08).

US-based Burma campaigners welcomed the move, saying the imprisoned opposition leader "richly deserves" the award. Burma's generals have held Ms Suu Kyi for more than 12 of the past 18 years, mostly under house arrest.

Her National League for Democracy (NLD) won polls in 1990 but the junta never handed over power. ARTICLE: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7366357.stm>

MIDDLE EAST

IRAQI CHILDREN ARE 'SILENT VICTIMS'

Wrapping up a six-day visit to Iraq, the UN human rights envoy, who has the task of protecting the rights of children in armed conflict, said that the war-ravaged country's children were silent victims of the continued violence, the UN New Centre reported (25/4/08).

"Many of them are no longer go to school, many are recruited for violent activities or detained in custody, they lack access to the most basic services and manifest a wide range of psychological symptoms from the violence in their everyday lives," said Radhika Coomaraswamy, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict.

She urged religious, political, military and community leaders to encourage children to stay out of the violence and return to their studies. Gender-based violence was also reported on the rise, which she said was "intolerable."

Only half of primary school children attend school, down from 80 per cent in 2005, she said. Only 40 per cent have access to clean drinking water.

ARTICLE: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=26454&Cr=iraq&Cr1=children>

'CHILDREN RECRUITED AS SUICIDE BOMBERS'

The ABC (26/4/08) reported that a UN fact-finding mission to Iraq had discovered children were being recruited as suicide bombers by various militias and insurgent groups.

"Since 2004, an increasing number of children have been recruited into various militias and insurgent groups, including as suicide bombers," UN special representative of the secretary general for children and armed conflict, Radhika Coomaraswamy, was quoted as saying. REPORT: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/04/26/2227969.htm>

NORTH ASIA

BEIJING 'TO TALK TO DALAI AIDES'

Chinese officials will hold talks with the Dalai Lama's representatives, state media say, in the first meeting since rioting broke out in Tibet last month, the BBC reported (25/4/08). Xinhua news agency quoted an official as saying a meeting would take place "in coming days".

A spokesman for the Tibetan spiritual leader welcomed the offer of talks. The Dalai Lama insists he has no political role and played no part in the protests. Beijing has consistently blamed what it termed a "Dalai clique" for fomenting unrest in Tibetan areas of China. ARTICLE: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7366500.stm>

DRIVER AND MONK GIVEN LIFE SENTENCES OVER TIBET RIOTS

Seventeen people have been jailed over the most violent challenge to Chinese rule in Tibet for nearly two decades, the London Guardian reported (29/4/08). The sentences, handed down late last month and ranging from three years to life, are the first since riots that began on March 10. Soi'nam Norbu, 20, a driver for a real estate company, was convicted of arson and disrupting public services and given a life sentence. A monk, Basang, is alleged to have led a group, including monks, who destroyed a local government office and smashed or burned and looted 11 shops, attacking police in the process.

The official Xinhua news agency said that the intermediate people's court of Lhasa - a Chinese court in the Tibetan capital - handed down the sentences in open court. China has said 22 people died in the riots. Tibetan exile groups say many times that number were killed in the uprising and ensuing crackdown. REPORT: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/apr/29/tibet.jailings>

AFRICA

AU LIKELY TO MERGE HUMAN RIGHTS COURTS

African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights and the Court of Justice of the African Union (AU) are to be merged in a move to integrate justice, allAfrica.com reported (28/4/08). Justice ministers and attorneys-general of the AU member states met recently at the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa, to consider recommendations of legal experts on the merger.

The AU commission said an institutional merger would make it feasible to bring together the competences of the two statutory AU organs. A draft single legal instrument on the proposed merger will be submitted to the next assembly of the heads of state and government.

Report: <http://allafrica.com/stories/200804280021.html>

CHILD ABDUCTIONS ON RISE

Cadres of the Lord's Resistance Army appear to have begun a new onslaught on children in central Africa, abducting youngsters to serve as soldiers, cooks, porters and sex slaves, according to human rights groups and authorities. The move comes after the group postponed signing on to a peace agreement and has raised fears the conflict between the LRA and Uganda will reignite. [The Globe and Mail \(Toronto\)](#) (25/4/08).

ZIMBABWE SECURITY FORCES CRACKDOWN AGAIN

Security forces raided opposition political party offices in Harare detaining hundreds of supporters as well as those of independent election observers and where they seized vote-related materials. The moves marked the most overtly aggressive tactics displayed so far in Zimbabwe's ongoing post-election uncertainty. [The New York Times](#) (26/4/08).

EUROPE

UN CONDEMNS TURKEY BORDER DEATHS

The UNHCR has accused Turkish police of causing the deaths of four men by forcing them into a river on the Turkey-Iraq border, the BBC reported (25/4/08). The strong current swept the men away, the UNHCR said, quoting witnesses.

The incident happened on Wednesday at an unpatrolled stretch of the border near the Habur crossing point, in Sirnak province, the UNHCR said. At least one of the four was Iranian. They were among 18 Iranians and Syrians refused entry into Iraq. The UNHCR said it was seeking clarification from Turkey on the circumstances of forced expulsion and the tragic loss of life.

FORMER A-G LAMBASTS BRITISH GOVERNMENT OVER SECURITY

Former Attorney-General, Lord Goldsmith, QC, delivered a scathing assault late last month on British Government plans to extend detention without trial to 42 days, warning that they would be seized on by misguided young Muslims as a justification to 'take up arms'. REPORT: <http://business.timesonline.co.uk/tol/business/law/columnists/article3806462.ece>

SECRET PACT ALLOWS US TO SPY ON UK MOTORISTS

UK Home Secretary Jacqui Smith secretly signed a 'special certificate' last year that gives foreign security agencies real-time access to traffic camera images and related data which monitors British motorists on UK highways (2/3/08). REPORT: <http://www.theinquirer.net/gb/inquirer/news/2008/04/21/quiet-pact-allows-spy-uk>

E. HEALTH & MEANS

FOOD

UN BODIES UNITE TO TACKLE FOOD CRISIS

Under-Secretary-General and Emergency Relief Coordinator John Holmes at first press conference as Coordinator of the UN Task Force on the Global Food Crisis, said the recent Chief Executives Board meeting, with its focus on rising food prices, powerfully symbolised the determination of the entire UN system to work together to tackle this major challenge (30/4/08).

The first order of business was putting together a plan of action ahead of a high-level meeting organised by the Food and Agriculture Organisation, the World Food Program and the International Fund for Agricultural Development for June 3/5, he said.

Concerns needed to be addressed in a comprehensive way, in the short-, medium- and long-term. Another look also needed to be taken at biofuels without falling into any knee-jerk reactions. He would work with Deputy Coordinator, Dr David Nabarro of the World Health Organisation, to bring the different UN bodies together and also bring in civil society expertise.

At the [news conference](#) in Geneva, he said the crisis was not affecting every country in the same way. "For many countries and population groups it is inconvenient, a problem for their daily budget and their purses, but it is not a matter of life and death. In some places and for some groups, particularly those living on less than a dollar a day, that quickly could become a matter of life and death, or certainly of increased suffering and malnutrition."

The task force is chaired by Mr Ban and consists of the heads of the [World Bank](#), the International Monetary Fund ([IMF](#)), the World Food Program ([WFP](#)), the Food and Agriculture Organisation ([FAO](#)), the International Fund for Agricultural Development ([IFAD](#)), the World Trade Organisation ([WTO](#)), and other organisations which will be invited to join.

ARTICLE: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=26517&Cr=food&Cr1=crisis>

FARMERS IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES NEED HELP NOW

The world must not only take immediate action to address the current food crisis, but also take advantage of higher food prices by helping farmers in developing countries to thwart similar situations in future, the head of the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) said (29/4/08). "The time for re-launching agriculture is now and the international community should not miss the opportunity," FAO Director-General Jacques Diouf Stated.

A two-pronged approach – policies to assist the millions worldwide whose livelihoods are at risk and measures to help poor farmers take advantage of the rising prices – was necessary, he said.

"We must produce more food where it is urgently needed to contain the impact of soaring prices on poor consumers, and simultaneously boost productivity and expand production to create more income and employment opportunities for the rural poor." Small holders must have access to land and water, as well as to essential inputs including seeds and fertilizers. This would allow them to increase their supplies when prices are high, enhancing their incomes and livelihoods. Countries must boost their spending on public resources for agriculture and rural development, which could spur private investment, according to [FAO](#).

When many Asian governments faced climbing food prices in the 1970s, they responded by stepping up their spending on irrigation and agricultural research, leading to growth and preventing the descent of millions into hunger and poverty, he said.

"A similar response is urgently needed today – particularly in sub-Saharan Africa," which is grappling with the problem of the lack of irrigation, Dr Diouf said.

The UN rural development arm has made nearly \$72 million in loans and grants available for anti-poverty initiatives in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

The funds were approved by the Executive Board of the UN International Fund for Agricultural Development ([IFAD](#)) in Rome last week. Programs receiving IFAD assistance include an initiative in Cape Verde to improve the lives of 60,000 poor rural people by integrating them into the island nation's rapidly expanding economy; a scheme in India seeking to improve the employment prospects of 95,000 poor households; and an initiative in the Philippines to reduce poverty among indigenous peoples in the north. SEE also Ban on world food situation UN & Agencies page

FOOD CRISIS 'OPPORTUNITY FOR AGRICULTURAL REFORM': With the growing food crisis comes at least one important upside: a "golden opportunity" to reform the global agriculture system and get rid of rich countries' protectionism and other policies that are hurting developing nations, columnist Martin Wolf argues. "The right choices are evident. The time to make them is now," he writes. [Financial Times](#) (29/4/08).

THAILAND PLANS RICE CARTEL

The prime minister of [Thailand](#), Samak Sundaravej, said on Wednesday that his government would try to create a cartel of rice-producing countries in partnership with [Vietnam](#), [Cambodia](#), [Myanmar](#) and [Laos](#), according to the New York Times (1/5/08).

"We don't aspire to be like [OPEC](#), but we hope to be just a group of five to help each other in trading rice on the world market," Mr Samak was quoted as saying in The Nation newspaper.

Governments in Thailand, the world's largest rice exporter, have for many years toyed with the idea of using their dominant market position to influence the price of rice in the same way that the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries tries to set crude oil prices. REPORT: http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/01/business/worldbusiness/01cartel.html?_r=1&ref=world&oref=slogin

CAMBODIAN SCHOOL FREE BREAKFAST TO BE SUSPENDED: Soaring global food prices are

endangering a World Food Program initiative that supplies free breakfast to 450,000 Cambodian children at more than 1,300 schools across the country. In just under a month, the schools' rice stocks will be gone and the breakfast program suspended indefinitely. [The New York Times](#) (30/4/08).

LATIN LEADERS IN FOOD PRICE PACT

Four Latin American leaders, meeting in Caracas, have agreed on a \$100m (£50m) scheme to combat the impact of rising food prices on the region's poor people, the BBC reported (24/4/08).

The presidents of Bolivia, Nicaragua and Venezuela and Cuba's vice-president also agreed on joint programs to promote the development of agriculture. Global food prices have risen in response to extra fuel costs and increased demand from India and China. The summit also blamed a US push for increased production of bio-fuels. Few details of how the program would work were given at the summit. REPORT: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/7364153.stm>

NEW TOURISM ALLIANCE HELPS FIGHT POVERTY IN OCEANIA

Victoria University has become a founding partner in an alliance aimed at harnessing the economic power of tourism to directly improve the living conditions in Pacific Island Countries (24/4/08).

The Oceania Sustainable Tourism Alliance - OSTA gathered leaders from the non-governmental and private sector in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands on Monday in Melbourne - to assist ten Oceania countries design and implement innovative tourism strategies to fight poverty and foster long-term improvements for the communities.

Mr LeLaulu, a former UN executive who helped to formulate the UN's Millennium Development Goals, said: "Tourism is the world's largest and fastest growing industry, and Victoria University's academic depth and wealth of experience in designing effective tourism models and policies will help Pacific island countries define how to best harness tourism to benefit their communities."

VU's Centre for Tourism and Services Research, led by Professor Leo Jago, will develop innovative tourism approaches and capacity-building training for OSTA countries, which are: East Timor; Fiji; Kiribati; Palau; Papua New Guinea; Samoa; the Solomon Islands; Tonga; Tuvalu; and Vanuatu.

An advocate of linking tourism and climate change adaptation, Mr LeLaulu is a charter member of the Carbon Poverty Reduction Initiative which includes the World Bank and leading conservation and development organisations, to plan the replanting of degraded areas to reduce carbon in the atmosphere. He is also president of the Washington-based Counterpart International, which has sustainable tourism projects in more than 60 countries in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, distributing US\$100 million in humanitarian assistance every year worldwide.

DETAILS: Professor Terry De Lacey, Centre for Tourism and Services Research, Victoria University, on 03 9919 5349/ 0429 662 020; Andy Gash, Marketing and Communications Department, Victoria University, on 03 9919 4950 or 0411 255 900.

HEALTH

ISRAEL'S DILEMMA OVER SICK GAZANS

A 17-year-old victim of violence between Israel and the Palestinians lost him a leg - he says an Israeli missile strike against militants in Bureij refugee camp in the Gaza Strip - was taken to Israel for treatment because Gaza's Shifa hospital was under severe strain after months of Israeli blockade and internal strife, the BBC reported (30/4/08).

Since his arrival at the medical centre in Ashkelon, he has undergone three operations and he is awaiting a fourth.

While some 1,600 Gazan patients had permit requests denied by Israel in 2007, more than 7,000 were allowed in for medical treatment - a 50 per cent increase on 2006 - according to the World Health Organisation (WHO). However, WHO says the proportion of permits denied also increased, from 10 per cent in 2006 to 18.5 per cent in 2007. Tertiary care is virtually non-existent in Gaza, so Palestinians there are forced to seek treatment in Israel or elsewhere.

"We treat hundreds of Gazans here each year," says Dr Ron Lobel, Barzilai Hospital's deputy director. Ironically, Barzilai's closeness to Gaza also means the hospital is within range of militants' rockets. "It's absurd," says Dr Lobel. "We're treating Gazans while coming under fire from their own backyards."

REPORT: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7375439.stm

INDIA'S PM: ABORTIONS OF FEMALE FOETUSES A 'NATIONAL SHAME'

Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said on Monday the country should be ashamed of its abortions of female foetuses, a widespread practice because of deep-seated cultural preference for boys. Every year, an estimated 500,000 female foetuses are aborted, due in part to the belief sons better support elderly parents. [Google/Associated Press](#) (28/4/08).

UN LAUNCHES DRIVE AGAINST MALARIA

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon marked World Malaria Day Friday by launching a fresh campaign against the disease, which continues to kill more than a million people every year, mostly children. The new drive aims to help provide all African countries with sufficient supplies of mosquito nets or high-quality household sprays by the end of 2010, in addition to more health clinics and special treatment centers for pregnant women. Read UNICEF's [press release](#) on how it's calling for stronger action against malaria. [Reuters](#) (4/25) , [BBC](#) (25/4/08).

BAN ANNOUNCES UN EFFORT TO END MALARIA DEATHS IN AFRICA

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon marked the first-ever World Malaria Day today by launching a new drive to ensure that all of Africa, which accounts for the bulk of the more than one million malaria deaths every year, has access to critical interventions such as bed nets and sprays by the end of 2010. REPORT: <http://www.un.org/news/> The UN Foundation Team has a current campaign to provide nets: NETSChallenge@nothingbutnets.net; <http://www.unfoundation.org/>

PHILIPPINES' MALARIA BATTLE ADVANCES: Philippine authorities Friday declared an additional six provinces malaria free for the last five years, bringing the country's total to 22 out of 81. Authorities still face many challenges working against total eradication, including traditional beliefs, population movements and limited access to rural areas. [IRINNews.org](#) (25/4/08).

WORLD BANK TRIES HIV EXPERIMENT IN TANZANIA

The World Bank is among the backers of a new experiment in rural Tanzania that will pay some 3,000 men and women as long as tests show they haven't contracted HIV. The new effort - which is also funded by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the Population Reference Bureau and the Spanish Impact Evaluation Fund - aims to encourage participants to refrain from unsafe sex. [Financial Times](#) ((25/4/08).

G. MEDIA MATTERS

WA POLICE RAID 'ATTACK ON FREE SPEECH'

Fairfax Media joined a growing chorus of condemnation of the West Australian Government over police raiding a Perth newspaper, seen as an attack on free speech, the Sydney Morning Herald reported (2/5/08). [Added to UNity 548 3/5/080].

The department of the Premier, Alan Carpenter, a former journalist, was reported to have admitted it made a complaint that led to the raid by 16 officers on the Perth newsroom of News Ltd's Sunday Times on Wednesday. Police were reported to have been looking for "government sources" of leaked information.

The paper's editor, Sam Weir, and the journalists' union, the Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance, said the raid attacked free speech. The corporate affairs director of Fairfax Media, Bruce Wolpe, yesterday urged respect for press freedom in WA. REPORT:
<http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/05/01/1209235058881.html>

FIJI EDITOR BACK IN SYDNEY

The Australian publisher of one of Fiji's leading newspapers was expected in Sydney on Saturday after being deported. Evan Hannah was expelled after Fiji's military regime claimed he breached his work permit and was a threat to national security, the ABC reported (3/5/08). [Added to UNITY 548 3/5/080].

His newspaper The Fiji Times won a High Court injunction against his eviction, but this was ignored by immigration officials. REPORT:
<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/05/03/2234343.htm>

IMPUNITY INDEX RANKS NATIONS WHO FAIL MURDERED JOURNALISTS

Joel Simon, Executive Director of the Committee to Protect Journalists, held a press conference to launch the Committee to Protect Journalists' Impunity Index, which ranks countries that fail to prosecute killers of journalists (30/4/08).

At a recent conference on press freedom and impunity, in Manila, attorney Nena Santos declared, "My heart bleeds for justice for a friend and children of all the victims."

Joel Simon and Sheila Coronel, of the Committee to Protect Journalists, write that the friend was Marlene Garcia- Esperat, a crusading investigative reporter from Mindanao whose cold-blooded murder in March 2005 made her a press freedom martyr in the Philippines and around the world. Attorney Santos achieved a breakthrough in the Philippines when she helped convict the gunmen who carried out the killing. She now has her sights set on the masterminds.

The Esperat case has been justly hailed a milestone in the fight against impunity. What is shocking, however, is that such convictions are so rare. There are 24 other murders carried out since 2000 in the Philippines in which no one has been brought to justice. REPORT: <http://www.pinoypress.net/2008/04/30/impunity-in-the-philippines/>

PRESS FREEDOM IN THE BALANCE IN SOUTH ASIA

The sixth annual *South Asia Press Freedom Report*, produced by the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) for the South Asia Media Solidarity Network (SAMSN) and released ahead of World Press Freedom Day on May 3, highlights the serious challenges that continue to confront the media in a region that is home to more than one-fifth of humanity (30/4/08).

The challenges range from political coercion and violence by state and non-state actors to commercial compulsions and advertiser pressure. All these factors can have a chilling effect on good journalistic practices, and impinge on the public's right to independent and critical information.

The report notes that when governments do not act decisively against a culture of impunity for attacks against the media, journalists and media workers are often compelled to adopt a play-safe attitude. Even where there is no overt restraint on the right to free speech, a hostile environment can compel the media to engage in self-censorship rather than risk retribution.

The report adds that in most countries in the region, the regulatory environment remains ill-defined, especially for the rapidly growing electronic media. In several countries, rival political parties and other civil society actors observe few accepted standards regarding the right to free speech.

The *South Asia Press Freedom Report 2007-08* presents trends in detail for each country, and lists the records prepared by IFJ affiliates and partners of direct attacks on journalists and media workers, noting media workers killed and incidents of physical harm and intimidation, and abductions and detentions. REPORT: <http://asiapacific.ifj.org>

CAUGHT IN MUGABE'S BRUTAL WEB

Charged with 'practicing journalism', Stephen Bevan, of the London Telegraph, was locked up in Harare where he endured misery with hundreds of others jailed for arbitrary reasons (Sydney Morning Herald, 25/4/08). "I was in the back of a ute bumping through the rush-hour traffic. Beside me, my fellow accused, Barry Bearak, the Johannesburg-based correspondent for The New York Times, sat lost in concentration. Our destination was Harare central police station, the headquarters of the Orwellian-sounding Law and Order Division of the Zimbabwe Republic Police. ARTICLE: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/04/24/1208743154075.html>

LESS FREE SPEECH

Pick up a Slovak newspaper, and you will find it a quick, if depressing, read, according to the London Economist (24/4/08). The main dailies have in recent weeks been appearing with blank, black-framed front pages, in protest at a new media law that will give anyone mentioned in an article sweeping rights to an equally prominent rebuttal. International media watchdogs have sharply attacked the law. They are worried by declining media freedom across Eastern Europe. REPORT: http://www.economist.com/world/europe/displaystory.cfm?story_id=11090504

NEPAL: The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) has called on Nepal's new government to commit openly to uphold freedom of the media and freedom of expression (24/4/08). The IFJ is concerned to ensure press freedom is recognised and acted upon within the new government following reports that some political parties and their supporters sought to intimidate journalists at polling booths during the campaign for the national election, held on April 10. According to the Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ) 61 incidents of media rights violations were recorded across 70 regions during the campaign period including 20 cases of physical harm against journalists, 12 cases of threats and intimidation, 21 cases of freedom of information violations, and eight attacks on media houses and vehicles. DETAILS: IFJ Asia -Pacific on +612 9333 0919.

SRI LANKA: According to the Free Media Movement (FMM), four photographers were barred from entering hospitals where injured army personnel (estimated to be in the hundreds) were reportedly being treated after fighting intensified in the country's north last week (28/4/08). The FMM said the restriction reflected growing concern that official statistics of casualties were under-reported by government-appointed military spokesmen. Government military statements report that the army has allegedly killed more than 3000 Tamil fighters in 2008. However, the FMM reports verification is limited as the only independent news sources covering the conflict are a small number of foreign wire services and Colombo-based news websites. "The IFJ joins the FMM in stressing that the public has a right to know exactly what is happening in the conflict, and this knowledge is central to any hope of peaceful resolution in the future," said IFJ Asia -Pacific Director Jacqueline Park. IFJ Asia -Pacific on +612 9333 0919

AFGHANISTAN: Two journalists were injured when 18 people were killed in a suicide blast in Khogyani district, Nangarhar province, close to the border with Pakistan (29/4/08). Among the 50 people reported injured was Paul Rafael, an Australian journalist who was evacuated to a US military hospital, and photographer Steve Dupont, also of Australia. Both were working for the *Smithsonian Magazine*. DETAILS: IFJ Asia -Pacific on +612 9333 0919.

AUSTRALIA: The communications minister had acknowledged the lack of external accountability of SBS in answers to a Question on Notice, the Democrats claimed this week, saying that SBS was placing advertising into all programs - even those without designed breaks - without legislative or regulatory or ministerial oversight of its guidelines. "It appears the Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, Senator Conroy, is philosophically

opposed to this degrading of SBS, but has no tools short of a new SBS Act with which to change this grubby policy," Senator Lyn Allison said this week. DETAILS: David Collyer 0417 613 610.

H. ARTICLES IN FOCUS

PICKY FEEDERS

The UN is calling for an international response to the global food crisis, but it's not clear that countries will put their national interests aside, writes Ian Williams in the London Guardian (29/4/08). Ban Ki-moon's speeches on the food crisis have had widespread coverage in media more accustomed to overlooking his pronouncements than broadcasting them, and the organisation and its associated agencies are working hard on the problem. He has [rung the alarm bell](#), and it has resonated across the world ... sadly, one cannot help but wonder about the likelihood of successful multilateral intervention.

ARTICLE: http://commentisfree.guardian.co.uk/ian_williams/2008/04/picky_feeders.html

BRING ON THE RIGHT BIOFUELS

Fads come fast and furious in our viral age, and the reactions to them can be equally ferocious, writes Roger Cohen in the New York Times (24/4/08). "That's what we're seeing right now with biofuels, which everyone loved until everyone decided they were the worst thing since the Black Death." ARTICLE:

http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/24/opinion/24cohen.html?_r=1&ref=opinion&oref=slogin

CUTTING THE TALL POPPIES

Tough and costly decisions need to be made to ease the hardship of the Afghan people and end the humiliation of the narco-state's international allies, argues Amin Saikal, in the Sydney Morning Herald (25/4/08). The policy approach pursued by the US and its allies towards transforming Afghanistan into a stable and secure state has provided the Taliban ample opportunity to reorganise, and its militia now hampers efforts to rebuild Afghanistan and an early exit of foreign forces. ARTICLE: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/04/24/1208743154827.html>

QUESTIONS LINGER ON SCOPE OF IRAN'S THREAT IN IRAQ

The US has gathered its most detailed evidence so far of Iranian involvement in training and arming fighters in [Iraq](#), officials say, but significant uncertainties remain about its extent and threat to US and Iraqi forces, the New York Times reported (26/4/08). Some intelligence and administration officials said [Iran](#) seemed to have carefully calibrated its involvement in Iraq over the last year; in contrast President Bush and other US officials have portrayed an intensified Iranian role, making it difficult to draw firm conclusions about Iranian arms going to Iraq. ARTICLE: http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/26/world/middleeast/26military.html?_r=1&th&emc=th&oref=slogin

PUTTING THE WAR ON AUTOPILOT

While [four out of five Americans](#) want the next president to take the country in a new direction, President Bush is trying to lock in the current course beyond his presidency - starting with his plans for the Middle East, Dan Froomkin writes in the Washington Post (24/4/08). He quotes [Julian E. Barnes](#) in the Los Angeles Times, that promoting Army General David H. Petraeus to commander of US forces in the Middle East, President Bush was doing more than rewarding a job well done in Iraq; he also taking a step toward perpetuating his policy of high troop levels in Iraq and placing his most trusted general in charge of a renewed military focus on Iran.

ARTICLE: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/blog/2008/04/24/BL2008042401889.html?wpisrc=newsletter&wpisrc=newsletter&wpisrc=newsletter>

BAGHDAD AND KURDS CLOSE THE GAP

In March, despite few signs of progress on an Iraqi national oil law, the Kurdistan Regional Government's Ministry of Natural Resources readied for a hiring spree, reports the US Forbes

Magazine (30/4/08). [Calls went out](#) for legal advisers, engineers, and geoscientists—thirty-five oil and gas experts in all. At the time the job postings seemed like wishful thinking; Baghdad and Irbil, capital of the Kurdish autonomous region, appeared sharply divided on how to develop the region's [massive oil wealth](#). But one month later, the want ads appear to have been a harbinger for warming relations between the Shiite-dominated central government and the northern Kurdish region. Iraq's chief government spokesman has hinted that a national oil agreement [is imminent \(UPI\)](#), and an Iraqi paper reports "[major concessions](#)" ([Azzaman](#)) have been reached. Diplomatic breakthroughs have been [rare](#) on chief issues dividing Iraqi Kurds and Shiite parties in parliament.

ARTICLE:

http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2008/04/baghdad_and_kurds_close_the_ga.html

IRAQ OIL REVENUE MAY TOP OUTLOOK

A new US Government report projects Iraq's oil revenue will top a record \$70 billion this year, adding fuel to a congressional push to force the Iraqi Government to assume more responsibility for rebuilding the country, the Wall Street Journal reported (30/4/08). The report from Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction Stuart Bowen highlights the windfall Iraq stands to reap this year because of soaring oil prices ... Iraq earned more than \$18 billion from oil sales in the first quarter of 2008, the report found.

ARTICLE: http://online.wsj.com/article/SB120950196830853907.html?mod=dist_smartbrief

WHAT ARE THEY UP TO NOW?

Intelligence reports from this administration can't be taken at face value, Dan Froomkin writes in the Washington Post (25/4/08). President Bush has built up a [prodigious track record](#) of selectively disclosing intelligence findings that serve his political agenda. And some of the most important of those findings, of course, turned out to be completely false. The latest disclosure from the White House's intelligence apparatus - that Syria secretly built a nuclear reactor with North Korean help - is in many ways a blockbuster. But at the same time, its highly suspicious timing raises doubts about the motivation behind its announcement.

ARTICLE: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/blog/2008/04/25/BL2008042502006.html?wpisrc=newsletter&wpisrc=newsletter&wpisrc=newsletter>

I. OTHER NEWS

BATTLE OVER BROOKLYN SCHOOL

[Debbie Almontaser](#) dreamed of starting a public school like no other in New York City. Children of Arab descent would join students of other ethnicities, learning Arabic together, James Estrin writes in the New York Times (28/6/08). By graduation, they would be fluent in the language and groomed for the country's elite colleges. They would be ready, in Ms. Almontaser's words, to become "ambassadors of peace and hope ...

"Things have not gone according to plan. Only one-fifth of the 60 students at the Khalil Gibran International Academy are Arab-American. Since the school opened in Brooklyn last fall, children have been suspended for carrying weapons, repeatedly gotten into fights and taunted an Arabic teacher by calling her a "terrorist," staff members and students said in interviews. ARTICLE: <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/28/nyregion/28school.html?ex=1210132800&en=e2bee44f0b3881f&ei=5070&emc=eta1>

US JEWS GET A NEW VOICE IN WASHINGTON

American Jews have formed a new pro-Israel lobby as an alternative to traditional organisations that they assert have often been impediments to progress in the Middle East because of their generally reflexive support of Israel, Neil A. Lewis writes in the New York Times (24/4/08).

"Officials of the new group, called 'J Street,' say they believe the best way to bring security and peace to Israel is to help political candidates who support that country but will occasionally

question some of its policies, like maintaining or expanding settlements in disputed territories.

Jeremy Ben-Ami, the J Street executive director and a former domestic policy adviser in the Clinton White House, said his group intended to select a handful of congressional candidates to support this autumn from those willing, for example, to express forcefully their support for a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestine issue and for aid to the Palestinian Authority. ARTICLE: <http://www.iht.com/articles/2008/04/24/mideast/lobby.php>

2008 WORLD REFUGEE DAY THEME IS 'REFUGEE PROTECTION'

World Refugee Day, on June 20, highlights each year the plight of refugees worldwide and recognises their courage and resilience. It also reinforces the important role that governments and civil society play in protecting refugees and helping them restart their lives.

World Refugee Day 2008 theme is 'Refugee protection'. Above all, making sure those people who flee their homes because of persecution and conflict are given safe haven and will not be sent back into danger, Ariane Rummery, of UNHCR, Regional Office Canberra, writes. Protection also means that refugees receive shelter, food and medical care and that their rights are respected, including rights to education, to freedom of movement and to family unity.

The UNHCR Regional Office in Canberra, is planning posters and TV community service announcements and would like to hear of organisations' plans for the day to feature in an events page: unhcr.org/nz/au

The pending 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in December will provide another opportunity to focus on refugee rights and UNHCR believes there are notable synergies between World Refugee Day and Human Rights Day this year.

UNHCR has copies of its education kit Human Rights, Refugee and UNHCR for teachers. Kit, posters and video from aulcapi@unhcr.org or +61 2 6281 9108/04; and shortly at: www.unhcr.org.au/UNHCR-pubres-canberraresources.

DETAILS: Ariane Rummery on 61 (0)2 6281 9104/ 61 (0)409 501 355; F 61 (0)2 6260. 3477.

MIGRANTS ADD TO SKILLS CRISIS: STUDY

Less than a third of people from non-English speaking countries who migrate to Australia on skilled workers' visas are gaining work in their fields and many of them are adding to the skills crisis they were brought in to solve, a study has found.

Those who graduated from Australian universities and were assessed as competent by local accrediting authorities were the least likely to find employment relevant to their qualifications, according to the report, *How are skilled migrants doing?* published in People And Place (29/4/08). The authors, Monash University demographers Bob Birrell and Ernest Healy, have called for a freeze on skilled migration while the Federal Government focusses on helping to bring present migrants up to the standard demanded by professions, in which they are qualified, through bridging courses. REPORT: <http://elecpress.monash.edu.au/pnp/>

HELPING STUDENTS INTO WORKING WORLD

The NSW Teachers Federation has launched a website that contains everything students, parents, teachers and employers would want to know about the world of work for today's teenagers (1/5/08). Students@Work is a new public information service provided by public school and TAFE teachers to help students balance the competing demands of full time study and part time work. DETAILS: Diane Hague, Media Officer on 0407 424 806; media@nswtf.org.au; <http://staging1.freestylemedia.com.au/studentswork>

SHOULD TAX DEDUCTIBILITY FOR POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS AND GIFTS CONTINUE?

Federal Parliament's Electoral Matters Committee organised a public hearing on Tuesday as part of its inquiry into the Federal Government's proposal to determine whether tax deductibility for

contributions and gifts to political parties, members and candidates should continue. Individuals and companies can currently claim up to \$1,500 per year as a deduction in their tax returns for contributions and gifts (including membership fees) to political parties, members and candidates. Mark Dreyfus QC, MP, acted as chairman. DETAILS: Secretariat on 02 62772358; <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/laca/reformcon.htm>

TAXATION COMMISSIONER APPEARS BEFORE COMMITTEE

The Commissioner of Taxation, Michael D'Ascenzo, was due to appear before Federal Parliament's Public Accounts and Audit Committee in Sydney (30/4/08) to explain how the Australia's tax system was administered. Committee chairperson Sharon Grierson MP said, "The community is entitled to expect that a well resourced and powerful agency such as the ATO is regularly held to account. Through these meetings, the committee can ensure that the ATO is treating honest taxpayers fairly and subjecting tax evaders to the full force of the law." DETAILS: Inquiry secretary on 02 6277 4574; www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jpaa.

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSES CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM

Federal-State relations, a constitutional preamble and issues of citizenship were on the agenda on Thursday at a roundtable on constitutional reform held by the Federal Parliament's Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee at Parliament House, Canberra.

The Roundtable on constitutional reform heard from some of Australia's leading constitutional law experts on possible options for the reform of Australia's Constitution.

The roundtable discussion topics included: alteration of the constitution; four-year fixed terms and qualifications of members; federal-state relations; recognition of Indigenous peoples and a new preamble; and citizenship and human rights.

It was reported that a key point emphasised by participants was the importance of public involvement and dialogue, particularly in regards to the process for amending the constitution and in the drafting of any preamble. DETAILS: Secretariat on 02 6277 2358; <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/laca/reformcon.htm>

NATIONAL UNANZ CONFERENCE IN AUCKLAND MAY 31

From May 31 to June 2 New Zealand will hold its UNANZ national conference in Auckland, with the main theme 'Our Common Future', linking issues such as human rights and development.

The conference will also feature workshops, among them a WFUNA workshop on the UN and Climate Change, with ideas to go to the WFUNA climate change taskforce.

Nick Nuttall, UNEP official spokesman from Nairobi, will attend, as will UNAA National President John Langmore. Also expected is Abdullah Saleh Mbamba, director UN Information Centre for Oceania and South Pacific, who is based in Canberra. The conference will workshop such topics as the UN and civil society roles, environmental (climate) refugees, transitions from peak oil and a fair Kyoto II treaty. DETAILS: www.unanz.org.nz; or Antony.Vallyon@northshorecity.govt.nz; accommodation: www.barrycourt.co.nz

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[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:

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UNAA Vic info@unaavictoria.org.au on (03) 9670 7878 Website: <http://www.unaavictoria.org.au/>.

UNAA WA 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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