

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.

August 29 2008

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Unity and Supplement can also be accessed at: <http://www.unityunaa.info/>

Earlier editions of UNity 2004-05, 2006 and 2007 are on the UNAA website: www.unaa.org.au or email the editor.

(It may be necessary to copy and paste links into your browser/address box)

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The prospect of global wars driven by climate change is not something often discussed publicly by our political leaders. –analyst.

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The joint UN-African Union peacekeeping mission in Darfur (UNAMID) has strongly condemned the "excessive, disproportionate use of lethal forces" by Sudanese security forces against civilians during a raid inside a displaced persons' camp in Darfur.

E. HEALTH & MEANS

A NEW GLOBAL AGENDA FOR HEALTH EQUITY

The toxic combination of bad policies, economics, and politics is in large measure responsible that a majority of people in the world do not enjoy the good health that is biologically possible, WHO Social Determinants of Health Commission reports.

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INQUIRY INTO BUILDING INDIGENOUS ENTERPRISE

The House of Representatives Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs Committee returned to Canberra on August 28 for a public hearing regarding its inquiry into Indigenous enterprise development.

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I. ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT

WORLD POVERTY 'MORE WIDESPREAD'

The World Bank has warned that world poverty is much greater than previously thought. It has revised its previous estimate and now says that 1.4 billion people live in poverty, based on a new poverty line of \$1.25 per day.

A. UNITED NATIONS & AGENCIES (Unity, UN AND UNAA Contacts)

SEVEN NATIONS CONDEMN RUSSIAN DECISION

Seven of the world's leading industrialised nations have jointly condemned Russia's decision to recognise Georgia's breakaway regions, the BBC reported (27/8/08).

Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the US and UK said Moscow's recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia violated Georgia's integrity and sovereignty. Earlier, the UK's foreign secretary said Western countries should re-examine their relations with Russia. David Miliband also warned Russia not to start a new Cold War.

Speaking during a visit to Ukraine, Mr Miliband said Moscow had not reconciled itself with the new map of the region and that the West should look at ways to reduce its dependence on Russian oil and gas.

French President Nicolas Sarkozy meanwhile described Russia's move to recognise South Ossetia and Abkhazia as an unacceptable attempt to change borders.

Russia said it was the last country that wanted a new Cold War.

REPORT: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7585182.stm>

GEORGIA: BAN CALLS AGAIN FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF SIX-POINT PLAN

The question of recognition of states is a matter for sovereign states to decide, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said (26/8/08), after Russia announced that it had recognised the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, two separatist regions in Georgia.

He cautioned that "today's developments may have wider implications for security and stability in the Caucasus," according to a statement. Mr Ban also voiced regret that "ongoing efforts to find a common solution on the way forward in the crisis in Georgia within the Security Council may be complicated."

In the **statement**, the Secretary-General repeated his call for the six-point plan agreed to between French President Nicolas Sarkozy and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev to be fully implemented.

The principles in that plan include: a commitment by all parties to renounce the use of force; the immediate and definitive cessation of hostilities; free access to humanitarian aid; the withdrawal of Georgian forces to their places of permanent deployment; and the convening of international discussions on lasting security arrangements for Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

The other principle stipulates the withdrawal of Russian forces to their lines of deployment before August 7, and includes the additional provision that Russian peacekeeping forces may implement additional security measures pending the definition of an international mechanism.

Mr Ban also stressed the "urgent need" to protect all civilians living in zones of conflict. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that over 158,000 people – 128,000 within Georgia and 30,000 who have fled to Russia – have been uprooted.

REPORT: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=27829&Cr=georgia&Cr1=>

HEAD OF UN REFUGEE AGENCY IN SOMALIA RELEASED

The UN refugee agency has welcomed news that the head of its office in Somalia has been released unharmed after two months in captivity in the war-torn Horn of Africa country (27/8/08).

Hassan Mohammed Ali, who heads the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) office in Mogadishu, was in good health and would soon be reunited with his family, it was reported. Mr Ali, a Somali national also known as Keynaan, was abducted from his home near Mogadishu on June 21 by an unknown armed group.

The agency thanked the Somali organisations and civil society members who held demonstrations to call for Mr Ali's release over the past two months.

The agency said it would continue to provide aid to displaced civilians across Somalia. UNHCR also offered its sympathies to aid workers who were still forcibly detained in Somalia, saying abductions and attacks against such workers had increased in recent months.

REPORT: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=27849&Cr=somalia&Cr1=>

NEW BROOM IN US COULD HELP NUKE DISARMAMENT: GARETH EVANS

The next Washington administration could bring a historic US commitment to "serious nuclear disarmament", Gareth Evans, Australia's co-chairman of a new international nuclear disarmament commission, said, according to The Australian (26/8/08).

Mr Evans said the world faced major proliferation challenges - the leakage of weapons material from the increasing adoption of civilian nuclear energy, terrorism, and nuclear weapons states standing outside the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty regime - but also a large opportunity from US politics.

He cited a changed atmosphere in Washington, led by a bipartisan alliance on disarmament of former secretaries of state Henry Kissinger and George Schultz, former defence secretary William Perry and former Senate armed service committee chairman Sam Nunn.

"(They are) making over the past two years a hard-headed, realistic case for the first time in US history for serious nuclear disarmament and the prospect that will flow through into the new US administration - particularly Obama but also a McCain administration."

Mr Evans was Australia's foreign minister from 1988 to 1996.

Now president of the Brussels-based International Crisis Group, he launched the International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament yesterday with co-chair Yoriko Kawaguchi, also a former foreign minister. The commission was proposed by Kevin Rudd to Japan's Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda, aiming to produce fresh anti-proliferation and disarmament proposals for a NPT review conference in 2010.

REPORT: <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,,24240408-26397,00.html>

BAN CONGRATULATES CHINA ON OLYMPICS

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon congratulated the people and government of China for their staging of the Olympic Games, after two weeks of competition across 28 sports.

"China can be proud of hosting a spectacular Olympiad, which brought together athletes and people from all over the world in celebration of the Olympic spirit, cooperation and goodwill," Mr Ban said in a **statement** (25/8/08).

"The 2008 Summer Games provided an important opportunity for the promotion of international peace and harmony through deepened dialogue and mutual understanding within the international community," he said.

UN OFFICIAL CALLS FOR INVESTIGATION INTO CIVILIAN DEATHS

The top United Nations official in Afghanistan has called for a thorough investigation of reports that large numbers of civilians were killed during an international military operation in the far west of the country.

Kai Eide, the Secretary-General's Special Representative, stated he had learned that civilians may have been killed during the operations, carried out in Shindand district of Herat province.

He stressed the importance of a thorough investigation to establish the facts "before we jump to any conclusions. The United Nations has always made clear that civilian casualties are unacceptable – they undermine the trust and confidence of the Afghan people."

Mr Eide said he had instructed the Herat office of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) to help provincial authorities to establish and verify the facts.

“Any civilian casualty is one civilian casualty too many,” he said. “And every effort that can be made must be made to ensure the safety and welfare of the civilian population where military operations are conducted.”

The Special Representative told a conference for southern Afghan governors that partnerships with provincial and district authorities were central to improving the effectiveness of aid across the south, which remains the most unstable and violence-wracked region of the country.

Speaking in Kandahar, Mr. Eide said it was in the southern districts and provinces “that the lack of effectiveness is most acutely felt. It is here that the lack of coordination has the greatest impact.” He also urged the governors to combat corruption more vigorously, or risk undermining the confidence of Afghans in their state institutions and jeopardising local security even further. **REPORT:**

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=27795&Cr=Afghan&Cr1=UNAMA>

THAILAND TELLS THE UN TO BROADEN FOCUS IN BURMA

Thailand's Prime Minister Samak Sundaravej has told western countries not to pin their efforts to bring democracy to Burma on the release of detained opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

Mr Sundaravej told visiting UN envoy to Burma, Ibrahim Gambari, that he would have more success engaging the military regime if Ms Suu Kyi were left off the agenda, Radio Australia reported (26/8/08).

The prime minister said the international community should focus on the constitution and elections as a means of bringing democracy to Burma.

REPORT: <http://www.radioaustralia.net.au/news/stories/200808/s2346151.htm?tab=latest>

FIVE NEW UN OFFICIALS SWORN IN

Five high-ranking UN officials took their oaths of office at a swearing-in ceremony in New York, before heading to Turin for a two-day retreat for senior managers (25/8/08).

Secretary General Ban Ki-moon swore in the new Under-Secretary-Generals for Legal Affairs, Patricia O'Brien, and for Peacekeeping Operations, Alain Le Roy, at the ceremony, held at UN Headquarters in New York.

Ms O'Brien, who served as Legal Adviser to the Department of Foreign Affairs in Ireland since 2003, becomes the first woman in the world body's history to hold the post of UN Legal Counsel.

As the new head of peacekeeping, Mr Le Roy will oversee almost 110,000 personnel serving in 20 peace operations around the world. French, he has extensive experience in international affairs, both at the political level and in the field, including senior positions with the European Union (EU), the French Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the UN.

Three Assistant Secretary-Generals were also sworn in: Warren Sach, for the Department of Management's Central Support Services; Jun Yamazaki, as Controller and for the Office of Program Planning, Budget and Accounts; and Jane Holl Lute, for Peacebuilding Support.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF DEMOCRACY SEPTEMBER 15

On November 8 2007, the General Assembly proclaimed September 15 as the International Day of Democracy, inviting member states, the United Nations system and other regional, intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations to commemorate the day.

The International Day of Democracy provides an opportunity to review the state of democracy in the world. Democracy is as much a process as a goal, and only with the full participation of and support by the international community, national governing bodies, civil society and individuals, can the ideal of democracy be made into a reality to be enjoyed by everyone, everywhere.

The following websites provide information on the democracy-related activities by UN offices and agencies:

- DPA <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpa/democracies.html> (new or restored democracies), <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpa/electoral.html> (electoral assistance)
- UNDEF <http://www.un.org/democracyfund/index.htm> (UNDEF)
- OHCHR <http://www.un.org/rights> (human rights)
- UNIFEM http://www.unifem.org/gender_issues/governance_peace_security (women)
- UNDP <http://www.undp.org/governance/index.html> (UNDP)

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 on 02 6247 4499 .

UNAA NSW office@unaansw.org.au 02 9212 0998;f 02 9280 0137 .

UNAA Qld unaabalmain@optusnet.com.au on ph/fax 07 32541096.

UNAA SA unaasa@picknowl.com.au on 08 8226 4141.

UNAA Tas. secretary@UNAATasmania.org on 03 6229 4269 <http://www.unaatasmania.org/>.

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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Daily press briefing by the office of the spokesperson for the UN Secretary General:

<http://www.un.org/News/briefings/docs/2008/db080527.doc.htm>

UN Daily News (Link only)

<http://www.un.org/news/dh/pdf/english/2008/27052008.pdf>

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<http://www.un.org/news/dh/pdf/english/2008/27052008.pdf>

B. CLIMATE CHANGE

ANALYST WARNS OF LOOMING GLOBAL CLIMATE WARS

The prospect of global wars driven by climate change is not something often discussed publicly by our political leaders, analyst Gwynne Dyer comments, ABC (25/8/08).

A top American military analyst, he says governments in the US and UK are already being briefed by their own military strategists about how to prepare for a world of mass famine, floods of refugees, and even nuclear conflicts over resources.

Gwynne Dyer is a military analyst and author who served in three navies and has held academic posts at the Royal Military College, Sandhurst, and at Oxford. Speaking about his latest book, *Climate Wars*, he says there is a sense of suppressed panic from the scientists and military leaders. **REPORT:** <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/08/25/2345829.htm>

PLEA FOR CO-OPERATION TO CUT EMISSIONS

Big business has urged the Federal Government and Opposition to work together on the emissions trading scheme, warning it is too big an economic change to be used as a political football, the Sydney Morning Herald reported (27/8/08).

The head of the Business Council of Australia, Greig Gailey, warns the government that the scheme could lose it votes unless people are properly compensated for the anticipated rises in the cost of power.

"Uncertainty is the great enemy of investment," Mr Gailey said. "The impact of the [emissions trading system] is just too great for us to be at the mercy of party politics. We ask both parties to forswear opposition for opposition's sake."

The council last week released modelling predicting dire consequences for industry if the government went ahead with the emissions trading system in its existing design. It found three of the 14 businesses examined in the modelling would shut, a further four would have to restructure their operations and the remaining seven would need to cut costs. In all cases, profits before tax would fall by 22 per cent.

The modelling was criticised as alarmist by environment groups which accused business of not shouldering its share of the challenge to reduce emissions. Mr Gailey's speech goes to great lengths to assert businesses' support for the scheme. He also repeats that consumers will not be fully protected from price rises by any government compensation scheme.

REPORT: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/08/26/1219516472344.html>

SPEECH: [The Great Climate Change Challenge \(speech by Greig Gailey to the Sydney Institute\)](#)

BCA: NEW RESEARCH SHOWS WAY FORWARD ON EMISSIONS TRADING

Business Council of Australia President Greig Gailey launched the BCA paper, *Modelling Success: Designing an ETS that Works*, this week. It incorporates research from Port Jackson Partners Limited (PJPL) examining the impacts of the proposed emissions trading scheme on 14 businesses across a range of sectors including minerals processing, manufacturing, oil refining, coal mining and sugar milling (21/8/08).

Mr Gailey said, "In releasing its Green Paper the government has invited input into the final design of its Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS). The BCA fully supports adopting a comprehensive emissions trading scheme as the best way to reduce emissions, but getting the design detail right is critical.

"The Green Paper puts Australia on a path to addressing climate change challenges through a partnership between business, government and the community. But the scheme must send the right signals to businesses," he said.

BCA believed the government was moving in the right direction to respond to climate change but an emissions reduction scheme must recognise business reality to encourage the investment required to reduce emissions and maintain a healthy economy, he said.

DETAILS: Scott Thompson, BCA on 03 8664 2664; 0403 241 128.

REPORTS: <http://www.bca.com.au/Content/101484.aspx>;

[Strategic Framework for Emissions Reduction](#) May 2007;

[Modelling Success: Designing an ETS that Works](#) August 21;

[Modelling Success: Designing an ETS that Works \(paper\)](#);

[Setting Achievable Emissions Targets for Australia \(paper\)](#);

[Strategic Framework for Emissions Reduction \(paper\)](#).

BCA PLAN WOULD DRIVE UP COST OF REDUCING EMISSIONS: GREENS

The Business Council of Australia's trading scheme recommendations would utterly undermine the environmental integrity of the emissions trading scheme and drive up costs for ordinary Australians, Senator Christine Milne, Australian Greens climate change spokesperson said (21/8/08).

"What a shame BCA continue to put their selfish interests ahead of what is clearly in Australia's best interest," Senator Milne said. "Big polluters always cry that the sky is falling when governments propose schemes to reduce pollution. But every time governments hold firm and introduce their schemes, the polluters clean up their act and get on with business," she said. "There is no hope for an international agreement to reduce emissions if wealthy, developed countries like Australia do not lead the way."

DETAILS: Tim Hollo 0437 587 562

EUREKA WINNERS ADVANCE GREENHOUSE MODELLING

The winners of the nation's top environmental research prize are now developing world-leading computer models that will improve the ability to track interactions between Australia's plants and soil and harmful greenhouse gasses (25/8/08).

The National Carbon Accounting System (NCAS) team was recently awarded the \$10,000 Sherman Eureka Prize for Environmental Research by the Australian Museum. NCAS uses remote sensing, greenhouse-gas accounting methods and modelling of environmental change to monitor and predict carbon storage and emissions from agriculture, forestry and soils across Australia.

For the past ten years the project has been led by Dr Gary Richards, principal scientist at the Department of Climate Change (formerly the Australian Greenhouse Office). Dr Richards is also a Visiting Fellow at the ANU Fenner School of Environment and Society.

"We needed to give people the capacity to ask 'what if' from the desktop," Dr Richards said. "We integrate satellite data with ground data, and put them in models that accurately account for carbon in a particular area."

The Eureka Award nomination included the researchers Dr Peter Caccetta, Dr John Raison, Suzanne Furby and Jan Skjemstad from CSIRO, and Dr Cris Brack, Dr Jenny Kesteven and Rob Waterworth from the ANU.

Dr Brack has also played a lead role in the development of NCAS since its inception. "It's the most sophisticated carbon monitoring system anywhere on the planet," he said, adding that the project had drawn on the expertise of hundreds of researchers including historians, atmospheric modellers and rocket scientists. The researchers are now considering ways to expand the ability of NCAS to monitor interactions between plants and soil and harmful greenhouse gases other than carbon, such as methane. "This is something no-one else can do, so it means we're continue to be world leaders in greenhouse storage and emissions modelling," Dr Brack said.

The NCAS tool is now used by more than 7,000 Australians. NCAS has also provided information for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change National Greenhouse Gas Inventories and the Kyoto Protocol. Other countries are considering how to adapt NCAS for their use. **DETAILS:** Dr Cris Brack on 0408 426 091; Simon Couper on 02 6125 4171 or 0416 249 241.

SPLIT WELFARE AND BUSINESS IN DROUGHT FUNDING: EXPERTS

Australia's drought support system needs to differentiate between the welfare needs of farmers and issues of business sustainability if it is to be equitable and climate-change relevant, ANU experts argue (25/8/08).

In a submission to the Productivity Commission's current inquiry into drought support, policy experts Dr Linda Botterill and Professor Bruce Chapman are calling for a broad inquiry into the nature and extent of poverty among Australia's farmers, and a consideration of amendments to the welfare safety net to make it accessible to farmers on a more equitable basis.

"The original intention that drought policy should only support those farmers with a long-term sustainable future in farming has been abandoned, and the welfare system is being used to subsidise farm business operations. This confuses the risk management message of the National Drought Policy," said Dr Botterill from the Political Science Program at the Research School of Social Sciences, ANU.

"Advances in climate science mean that what we once thought of as 'exceptional circumstances' are proving to be anything but exceptional. In this case, Exceptional Circumstances Relief Payment might best be removed from the National Drought Policy and replaced by a standing farm welfare program. This could be delivered on terms that are equitable with the rest of the community, and on the basis of the individual family's needs – not on the basis of flawed geographically-based exceptional circumstances declarations."

The researchers propose that removing the eligibility for welfare from any drought support program would reinforce the business focus of the National Drought Policy, and also greatly reduce the politicisation of the program.

"Media images of drought-affected families are powerful in evoking public support for governments to 'do something'," Dr Botterill said. "If these families are receiving welfare support on an equitable basis, governments are better placed to implement policies in a manner consistent with the original intent of the National Drought Policy."

Professor Bruce Chapman from the Crawford School of Economics and Government at ANU says that the main instrument employed by the Federal Government to support farm businesses experiencing exceptional circumstances is the interest rate subsidy, yet such subsidies are not consistent with the broader goals of encouraging self-reliance.

"We propose that the farm business support currently offered in the form of interest rate subsidies be replaced by an income contingent loan scheme, either based on existing exceptional circumstances declarations processes, or based on individual farm business need, decoupled from geographically-based declaration processes," Professor Chapman said. "Such loans are more consistent with the principles of the National Drought Policy."

DETAILS: Dr Linda Botterill on 0419 514 578, Professor Bruce Chapman 0424 589 728
SUBMISSION: Simon Couper on 02 6125 4171.

C. HUMAN RIGHTS

PAYMENTS MANAGED NOT STRIPPED: PEARSON

Cape York Aboriginal leader Noel Pearson, director of the Cape York Institute, said he has been at pains to ensure that in the Queensland trials payments are managed, not stripped, from families, the ABC reported (28/8/08).

He was commenting on the Federal Government's plan to strip Centrelink payments from parents whose children skip school. Legislation is before Federal Parliament to freeze welfare payments to parents for three months if their children are frequent truants.

"The Cape York approach is that we don't take money away from families," he said. "There is a lot of mention that we [are] stripping people from welfare, [but] nobody loses any money."

"A clamp might be put on your money to make sure that you spend it on your children's clothes and so on but our approach does not deprive people of money. We want to put people in a position where if they are taking responsibility there should be no interference.

"It's only where there is a breakdown, where people have failed to send their kids to school or are not abiding by their obligations, that's when there should be intervention."

REPORT: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/08/28/2348540.htm?section=australia>

OVERSEAS STUDENTS 'HELD LIKE TERRORISTS'

Nearly 300 overseas students have been thrown into detention centres in Sydney and Melbourne in the past three years after falling foul of Australia's immigration laws, The Australian reported (28/8/08).

Documents obtained by The Australian under Freedom of Information laws reveal that in the three years to the end of March, 299 overseas students were put into the Villawood detention centre in Sydney or the Maribyrnong centre in Melbourne. Most were deported; five are still in detention. University, TAFE and secondary school students from 24 countries were detained. Most came from China, India, Malaysia, Sri Lanka and Indonesia.

Of the detainees, 207 were held for overstaying their visas, 30 for attendance breaches, 14 for failing their courses, seven for not starting their courses, four for withdrawing from their courses, one for a work breach and 36 for other reasons.

Immigration Minister Chris Evans recently stated mandatory detention for overstayers and unlawful non-citizens would only apply in certain circumstances, such as where a person presents a risk to the community, or where there was repeated non-compliance.

REPORT: <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,24253189-2702,00.html>

SLAVE TRADE REQUIRES RENEWED EFFORT: UNESCO CHIEF

Marking the International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition, the UN Educational, Scientific, Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) chief appealed to member states to renew efforts to end all forms of oppression (23/8/08).

"While we should never forget the atrocities committed in the past, we should be equally vigilant in seeking to abolish the contemporary forms of slavery that affect millions of men, women and children around the world," said UNESCO Director-General Koïchiro Matsuura.

He noted that despite a tremendous international effort to combat the exploitation of human beings as well as the growing awareness of forced labour and the sale and prostitution of children, flagrant violations of human rights continued.

The day commemorates the uprising on August 23 1791 when slaves of Santo Domingo in the Caribbean launched an insurrection which ultimately led to the Haitian revolution and promoted the cause of human rights.

This year's International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition coincides with the bicentenary of the abolition of the slave trade by the US in 1808.

Also, the freedom from slavery and servitude as a fundamental human right was recognised in Article 4 of the UN Declaration of Human Rights, on its 60th anniversary.

"Let us therefore remember the millions of men, women and children who were subjected to this most invidious denial of human rights, and those who fought tirelessly to end that tyranny," Mr Matsuura said.

REPORT: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=27799&Cr=Slave&Cr1=>

FOCUS ON CHILDREN IN SOUTH ASIA

The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) has called on South Asian governments to strengthen laws to tackle child trafficking, a neglected form of the wider scourge of human trafficking.

Although there are few reliable estimates of the true scope of child trafficking in the region, UNICEF says that most South Asian nations are countries of destination, origin and transit in a new **report** launched (27/8/08).

Trafficking children in the area are exploited both sexually – in such guises as prostitution, sex tourism and child pornography – and for labour to work on farms and as domestic servants, among others. The agency says that trafficking is not only committed by organised crime, but that friends, relatives and even parents can be complicit.

“This signifies that governments in South Asia have multiple responsibilities: to prevent trafficking; to protect children who are victims or who may be at risk; to prosecute perpetrators; and to ensure the recovery and empowerment of children who are victims of trafficking, exploitation, abuse and violence,” the report states.

While authorities have set up action plans with some countries codifying the criminalisation of human trafficking, the agency said tougher laws are needed, along with legal and psychosocial support for child victims.

To date, no South Asian nation has ratified the 2000 Palermo Protocol, the first international pact to define trafficking in humans and specially addressing children.

“Measures should be taken to ensure that a trafficked child is never criminalised and that people’s migration is not jeopardised,” the report notes, adding that children must also be protected legally from secondary victimisation and must not be prosecuted for offences committed as trafficking victims.

The study, entitled *South Asia in Action: Preventing and responding to child trafficking*, was released at a gathering of South Asian government and non-government organisation representatives, in Kathmandu, Nepal, to discuss tactics to curb trafficking and exploitation.

CALL FOR RELEASE OF NEPALESE CHILDREN

A senior UN official has called on Nepalese authorities and the country’s Maoist forces to immediately free nearly 3,000 children who have still not been formally released from the Maoist cantonments, despite the end of the armed conflict (25/8/08).

Radhika Coomaraswamy, Secretary-General’s Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, issued a statement stressing that the comprehensive peace agreement which ended Nepal’s conflict called for the immediate release of the children once they entered the cantonments.

Yet although many children had been released informally, there had been no progress in securing their formal discharge, Ms Coomaraswamy said. Last year the UN Mission in Nepal and the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) identified that there were 2,973 under-age members of the Maoist forces as of May 2006.

“UNMIN child protection advisers, UNICEF and its partners should have access to these children to make sure that they receive their rights to recovery and reintegration,” she said.

UN OFFICIALS ALARMED BY EARLY RELEASE OF CONVICTED RAPISTS

A senior UN human rights official in Afghanistan voiced deep concern that two individuals convicted in 2006 for the rape of a woman in the north of the country have been released early (26/8/08).

“This sends the wrong message to other perpetrators of violent crimes against women, that they will not be held accountable for their actions,” said Norah Niland, the head of the human rights unit with the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), adding that “there can be no peace in Afghanistan without justice.”

Ms. Niland noted that the 11-year prison sentence against the perpetrators was upheld by the Court of Appeal and confirmed by the Afghan Supreme Court.

However, the two men were subsequently released from incarceration after serving "a fraction of their sentence" and are now back in the neighbourhood of Samangan province where the crime was perpetrated and where the victim and her family continue to live.

"While there appears to be conflicting reports on the circumstances of the release of these prisoners, whatever the circumstances, this is clearly an injustice against the victim, the victims' family and all Afghan women," Ms. Niland stated. "Such injustice can only promote a culture of impunity for violence perpetrated against women."

She welcomed the intention by the Afghan authorities to investigate the circumstances surrounding the release and urged them take all appropriate measures to ensure that justice is done and the rights of Afghan women are protected.

REPORT: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=27830&Cr=afghan&Cr1=>

KARZAI ANNOUNCES INVESTIGATION

Afghan President Hamid Karzai has announced a full investigation into the case of two rapists who have been freed on a presidential pardon, the BBC reported (27/8/08).

The case was raised by the BBC after it discovered that the victim, Sara, had been forced into hiding by the release of the men. Sara and husband Dilawar only found out the rapists had been freed when they saw them walking around their village. It was reported that the case highlights the endemic corruption in the Afghan legal system.

AFTER MYANMAR VISIT, GAMBARI TALKS TO THAILAND AND INDONESIA

Senior UN envoy to Myanmar Ibrahim Gambari wrapped up his six-day visit to the country on August 23 by meeting senior government members and the diplomatic corps.

Mr Gambari, the Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Myanmar, held open and extensive meetings with Prime Minister Thein Sein, members of the State Peace and Development Council, including the ministers of information, foreign affairs and culture. He briefed the local diplomatic community and met with government officials to discuss issues including reconciliation and how to help Myanmar tackle its socio-economic challenges.

He is travelling on to Thailand and Indonesia to continue consultations with regional leaders as part of his "good offices" mission on behalf of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

END 'DISCRIMINATORY ACCESS TO PUBLIC DOCUMENTS'

Disability Discrimination Commissioner Graeme Innes has called upon government departments and agencies to improve their adherence to government standards and legislation that require them to provide equal access to public information for people with disability (24/8/08).

"This is about ensuring that people are not discriminated against on the basis of their disability when information - some of it very high profile - is released by government departments and agencies", Mr Innes said. "Of all organisations, government departments and agencies know they should be making documents and information accessible to everyone."

He was disturbed by repeated instances of important information published by government with little consideration of accessibility for people with disability.

"We've seen several important reports and papers published recently, all of them initially inaccessible to many people with disability - *The Green Paper on Carbon Emissions Trading* and the *Grocery Watch* website are two prominent examples", he said. "The Green Paper on Carbon Emissions Trading is over 500 pages long, but when I tried to read the PDF files with my synthetic speech software, it told me that there was one paragraph in those 500 pages - this made the document unusable because I couldn't move from section to section.

"Making information as socially important and highly publicised as the *Grocery Watch* website and the *Green Paper on Carbon Emissions Trading* inaccessible to a significant sector of the

population is, put bluntly, a disgrace." Commissioner Innes noted that, generally speaking, accessible versions of documents are eventually supplied when people ask for them, but this often takes weeks.

"That's not good enough - people with disability have an equal right to participate in public debates about important issues, but they need to be able to get access to information when it's published, not after the debate has moved on for everyone else."

When documents are only put on the Internet in PDF format, it usually results in inadequate or zero access for people with disability, he said. "You can use HTML, Microsoft Word, or RTF formats. It's particularly depressing to see documents created in word-processor formats, which provide very good access, being converted into PDF, which doesn't, then only being posted in PDF."

All Australian governments had policies that commit their departments and agencies to complying with requirements for publishing information so that it is accessible, including the requirements of the federal Disability Discrimination Act.

"I'm not telling government publishers that they can't use PDF, but I am telling them that they must provide the same content in other accessible formats alongside the PDFs on their websites," he said. "I'm also telling them that, if this doesn't begin to improve, we will start to name and shame." [DETAILS](#): Brinsley Marlay on 02 9284 9656 or 0430 366 529.

WHISTLEBLOWER FACES 10 YEARS' JAIL

A former federal public servant is facing up to 10 years in prison after being found guilty of blowing the whistle on aspects of the Northern Territory intervention, the Sydney Morning Herald reported (26/8/08).

A former Indigenous policy adviser pleaded not guilty to seven charges of intentionally leaking information in July 2006.

[REPORT: http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/08/25/1219516370480.html](http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/08/25/1219516370480.html)

PROTECTING WHISTLEBLOWERS IN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT PUBLIC SECTOR

The Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) was due to outline the need for a robust legislative framework to protect whistleblowers at a public hearing in Canberra (28/8/08). The hearing is part of an inquiry being conducted by the House of Representatives Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee into whistleblowing protections within the federal government public sector.

In Australia now, there are no uniform laws to protect whistleblowers. Some protections exist at both the federal and at the state and territory level. At the federal level, the Public Service Act 1999 provides protection for Australian Public Service (APS) employees making disclosures in certain circumstances, and a Commonwealth Government employee who 'blows the whistle' is currently only protected in a narrow range of circumstances.

The CPSU has indicated that it supports appropriate sanctions to protect public servants who put their careers and reputation at risk by delivering frank and fearless advice, or who blow the whistle on corruption or maladministration. The National Secretary of the CPSU, Stephen Jones, was scheduled to discuss the CPSU's position on some of the issues, challenges and best practices, surrounding whistleblowing protections within the federal government public sector.

Committee Chairperson Mark Dreyfus said, "Whistleblowing protections are designed to protect disclosures made in the public interest that would otherwise breach the law. They should also provide legal redress for whistleblowers subjected to victimisation, or discrimination ... More effective and comprehensive protection for whistleblowers can increase the likelihood of public interest disclosures being made".

The committee is to inquire into and report on a preferred model for legislation to protect public interest disclosures (whistleblowing) within the Federal Government public sector, addressing:

the categories of people who could make protected disclosures
the types of disclosures that should be protected
the conditions that should apply to a person making a disclosure
the scope of statutory protection that should be available
procedures in relation to protected disclosures, and
the relationship between the Committee's preferred model and existing Commonwealth laws.
BACKGROUND (terms of reference): www.aph.gov.au/laca; secretariat on 02 6277 2358.

THREE MORE GIRLS KIDNAPPED IN HAITI: UN MISSION REPORTS

Three more young girls had been kidnapped in Haiti over the past week, the UN peacekeeping mission to the impoverished Caribbean country reported, amid mounting UN concern about the continuing spate of child abductions.

An eight-year-old girl was kidnapped in the capital, Port-au-Prince, last Thursday, and the following day a seven-year-old girl was abducted in the town of Arcahaie, according to the UN mission (known as MINUSTAH).

On Saturday, a three-year-old girl who had been kidnapped two days earlier was found in Arcahaie and brought to hospital after being injured with a razor blade. The latest abductions have occurred as MINUSTAH officials warn that criminal gangs in Haiti were increasingly targeting children for kidnappings.

MINUSTAH child protection adviser Massimo Toschi told the UN News Centre last week that around half of all kidnapping victims are now under age.

The gangs have become more vicious and depraved in their attacks, with child victims often tortured, and some killed despite their family paying all or part of the demanded ransom. Girls who have been abducted are frequently raped or sexually abused.

Mr Toschi said the gangs tend to abduct children on their way to and from school, choosing victims from both poor and affluent families with the expectation that even families with little money will be able to draw on the Haitian diaspora to help pay the ransom, which can be as much as \$25,000.

REPORT: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=27818&Cr=minustah&Cr1=kidnap>

INDIGENOUS BRAZILIANS 'STILL SUFFERING INEQUALITIES'

Brazil's Indigenous peoples still struggle to exercise real control over their lives and lands, despite some advances in their conditions and the government's commitment to improve the situation, a UN human rights expert said after wrapping up a 12-day visit to the South American country (25/8/08).

S. James Anaya, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people, said in a statement that indigenous people in Brazil are likely to be poor, to endure low health and education standards and to face discrimination that sometimes results in violence.

While the Government has promised to advance indigenous rights in line with the recently struck UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and with national constitutional protections, a significant part of Brazilian society opposes Government policies that try to respond to the aspirations of indigenous peoples.

"Reforms are needed to ensure that indigenous peoples are better able to exercise their right of self-determination within the framework of a Brazilian State that is respectful of diversity," he said. It is evident that indigenous peoples frequently did not control the decisions that affect their everyday lives and their lands.

REPORT: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=27813&Cr=indigenous&Cr1=>

EQUAL PAY DAY: WOMEN SHORT-CHANGED AT JUNE 30

The Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency (EOWA) has named August 27 *Equal Pay Day* and is calling on employers to conduct a pay audit in their workplace.

With women earning just 84 cents in the male dollar, women effectively have to work longer to earn the same money as a man, EOWA says. To match the average wage a man earns in 12 months or the financial year working full time ordinary hours, a woman has to work an extra 54 days, or a total of 14 months to earn the same. August 27, 2008 marks the day when women's average salary catches up to what men have banked by June 30 2008.

Anna McPhee, Director of the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency, said women had less hourly pay, less weekly pay, less annual pay and less total superannuation savings.

Employers could support Equal Pay Day by initiating a pay audit in their workplace and respond where appropriate with transparent payment and promotion criteria, a meaningful work valuation assessment, review of overtime payments, provision of flexible work practices for all staff, removal of gender bias from performance reviews and where appropriate, increases in pay for women.

Despite being granted equal pay for equal work more than 30 years ago in the 1972 Equal Pay Case, pay equity had not been achieved.

"Pay equity is not just about equal pay for equal work," she said. "The 15.6 per cent gender wage gap reveals the systemic discrimination in the under-valuation of women's work."

The impact of pay inequity on society was costly not only to women, but also to families, government and the community. Women's life time earnings were low, leaving many women in poverty after the significant contribution to society of raising children. Most families were forced to assume traditional roles of male bread winner and female carer, rather than equally sharing the load of both paid and unpaid work. August 27 is the focus of an ongoing campaign for the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency (EOWA) to educate the community about the causes and solutions of pay equity.

DETAILS: www.eowa.gov.au.

NOTE: EOWA is a Federal Government statutory authority which administers the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act (1999). Employers of 100 people or more are required to report to the agency on the initiatives they take within their organisations to advance women in the workplace.

PLEA TO CINEMAS FOR PEOPLE WITH POOR HEARING

As part of Hearing Awareness Week, Australia's Disability Discrimination Commissioner, Graeme Innes, has called for cinemas to do their share for Australians who are deaf and hearing impaired (27/8/08).

"One in six Australians are affected by hearing loss, so it is about time major cinema chains reflected this market share in the numbers of screens showing captioned movies," said Commissioner Innes.

Captioned movies – those providing the dialogue and other sounds not heard by people who are deaf or hearing impaired - are shown two to three times a week on ten screens around Australia. This number of screens, which show captioned movies, has remained the same for five years.

Mr Innes recently congratulated the Government for providing some assistance to 12 independent cinemas to purchase the necessary equipment but called on the major cinema chains to use this week, Hearing Awareness Week, to announce a major increase in the availability of captions. He noted that, in New Zealand, captions are used as a positive attraction for cinemas.

US ACTIVISTS SAY CHINESE INTERROGATED THEM FOR HOURS

Eight American activists jailed in China for protesting during the Olympics said on Monday that they were interrogated for hours, deprived of sleep and accused of having ties to the US government, the Canadian Broadcasting Commission reported (25/8/08/AP/CBS).

The activists were sent home late Sunday during the closing ceremonies. Speaking outside City Hall in New York, the detainees said they were kept in cells and were allowed to leave only for interrogations, which sometimes lasted for hours. Some said they emerged more dedicated than ever to their cause.

"Our conditions were uncomfortable, but because we're Westerners, we suffered absolutely nothing compared to what the Tibetan people suffer," said John Watterberg, 30, a musician who lives in New York.

China's foreign ministry said in a statement Monday that "the protesters participated in 'Tibet independence' activities and that is against China's law." China hoped "the relevant countries will teach their citizens to abide and respect China's laws."

REPORT: <http://www.cbc.ca/world/story/2008/08/25/activist-interrogated.html>

CALL FOR ENTRIES: SUBMIT HUMAN RIGHTS PHOTOGRAPHS

The 2008 Human Rights Photography Competition is now open. The competition, which is being run in association with the Human Rights Medals and Awards, shares this year's official UN Human Rights Day theme: 'Dignity and justice for all of us'.

"We're searching for photographs that both reflect the theme of the competition - Dignity and justice for all of us - and provide a unique approach to a human rights subject," said federal Human Rights Commissioner, Graeme Innes.

"In reflecting the theme, an image might record a moment that celebrates dignity and justice," he said. "It might illustrate fundamental rights and freedoms being recognised, or it might simply capture an observation of what human rights means to the photographer and, for that matter, the viewer."

International Human Rights Day on December 10 marks the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The official theme supports the vision of the declaration as a commitment to universal dignity and justice, and reinforces the fact that human rights are an inextricable part of our lives.

The three categories for the 2008 Human Rights Photography Competition are: Under 18 (male), Under 18 (female) and 18 and above (age at 30 June 2008).

Winners, highly commended and shortlisted entries in each category will be placed on the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission website and exhibited at the Human Rights Medals and Awards ceremony at the Sheraton on the Park Hotel, Sydney, on December 10.

ENTRIES close COB **October 31**.

DETAILS: www.humanrights.gov.au/photo_comp; or on 02 9284 9618; hrawards@humanrights.gov.au

D. PEACE & SECURITY

AFRICA

SECURITY FORCES KILL ESTIMATED 64 IN SUDAN IDPS CAMP

The joint UN-African Union peacekeeping mission in Darfur (UNAMID) has strongly condemned the "excessive, disproportionate use of lethal forces" by Sudanese security forces against civilians during a raid inside a displaced persons' camp in Darfur (26/8/08).

An estimated 64 people were killed and 117 others wounded as a result of the exchange of gunfire inside the Kalma camp for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in South Darfur state, according to information provided to **UNAMID** staff who later visited the site.

The mission later evacuated 49 people to a hospital in Nyala, the state capital, and warned that the number of casualties of both dead and wounded could rise.

In a statement, UNAMID said the Sudanese military and police who raided the camp to execute a search warrant for weapons and drugs were heavily armed, while the camp residents seemed to carry only sticks, knives and spears.

Sudanese forces told the mission they were met by a human shield of women and children, from behind which gunfire erupted, when they entered – thus prompting them to return fire.

“While the alleged presence of weapons in the Kalma camp is a real security concern for the government of Sudan authorities, the actions taken to address it are a clear violation of the Darfur Peace Agreement,” UNAMID stated.

REPORT: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=27833&Cr=darfur&Cr1=unamid>

MUGABE 'TO FORM GOVERNMENT ALONE'

Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe says he will form a new government despite stalled power-sharing negotiations with the opposition, state media reports, according to the BBC (27/8/08). "The MDC (Movement for Democratic Change) does not want to come in apparently," he is quoted as saying.

The BBC's Karen Allen says such a move would be the death-knell for the South African-brokered talks to end the post-election crisis. Meanwhile, three MDC MPs were arrested on Tuesday when parliament was opened. Two other opposition MPs had been arrested the day before, although one was later released.

REPORT: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7583748.stm>

SOUTH EAST ASIA

MINDANAO FIGHTING ESCALATES DESPITE UN PLEA

UN agencies have appealed for peace in the southern Philippines, where fighting between government forces and Muslim separatist rebels has escalated over the past two weeks and the number displaced is now over 270,000, the ERIN News reported (25/8/08).

In a 22 August statement, the UN Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) said civilian lives were at risk as a result of fighting between the army and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), which has been attacking, and trying to take control of, civilian communities in the southern island of Mindanao.

"It is with great concern that we witness the deteriorating humanitarian situation in various parts of Mindanao as a result of the recent upsurge in conflict," the IASC stated. "Many civilians have lost their lives and many more are at risk."

"The agencies of the IASC, who come together to coordinate relief efforts on behalf of the international community in times of crisis, appeal for calm and protection of all civilians," it said.

The IASC involves UN agencies, including the World Food Program (WFP), the UN Development Program, the Food and Agriculture Organisation, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), and some non-governmental organisations

REPORT: <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=79969>

ASIA

UN URGES RESTRAINT IN INDIAN-ADMINISTERED KASHMIR

The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has voiced its concern about recent violent protests in Indian-administered Kashmir reportedly leading to civilian casualties and restrictions to the right to freedom of assembly and expression (27/8/08).

“OHCHR calls on the Indian authorities and in particular security forces to respect the right to freedom of assembly and expression, and comply with international human rights principles in controlling the demonstrators,” said a statement issued in Geneva.

“The use of force should be proportionate to the threat posed and firearms must only be used in dispersing a violent assembly to protect individuals against an imminent threat of death or serious injury,” it stated.

The Acting High Commissioner for Human Rights has called for thorough and independent investigations into all killings so far. **REPORT:**

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=27835&Cr=human%20rights&Cr1=casualties>

DEMONSTRATORS SHOT DEAD IN KASHMIR

Police in Indian administered Kashmir opened fire on pro-independence demonstrators, killing at least four people, Radio Australia reported (26/8/08). About 100 others were hurt. Police said the protesters were shot as troops struggled to disperse anti-India marchers who rallied across the dispute-hit region in defiance of a strict curfew.

The recent troubles around Srinagar have been triggered by a state government plan announced in June to donate land to a Hindu shrine trust in the Kashmir valley. The decision was reversed after massive Muslim protests.

REPORT: <http://www.radioaustralia.net.au/news/stories/200808/s2346214.htm?tab=latest>

NORTH KOREA HALTS NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT PROCESS

North Korean officials announced on Tuesday the country had stopped dismantling its nuclear program as part of a rapprochement effort with the West and threatened to restore previous facilities' capabilities. Officials blamed the move on US failure to live up to its part of the disarmament process and remove North Korea from a terrorism blacklist. [The New York Times](#) (26/8/08).

UN TEAM CONFIRMS 90 CIVILIANS KILLED

An investigation by the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) has found that some 90 civilians, including 60 children, were among those killed during military operations in the strife-torn nation's western Herat province last week, UN News reported (26/8/08).

A team of human rights officers from UNAMA went to Herat's Shindand district to investigate reports that large numbers of civilian casualties were sustained during operations conducted by foreign and Afghan military personnel around midnight on August 21. They found “convincing evidence, based on the testimony of eyewitnesses, and others,” that some 90 civilians were killed – including 60 children, 15 women and 15 men – with another 15 wounded.

“This is a matter of grave concern to the UN. I have repeatedly made clear that the safety and welfare of civilians must be considered above all else during the planning and conduct of all military operations,” Kai Eide, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, said in a **statement** in Kabul.

Mr Eide called on the international and Afghan military forces to “thoroughly review” the conduct of the operation to ensure that it does not happen again.

REPORT: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=27816&Cr=Afghan&Cr1=>

JAPANESE AID WORKER KILLED

A Japanese aid worker who was kidnapped in Afghanistan has been killed, Afghan officials say, the BBC reported (27/8/08).

Police in the eastern province of Nangahar say they have recovered the body of Kazuya Ito, 31. Mr Ito, an engineer, was kidnapped on Tuesday while inspecting an irrigation project, according to local officials.

The Afghan army and police launched a rescue mission but say they were only able to free two Afghan colleagues working with the Japanese man.

REPORT: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7584232.stm

PAKISTAN'S ZARDARI SAYS TALIBAN WINNING WAR

The Pakistani Taliban have "the upper hand" and should be put on the country's list of banned organisations, Asif Ali Zardari, who has been nominated by his party to be the country's next president, said, the ABC reported (25/8/08).

In an interview with the BBC, Mr Zardari said the world and Pakistan were losing the 'war on terror'.

"It is an insurgency", the widower of assassinated former prime minister Benazir Bhutto was quoted as saying. "It is our country and we will defend it. The world is losing the war. I think at the moment they (the Taliban) definitely have the upper hand.

"The issue, which is not just a bad-case scenario as far as Pakistan is concerned or as Afghanistan is concerned but it is going to be spreading further. The whole world is going to be affected by it."

REPORT: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/08/25/2345463.htm?section=world>

PAKISTAN'S GOVERNING COALITION COLLAPSES AFTER POLITICAL REVERSAL

Former Prime Minister and leader of the Pakistan Muslim League-N party Nawaz Sharif made good on threats to leave the ruling coalition government after Asif Ali Zardari, former ally and widower of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, announced his plans to run for president - despite assurances he would not.

Mr Zardari also reneged on his promise to reinstate judges deposed during Pervez Musharraf's administration - judges who, if reinstated, might choose to prosecute Mr Zardari and members of his People's Pakistan Party. The Pakistan Muslim League-N party put forth former Supreme Court Chief Justice Saeed-uz-Zaman Siddiqui as a candidate for president. [The Washington Post](#) (26/8/08).

US OFFICIALS QUERY ONE-TO-ONE CONTACT

[Zalmay Khalilzad](#), the US ambassador to the [United Nations](#), is facing angry questions from other senior Bush administration officials over what they describe as unauthorised contacts with [Asif Ali Zardari](#), a contender to succeed [Pervez Musharraf](#) as president of [Pakistan](#), the New York Times reported (25/8/08).

Mr Khalilzad had spoken by telephone with Mr Zardari, the leader of the Pakistan Peoples Party, several times a week for the past month until he was confronted about the unauthorised contacts, a senior US official said. Other officials said Mr Khalilzad had planned to meet with Mr Zardari privately next Tuesday while on vacation in Dubai, in a session that was cancelled only after Richard A. Boucher, the assistant secretary of state for South Asia, learned from Mr Zardari himself the ambassador was providing "advice and help." REPORT: http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/26/washington/26diplo.html?_r=3&ref=world&oref=slogin&oref=slogin&oref=slogin

IRAQ SEEKING 2011 TROOP PULLOUT

The Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri Maliki has spoken in detail about a deal to bring an end to the foreign combat troop presence in the country, the BBC reported (25/8/08).

He said the agreement would lead to the withdrawal of the troops by 2011, but he added that no specific timetable had been agreed with the US. A US state department spokesman said there was no final deal and only a draft text had been agreed.

Any agreement will have to be approved by the Iraqi parliament and presidency. The BBC's Crispin Thorold in Baghdad said Mr Maliki's comments might say more about his political position than about the deal between the US and Iraq.

REPORT: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7580968.stm

UN PEACEKEEPERS BRING OTHER CULTURES TO LEBANON

Since 1978, peacekeeping troops have been stationed in Lebanon, where their presence has had a visible effect on life in that country. Troops from various nations contribute to the culture: Indian troops bring yoga instruction, French troops teach poetry, and Chinese troops introduced tai-chi. [Los Angeles Times](#) (26/8/08).

E. HEALTH & MEANS

SOCIAL INJUSTICE KILLS PEOPLE 'ON GRAND SCALE'

A child born in a Glasgow, Scotland suburb can expect a life 28 years shorter than another living only 13 kilometres away. A girl in Lesotho is likely to live 42 years less than another in Japan. In Sweden, the risk of a woman dying during pregnancy and childbirth is one in 17,400; in Afghanistan, the odds are one in 8. Biology does not explain any of this. Instead, the differences between -- and within -- countries result from the social environment where people are born, live, grow, work and age.

These "social determinants of health" have been the focus of a three-year investigation by an eminent group of policy makers, academics, former heads of state and former ministers of health. Together, they comprise the World Health Organisation's Commission on the Social Determinants of Health. The commission has presented its findings to the WHO Director-General Dr Margaret Chan.

"(The) toxic combination of bad policies, economics, and politics is, in large measure, responsible for the fact that a majority of people in the world do not enjoy the good health that is biologically possible," the commissioners write in *Closing the Gap in a Generation: Health Equity through Action on the Social Determinants of Health*. "Social injustice is killing people on a grand scale."

"Health inequity really is a matter of life and death," Dr Chan said welcoming the report. "But health systems will not *naturally* gravitate towards equity. Unprecedented leadership is needed that compels all actors, including those beyond the health sector, to examine their impact on health. Primary health care, which integrates health in all of government's policies, is the best framework for doing so"

Sir Michael Marmot, Commission Chairman said: "Central to the commission's recommendations is creating the conditions for people to be empowered, to have freedom to lead flourishing lives. Nowhere is lack of empowerment more obvious than in the plight of women in many parts of the world. Health suffers as a result. Following our recommendations would dramatically improve the health and life chances of billions of people."

Health inequities - unfair, unjust and *avoidable* causes of ill health - have long been measured between countries but the commission documents "health gradients" within countries as well.

For example:

- Life expectancy for Indigenous Australian males is shorter by 17 years than all other Australian males.
- Maternal mortality is 3-4 times higher among the poor compared to the rich in Indonesia. The difference in adult mortality between least and most deprived neighbourhoods in the UK is more than 2.5 times.
- Child mortality in the slums of Nairobi is 2.5 times higher than in other parts of the city. A baby born to a Bolivian mother with no education has 10% chance of dying, while one born to a woman with at least secondary education has a 0.4% chance.
- In the United States, 886,202 deaths would have been averted between 1991 and 2000 if mortality rates between white and African Americans were equalised. (This contrasts to 176,633 lives saved in the US by medical advances in the same period.)
- In Uganda the death rate of children under 5 years in the richest fifth of households is 106 per 1000 live births, but in the poorest fifth of households in Uganda it is even worse - 192 deaths per 1000 live births - that is nearly a fifth of all babies born alive to the poorest households destined to die before they reach their fifth birthday. Set this against an average death rate for under fives in high income countries of 7 deaths per 1000.

The commission found evidence that demonstrates in general the poor are worse off than those less deprived, but they also found that the less deprived are in turn worse than those with average incomes, and so on. This slope linking income and health is the *social gradient*, and is seen everywhere - not just in developing countries, but all countries, including the richest. The slope may be more or less steep in different countries, but the phenomenon is universal.

Economic growth is raising incomes in many countries but increasing national wealth alone does not necessarily increase national health. Without equitable distribution of benefits, national growth can even exacerbate inequities.

NEW GLOBAL AGENDA FOR HEALTH EQUITY

The Commission on Social Determinants of Health, delivering a report on the social determinants of health and health equity on Thursday, recommended three principles of action:

- 1 Improve the conditions of daily life – the circumstances in which people are born, grow, live, work and age;
- 2 Tackle the inequitable distribution of power, money, and resources – the structural drivers of those conditions of daily life – globally, nationally, and locally;
- 3 Measure the problem, evaluate action, expand the knowledge base, develop a workforce that is trained in the social determinants of health, and raise public awareness about the social determinants of health.

The report comments that the commission's work embodies a new approach to development:

“Health and health equity may not be the aim of all social policies but they will be a fundamental result. Take the central policy importance given to economic growth: Economic growth is without question important, particularly for poor countries, as it gives the opportunity to provide resources to invest in improvement of the lives of their population. But growth by itself, without appropriate social policies to ensure reasonable fairness in the way its benefits are distributed, brings little benefit to health equity.”

The commission's overarching recommendations are to:

Improve the well-being of girls and women and the circumstances in which their children are born, put major emphasis on early child development and education for girls and boys,

improve living and working conditions and create social protection policy supportive of all, and create conditions for a flourishing older life. Policies to achieve these goals will involve civil society, governments, and global institutions.

In order to address health inequities, and inequitable conditions of daily living, it is necessary to address inequities – such as those between men and women – in the way society is organised. This requires a strong public sector that is committed, capable, and adequately financed. To achieve that requires more than strengthened government – it requires strengthened governance: legitimacy, space, and support for civil society, for an accountable private sector, and for people across society to agree public interests and reinvest in the value of collective action. In a globalised world, the need for governance dedicated to equity applies equally from the community level to global institutions.

“Acknowledging that there is a problem, and ensuring that health inequity is measured – within countries and globally – is a vital platform for action. National governments and international organisations, supported by WHO, should set up national and global health equity surveillance systems for routine monitoring of health inequity and the social determinants of health and should evaluate the health equity impact of policy and action.

“Creating the organisational space and capacity to act effectively on health inequity requires investment in training of policy-makers and health practitioners and public understanding of social determinants of health. It also requires a stronger focus on social determinants in public health research.”

The report advises on the need to bring the two agendas of health equity and climate change together: “Our core concerns with health equity must be part of the global community balancing the needs of social and economic development of the whole global population, health equity, and the urgency of dealing with climate change.”

REPORT: http://www.who.int/social_determinants/final_report/csdh_finalreport_2008.pdf

NEPAL: FAMILIES OF MISSING PERSONS HAVE A RIGHT TO KNOW

On the International Day of the Disappeared (August 30 2008), the International Committee of the Red Cross is appealing to the government of Nepal to clarify the fate of those who went missing during the country's 10-year internal conflict. The ICRC and the Nepal Red Cross Society are publishing the names of more than 1200 people reported as missing by their relatives between 1996 and 2006.

"Publishing the names of these 1227 people has two main aims," says Mary Werntz, head of the ICRC delegation in Kathmandu. "First, it seeks public recognition for the families of the missing and acknowledgement of their suffering and needs. Secondly, the publication constitutes an appeal to the government of Nepal to clarify the fate of those who went missing during the conflict and to meet the immediate needs of their families."

It is imperative," said Ms Werntz, "that the authorities establish mechanisms to resolve the legal problems faced by the families of the missing persons and to support them in overcoming their loss. One frequent problem is that women cannot inherit the property of the person who has disappeared, as the missing person has not been declared dead."

The ICRC has received tracing requests from thousands of families in many conflict-affected countries, including Bosnia-Herzegovina, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Georgia, Iraq, Liberia, Sri Lanka and the Russian Federation. [DETAILS:](#)

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), SYDNEY SUPPORT OFFICE TO THE REGIONAL DELEGATION FOR THE PACIFIC on 61 2 9388 9039; sydney.syd@icrc.org ; Bijan Frederic Farnoudi, ICRC Kathmandu, +977 1 44 82 285, +977 1 44 92 679, +977 985 103 46 38; <http://www.icrc.org>

WORLD POVERTY 'MORE WIDESPREAD'

The World Bank has warned that world poverty is much greater than previously thought, the BBC reported (27/8/08).

It has revised its previous estimate and now says that 1.4 billion people live in poverty, based on a new poverty line of \$1.25 per day. This is substantially more than its earlier estimate of 985 million people living in poverty in 2004.

The bank has also revised upwards the number it said were poor in 1981, from 1.5 billion to 1.9 billion. The new estimates suggest that poverty is both more persistent, and has fallen less sharply, than previously thought. However, given the increase in world population, the poverty rate has still fallen from 50 per cent to 25 per cent over the past 25 years.

"This is pretty grim analysis coming from the World Bank," said Elizabeth Stuart, senior policy advisor at Oxfam. "The urgency to act has never been greater, especially in sub-Saharan Africa where half the population of the continent lives in extreme poverty, a figure that hasn't changed for over 25 years." [REPORT: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/7583719.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/7583719.stm)

PAKISTAN: CONFLICT LEAVES TENS OF THOUSANDS IN DIRE NEED OF AID

Armed conflict has intensified recently in Bajaur Agency on Pakistan's border with Afghanistan, leaving more than 200,000 displaced people in urgent need of humanitarian assistance. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has launched a relief operation to help 64,000 of them, on both sides of the border.

"In recent days, large numbers of civilians – mainly women and children – were forced to flee their homes in Bajaur Agency for relatively safer areas in the North West Frontier Province and other tribal agencies," said Pascal Cuttat, the ICRC's head of delegation in Pakistan.

"Despite the efforts of local authorities and NGOs, these displaced people are in urgent need of basic necessities such as food, clean water and shelter. Lack of medical care is a problem for sick people, particularly children."

Together with the Pakistan Red Crescent Society, the ICRC has delivered medical supplies to the hospitals receiving the bulk of the injured, in and around the conflict-affected areas. Blankets, jerrycans, clothing, tarpaulins, soap, washbasins and buckets are being distributed to approximately 50,000 displaced persons. Food is also on its way for the displaced population. Joint ICRC and Pakistan Red Crescent teams are on the ground to assess the needs.

"Some people have found refuge with host families who themselves are poor and are now depleting their resources by feeding more people. For these families, obtaining enough food is the main problem. Some larger families have also had to deal with overcrowding in their homes after taking in displaced people. We are therefore helping both the displaced in host communities and those sheltering in public buildings" said Mr Cuttat.

[DETAILS:](#) Marco Succi, ICRC Islamabad, on +92 300 850 81 38; Carla Haddad, ICRC Geneva, on +41 22 730 2405 or +41 79 217 3226.

PHILIPPINES: RED CROSS ESCORTS CIVILIANS OUT OF COMBAT ZONE

As clashes continue between the armed forces and fighters of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in the southern Philippines, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), supported by the Philippine National Red Cross, has escorted around 900 trapped civilians out of a combat zone to a safer area on Mindanao.

The civilians had been caught in the middle of fighting near Datu Piang, in Maguindanao province. ICRC delegates accompanied them to a nearby evacuation centre.

"Thanks to our longstanding presence in the Philippines and the trust gained among all those involved in the conflict, both the armed forces and the MILF agreed quickly to let us evacuate the villagers", said Felipe Donoso, head of the ICRC delegation in the Philippines.

Fighting has occurred in several municipalities in the provinces of Maguindanao and Shariff Kabunsuan. The government estimates that some 60,000 people have been forced to flee by the hostilities. More military operations are also continuing in Cotabato province.

During the past week, the ICRC and the Philippine Red Cross have been providing food for around 40,000 displaced people in Cotabato and Lanao del Norte provinces and clean drinking water for over 12,500 victims. Emergency sanitation facilities are being set up at the

sites where displaced people have gathered. Emergency household items and hygiene kits have so far been distributed to about 11,000 people.

DETAILS: Marçal Izard, ICRC Geneva, on +41 22 730 2458; +41 79 217 32 24; www.icrc.org Sydney Support Office to the Regional Delegation for the Pacific on 61 2 9388 9039/61 2 418 485 120; <http://www.icrc.org>

ANTI-RETROVIRAL DRUGS LOWER MALAWI AIDS DEATH RATE

Mortality rates are plunging in Malawi, one of the African countries most affected by the AIDS epidemic, where anti-retroviral drugs introduced in 2004 have had a strong impact. Nearly 70 per cent of those taking the drugs are still alive. The WHO figures that 35 per cent of those infected in Malawi - at least 910,000 - are now taking anti-retroviral drugs. [BBC](#) (26/8/08).

MEXICAN PRISONERS RECEIVE HIV/AIDS AWARENESS PROGRAMS

Health advocates are working in five Mexican prisons to raise awareness and help prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS. Few prisoners know details about the disease or how it is contracted, leaving them particularly vulnerable to infection. [The New York Times](#) (26/8/08).

F. MEDIA MATTERS

HOSTAGES FACE 'BEING TRADED AMONG MILITIAS'

An Australian freelance journalist kidnapped in Somalia could be traded between militia groups who have made kidnapping foreigners a lucrative business, the Sydney Morning Herald reported (28/8/08).

The militias, who are equipped with the latest communications devices, were unlikely to harm Queenslander Nigel Brennan because he would be a valuable commodity, an international security officer in the country. He did not want to be named.

Nigel Brennan, 37, was travelling with Canadian photojournalist Amanda Lindhout, 27, and Somali translator Abdifatah Mohammed Elmi when they were kidnapped at gunpoint about 25km from the Somali capital, Mogadishu. They were on their way to visit a refugee camp.

A Department of Foreign Affairs spokeswoman said earlier the government was "urgently investigating" the reports. "The Australian high commissioner has made contact with Somali authorities to seek further information about the incident and to confirm the welfare of Mr Brennan," she said.

"They've seen these two internationals and thought ... 'This is the best payday ever, bang, get out of the car,'" the security expert said, adding the two Westerners would have been targets from the moment they boarded the plane to Somalia on August 20. Last week, an attempted kidnapping of a South Korean businessman occurred although he was travelling with 10 armed guards. **REPORT:** <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/08/27/1219516562516.html>

Islamist insurgents denied kidnapping Nigel Brennan and Amanda Lindhout, the ABC reported (26/8/08). Ms Lindhout freelances for French TV and Canada's Global National News. **REPORT:** <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/08/26/2346207.htm>

UNESCO CHIEF CONDEMNS MURDER OF NIGERIAN JOURNALIST

The head of UNESCO whose job is to defend press freedom deplored the assassination of a senior Nigerian newspaper journalist, who was shot dead last week (25/8/08).

Koïchiro Matsuura, the Director-General of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (**UNESCO**), said Paul Abayomi Ogundeji was the second member of the editorial board of *Thisday*, a Lagos English-language paper, to be murdered in two years.

"His killing is a blow to the basic human right of freedom of expression in Nigeria," Mr Matsuura said, advocating the authorities should spare no effort to investigate and bring the culprits to trial.

UNESCO said there were conflicting reports about the exact circumstances of the killing of Abayomi Ogundeji, who was shot in Abuja on August 17. He had worked for *Thisday* for three months and previously worked for other Nigerian publications. UNESCO is the only UN agency with a mandate to defend freedom of expression and press freedom.

550 JOBS TO GO IN FAIRFAX 'BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT'

Fairfax Media says it will cut about 550 jobs, or five per cent of its workforce, as part of a "business improvement program", the ABC reported (26/8/08).

The media group says the cost cutting will take place later this year across its Australian and New Zealand printing and publishing businesses and save the company \$50 million.

Chief executive David Kirk says it was the third wave of improvement initiatives undertaken over the last three years. "Media companies fit for the modern media world need to be lean and agile," he said. "This far-reaching program will position us well for the next stage of our growth and development."

Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance's Christopher Warren said about a third of the jobs will be editorial positions. **REPORT:** <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/08/26/2346579.htm>

QUALITY JOURNALISM 'SO IMPORTANT TO DEMOCRACY'

A former editor of the Sydney Morning Herald and now an on-line publisher, Eric Beecher, said on the ABC (28/8/08) that it was implicit in the Fairfax announcement that money and a responsibility to shareholders "goes ahead of journalists".

Politicians and policymakers should realise (that in future) they would have to look elsewhere for quality, resourced journalism which was so important to the structure of democracy. He said although government funding enraged some people, the reality had to be confronted that Fairfax had been the biggest producer of quality journalism, employing hundreds of journalists.

STANDARDS COULD BE 'SERIOUSLY UNDERMINED'

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) said it was deeply concerned that quality journalism in Australia was being seriously undermined as corporate cutbacks bite hard into a major national newspaper group known for its influential mastheads.

Fairfax Media, which publishes *The Sydney Morning Herald*, Melbourne's *The Age*, *The Australian Financial Review* and regional weeklies, announced on August 25 that it would cut 550 jobs - about 8 to 10 per cent of the workforce - including more than 120 journalists.

On August 27, the editor of *The Age*, Andrew Jaspan, was sacked. The cuts are the third round of major job-shedding at Fairfax in four years. News reports also said Fairfax planned to outsource much of its editorial production to an external agency, further raising concerns about quality control at Fairfax papers.

"Fairfax seems prepared to abandon its hard-earned good reputation for quality newspapers," said Christopher Warren, President of the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance and a member of IFJ executive committee. "The job cuts inevitably will lead to a loss of quality at Fairfax newspapers when quality has never been so important."

"All indications are that cost-cutting has been a disaster for mainstream news media companies around the world, forcing them into a vicious downward spiral," Mr Warren said. "Managed well, the new technology being used in newsrooms could herald a golden age of journalism as new tools being developed almost every day allow journalists to tell their stories in new and exciting ways. But it will take vision and guts on the part of news executives."

The IFJ has joined the alliance in calling on Fairfax and other media owners to recognise the need to continue to invest in quality journalism that serves the public interest. Without this investment, highly regarded media houses will lose credibility, and journalism and the public at large will suffer for it, they said.

[IFJ PETITION](http://www.fairgofairfax.org.au/petition/) to show support for Fairfax journalists and quality media in Australia:
<http://www.fairgofairfax.org.au/petition/>

CHINA: A journalist, who did not wish to be named, reported police in Guangxi stopped a Hong Kong television crew from filming the scene of a chemical factory explosion, which claimed 16 lives and led to the evacuation of thousands of people.

“They said that we have to apply to the propaganda department of Guangxi in order to enter the restricted area, despite showing our press cards issued by the Beijing Olympic Organising Committee,” the journalist told the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) (27/8/08). The Reporting Regulations for journalists from the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and other countries remain in force until October 17, and notionally allow journalists to report freely anywhere in China. [DETAILS:](#) IFJ Asia -Pacific on +612 9333 0919.

PAKISTAN: A journalist in Pakistan was taken from his car at gunpoint, blindfolded and interrogated, possibly because of a tape showing an interview with a Baloch nationalist leader, the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) reported (27/8/08).

Hasan Abdullah, an anchor and reporter for *Dawn News*, told the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ) that he was detained in Islamabad on August 26 after four occupants of a car - that crashed into his car - pointed a gun at him and ordered him by name into their vehicle. Mr Abdullah said he was blindfolded, driven away and interrogated and held for six hours. He was returned to his vehicle about 5pm.

The four men, whom he believes to be members of Pakistan's intelligence agencies, kept his mobile phone, which contains a tape containing an interview with Balach Marri, a leader of the Balochistan-based Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) who was killed in Afghanistan in late 2007.

In Turbat, Balochistan, on August 25 three journalists from private television channels were injured reporting a rally on the second anniversary of the death of another Baloch nationalist, Nawab Akbar Bugti. Paramilitary troops reportedly opened fire to disperse a crowd of several thousand, killing one man and injuring about 15 others, including Irshad Akhat, of Aaj TV. A prime ministerial adviser, A. Rehman Malik, has ordered an inquiry into the incident demanding a report within 48 hours.

In Quetta, Balochistan, this week, ARY OneWorld's acting bureau chief, Ghani Khakar, was allegedly beaten by members of the Frontier Constabulary (FC); in another incident, FC personnel reportedly injured Dawn TV cameraman Shakir Imrani and online correspondent Irshad Ahmed Mastoi, the PFUJ said. [DETAILS:](#) IFJ Asia -Pacific on +612 9333 0919.

INDIA: Newspapers in Srinagar, the capital of Jammu and Kashmir, failed to print for two consecutive days because of severe restrictions on the movement of journalists and other media employees. Security agencies have compelled local cable news channels to suspend broadcasts or to air only entertainment programs (25/8/08).

Fifteen journalists and media workers were reported injured on August 24 in targeted attacks by personnel of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), a paramilitary force controlled by the Indian Union Government, deployed in Srinagar since 2005.

The injured included journalists from India's two main news agencies, the Press Trust of India and the United News of India, who had been trying to go to their workplaces. International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) inquiries with journalists in Srinagar reveal that security forces are persistently disregarding media accreditation cards and curfew passes, in some instances destroying them. Three English language newspapers from Srinagar – *Greater Kashmir*, *Etalaat* and *Rising Kashmir* – posted notices on their websites regretting their failure to publish for two days because staff were unable to travel to their workplaces. The Urdu language press also has become paralysed. [DETAILS:](#) IFJ Asia -Pacific on +612 9333 0919

THAILAND: One journalist was killed and another injured in a bomb blast in the Sungai Kolok district of Narathiwat province in southern Thailand on August 21, the IFJ reported

(25/8/08). Chalee Boonsawat, a reporter for *Thai Rath* newspaper, was killed in the attack outside a restaurant in Sungai Kolok, near Thailand's border with Malaysia. Phadung Wannalak, a reporter with ModernNINE TV, was among the 30 people reported injured.

The Thai Journalists' Association (TJA), the Confederation of Thai Journalists and the Thai Broadcast Journalists' Association said in an open letter on August 22 that Chalee Boonsawat's death was a "great loss to the Thai media community". It was the first time a reporter had been killed in the conflict in the three southern-most provinces, they said. Long-standing unrest and violence plagues Thailand's southern provinces as conflict between a Muslim separatist movement and local authorities continues without resolve. [DETAILS](#): IFJ Asia -Pacific on +612 9333 0919.

NEPAL: Threats continue to be made against media personnel in Dhanusa district, in Nepal's troubled Terai region. The Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ) said that Ganesh Kharel, editor and publisher of *Janasaugat Weekly*, of Janakpur, reported receiving threats from someone claiming to be from the Terai National Liberation Army (TNLA).

Mr Kharel said he feared for his safety after a caller, using the name Baba Khan, made several calls, including in the middle of the night, warning of "physical action" if he published in Nepali. On August 14, Sheetal Sah, the coordinator of the FNJ's central region chapter, received a threatening phone call in Janakpur from someone claiming to be from the TNLA. Sah was also warned he would be physically attacked.

The threats follow a statement on August 4 by Akash Tyagi, the TNLA's eastern region leader, warning journalists in Janakpur that the TNLA would close all newspapers and radio stations using the Nepali language if they did not stop publishing reports in Nepali. [DETAILS](#): IFJ Asia -Pacific on +612 9333 0919.

G. OTHER NEWS: UNAA NATIONAL CONFERENCE BRISBANE

OBAMA VOTED DEMOCRATIC NOMINEE

Senator [Barack Obama](#), the Hawaiian-born son of a father from Kenya and a mother from Kansas, officially became the presidential nominee of the [Democratic Party](#) on Wednesday, capping a meteoric rise from a little-known state senator to the first African-American to win a major-party nomination, the New York Times reported (27/8/08).

Although there was some suspense over how the nomination process would play out, in the end, Senator [Hillary Rodham Clinton](#) released her delegates before the roll call to vote for Mr Obama and announced that she was voting for Mr Obama and his running mate, Senator [Joseph R. Biden Jr.](#) of Delaware. [REPORT](#): http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/28/us/politics/28DEMSDAY.html?_r=1&hp&oref=slogin

ANWAR IBRAHIM WINS LANDSLIDE VOTE

Malaysian opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim has won a landslide victory in a by-election in Penang, the BBC reported (26/8/08).

The result returns Mr Anwar to parliament after a decade's absence, and comes despite sodomy charges he says are politically motivated. The 61-year-old has been trying to make his political comeback since a ban on seeking public office expired in April.

Mr Anwar told the BBC the overwhelming by-election victory was a "key point of departure" for his coalition in its campaign to bring down the government. Mr Anwar defeated Arif Shah Omar of the ruling Barisan Nasional (National Front) coalition.

While the result will not change the balance of power, it will strengthen Mr Anwar's hand in his campaign to become the next prime minister, the BBC correspondent said. [REPORT](#): <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7581446.stm>

EAST TIMOR NOT IN AUSTRALIAN GUEST WORKER SCHEME

Australia will not be including East Timorese in its initial guest workers program despite an approach by the country's Prime Minister Xanana Gusmao, Radio Australia reported (26/8/08).

The decision follows a meeting on Monday in Canberra between the East Timorese leader and the Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd. Four countries, Tonga, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu will be part of the trial program.

The program will grant seven month visas allowing employment in Australia's horticultural industry. A number of other countries have also expressed interest including East Timor.

Australia has agreed to fund a \$US5 million defence training complex in East Timor; doubling of university scholarships for East Timorese in Australia; and other training initiatives.

REPORT: <http://www.radioaustralia.net.au/news/stories/200808/s2345796.htm?tab=latest>

MIGRANTS DIE OF HUNGER AND THIRST

At least 25 African migrants died from hunger, thirst and exposure after trying to reach Spain by boat. A cargo ship rescued 25 survivors off the coast of southern Spain's Almeria province. Five women and five children were reported among the survivors.

A boat patrolling waters between Malaga and Melilla rescued the migrants from a half-submerged boat late on Monday. Every year, tens of thousands of Africans try to enter Spain by boat to find work in Europe. REPORT: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7582892.stm>

INQUIRY INTO BUILDING INDIGENOUS ENTERPRISE

The House of Representatives Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs Committee returned to Canberra on August 28 for a public hearing regarding its inquiry into Indigenous enterprise development - in Committee Room 2R2 Parliament House.

The committee was to hear advice from Registrar of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporations Anthony Bevan. The registrar is an independent statutory office holder who administers the *Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006* (CATSI Act). This Act provides greater flexibility to Indigenous community organisations when establishing governance structures for community-owned corporations and for corporate partnerships with industry.

Committee Chairman Richard Marles said beforehand that: "There is a strong link between economic development and self determination in Indigenous communities. The advice and assistance of the registrar, administered through the Office of the Registrar for Indigenous Corporations, is important not only to ensure the foundations for positive development are in place but also for delivering certainty to all parties involved."

The committee were also to hear from experts affiliated with the Australian National University's Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR). Established in 1990 the CAEPR is a multidisciplinary centre with a mission to achieve better outcomes for Indigenous Australians. Its evidence based and innovative research aims to inform public debate and policy formation.

CAEPR foundation director Professor Jon Altman and Ms Kirrily Jordan were to advise on the competitive advantage that land owning Indigenous communities have to build traditional cultural practices, their customary economy, into viable industries in natural resource management. The hearings were scheduled to conclude with evidence from Professor Dennis Foley of the University of Newcastle and the CAEPR's Dr Boyd Hunter who focus on Indigenous business strengths and measures to support them in urban and regional areas, where most successful Indigenous owned businesses operate.

Mr Marles said: "Land-owning Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have rich competitive advantages to build on Indigenous intellectual property beyond the arts and tourism in land and resource management. At the same time, urban Indigenous business

owners present significant enterprise strengths, with employers in the construction and services sectors using culture to mentor young Indigenous trainees to business readiness.”
DETAILS: <http://www.aph.gov.au/atsia>; BACKGROUND: Secretariat on 02 6277 4559; atsia.reps@aph.gov.au;

H. ARTICLES IN FOCUS

GEORGIA IS THE GRAVEYARD OF AMERICA'S UNIPOLAR WORLD

If there were any doubt that the rules of the international game have changed for good, the events of the past few days should have dispelled it, writes Seumas Milne in the London Guardian (28/8/08). On Monday, President Bush demanded that Russia's leaders reject their parliament's appeal to recognise the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Within 24 hours, Bush had his response: President Medvedev announced Russia's recognition of the two contested Georgian enclaves ... The Russian message was unmistakable: the outcome of the war triggered by Georgia's attack on South Ossetia on August 7 is non-negotiable - and nothing the titans of the US empire do or say is going to reverse it ... But what is clear is that America's unipolar moment has passed - and the new world order heralded by Bush's father in the dying days of the Soviet Union in 1991 is no more. The days when one power was able to stride the globe like a colossus, enforcing its will in every continent, challenged only by popular movements for national independence and isolated "rogue states", are now over.

ARTICLE: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2008/aug/28/russia.usforeignpolicy>

PIDDLING ABOUT THE EDGES

So just how should Australian citizens be told the government believes the water shortage is so severe they need to drink recycled sewage? Certainly not with a newspaper report that says the government has a "secret plan to make us all drink wee", according to the Commonwealth Public Service Commissioner, Lynelle Briggs. (Sydney Morning Herald, 23/8/08). Matthew Moore writes that in a speech in Canberra, she raised the delicate, hypothetical issue of drinking recycled effluent to explain why freedom of information laws don't work ... She recognised how the rest of the world was becoming more open and said it was about time ministers accepted that advice they receive "should properly be made public as a true test of government accountability processes". There was no doubt public trust in governments would increase if they released more information, "and released willingly, not begrudgingly". And she provided a series of sensible suggestions about the options she would like the government to explore as it reforms the FOI law. Defending her cautious staff, she said a principal reason they block release of information is because of irresponsible behaviour by the media, the opposition and the lobbyists once they get hold of it. Which brought her to sewage ...

ARTICLE: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/08/22/1219262526792.html>

RISE OF THE SEA TURTLES

In an extract from *Rise of The Sea Turtles* in Newsweek (18-25/8/08), Melinda Lui and Duncan Hewitt write that measuring attitudes among sea turtles (*hai gui*—'sea turtle'—referring to someone who has lived overseas) can be difficult, especially with all of Chinese society changing around them. Still, some empirical data is emerging. Prof. David Zweig, head of the Center on China's Transnational Relations at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, is directing a research project based on responses from thousands of returnees from campuses in Canada, Japan and Europe. The data shows they're "no less jingoistic than those who have never gone abroad," Zweig says. "As in, 'My country, right or wrong.'" What's more, he adds: "A significant proportion of them believe that using force to promote China's national interests is acceptable." Bottom line? "It means the post-1989 policy to imbue youth with nationalism through 'patriotic education' has succeeded," Zweig says.

ARTICLE: <http://www.newsweek.com/id/151730>

FORCED TO LIVE IN HUNGER

Sugar, flour, milk powder and bread account for half the calories consumed by people in remote Aboriginal communities, a study reveals (Sydney Morning Herald, 25/8/08). Fruit accounts for only one per cent of energy consumption, and vegetables - including potatoes and hot chips - just five per cent in one community in north-east Arnhem Land. It is the first study to investigate the link between poverty and inadequate nutrition among Aborigines in

the NT. While it focused on the one unnamed community of 2000 people, it offers a damning insight into a broader crisis in the nutrition of indigenous Australians.

ARTICLE: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/08/24/1219516262660.html>

TOWN WHERE FAMILIES CAN'T AFFORD TO EAT

With potatoes at \$1.50 each, half a pumpkin at \$14 and sausages more than \$1 each, the tiny Aboriginal settlement of Mulan, at the top of the Tanami Desert, may well be the dearest place in the nation to host a barbecue, reported the Sydney Morning Herald (25/8/08). Its residents are among the country's poorest, but so high are the basic living costs that many simply go hungry for a couple of days each week. A health worker from the Kutjungka region, which covers a number of Aboriginal settlements in the area, told the *Herald* that alcoholism was not the problem in Mulan that it was in some Aboriginal communities. The big concern was that "many people are simply unable to feed their families" because of the cost of food.

ARTICLE: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/08/24/1219516263555.html>

IN NUCLEAR NET'S UNDOING, A WEB OF SHADOWY DEALS

The president of [Switzerland](#) stepped to a podium in Bern last May and read a statement confirming rumours that had swirled through the capital for months, the New York Times reported (24/8/08). The government, he acknowledged, had indeed destroyed a huge trove of computer files and other material documenting the business dealings of a family of Swiss engineers suspected of helping smuggle nuclear technology to [Libya](#) and [Iran](#). The files were of particular interest not only to Swiss prosecutors but to international atomic inspectors working to unwind the activities of [Abdul Qadeer Khan](#), the Pakistani bomb pioneer-turned-nuclear black marketeers ... The Swiss president, Pascal Couchepin, took no questions. But he asserted that the files — which included an array of plans for nuclear arms and technologies, among them a highly sophisticated Pakistani bomb design — had been destroyed so that they would never fall into terrorist hands. Behind that official explanation, though, is a far more intriguing tale of spies, moles and the compromises that governments make in the name of national security.

ARTICLE: <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/25/world/25nuke.html?th&emc=th>

PAST IS STILL PRESENT WITH CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY

Amid the extensive reporting of the conflict in Georgia, it was mentioned that rape had, apparently, once again been used as a weapon of war, writes Michael Gawenda in the Sydney Morning Herald (28/8/08). This is not surprising. Rape has been used as a weapon of war for thousands of years. It is still used this way, despite being declared a war crime and a crime against humanity by the United Nations. Thousands of women were raped during the conflict in the Balkans in the 1990s, during the civil war in the Congo and in Darfur. The consequences of war crimes and crimes against humanity are felt for generations. That's one reason why there should be no statute of limitations on the prosecution of alleged war criminals, no matter their age, or the decades that have passed. Such prosecutions are as much about recognising what was done as about delivering justice.

REPORT: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/08/27/1219516560195.html>

UN FARCE

It has been almost a year since the world was stirred by thousands of Burmese monks and ordinary people taking to the streets to demand freedom - and being bloodily crushed by one of the world's cruellest regimes, the Washington Post says in an editorial (27/8/08).

Governments everywhere proclaimed that such violence and repression could not stand, and they insisted that UN Secretary General [Ban Ki-moon](#) do something. Mr Ban sent his special envoy on a mission with explicit goals: Secure the release of democratic leader [Aung San Suu Kyi](#) and other political prisoners, and help the [National League for Democracy](#) (NLD) to reopen offices throughout the country. The envoy, [Ibrahim Gambari](#), just finished sixth fruitless mission to Burma, and it is clear now that [UN](#) diplomacy has become a cover for inaction, not a pathway to reform ... A fig leaf of international process comforts the regime, those who trade with it -- and those who give flowery speeches about democracy but resist action, such as an arms embargo. It is time for Mr Ban to say that he won't allow the United Nations to be exploited and humiliated in this way.

EDITORIAL: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/08/26/AR2008082603078.html?wpisrc=newsletter&wpisrc=newsletter>

I. ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT

FOOD RIOTS IN EASTERN INDIA AFTER RIVER BREAKS BANKS

Food riots erupted on Wednesday in eastern India, where more than two million people have been forced from their homes and about 250,000 houses destroyed in what officials say are the worst floods in 50 years, Reuter/Yahoo News reported.

One person was killed in Madhepura district when angry villagers fought among themselves over limited supplies of food and medicines at overcrowded relief centres (27/8/08)..

The Kosi river in Bihar, one of India's poorest states, smashed through mud embankments and changed course last week, unleashing huge walls of water that inundated hundreds of villages and towns. The floods have since killed nearly 50 people in Bihar.

Stranded villagers waved at passing helicopters and sent text messages to local authorities from rooftops of flooded buildings.

"Time is running out for me and there is no relief in sight and I have not eaten for days," a message from flood victim Sanjeev Kumar read.

REPORT: <http://au.news.yahoo.com/a/-/archive/4971932/food-riots-indian-floods-destroy-250000-homes>

WFP TO FEED 50,000 FLOOD VICTIMS IN EASTERN TERAI

The UN World Food Program (WFP) in Nepal announced it was mobilising emergency food assistance for 50,000 people displaced by floods. in the eastern Terai districts of Nepal (27/8/08).

The emergency operation is in response to a Nepal Government request after monsoon rains caused an embankment of the Saptakoshi River to collapse, flooding thousands of hectares of land and forcing an estimated 50,000 people to flee their homes.

DETAILS: Richard Ragan, WFP Country Representative, or Heather Sutliff, Communications Officer, on +977-1-554-2607 ext. 2104. SEE also:

<http://www.wfp.org/english/?ModuleID=137&Key=2590>

UN RURAL DEVELOPMENT ARM AIDS NIGERIA'S MICROFINANCE INSTITUTIONS

The UN International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) is providing a \$27 million loan to fortify microfinance institutions in Nigeria to create a sustainable rural financial system in the West African nation, the UN News reported (26/8/08).

The seven-year initiative, co-financed with the Ford Foundation, will create ties between microfinance institutions and formal financial mechanisms in one dozen Nigerian states.

The Rural Finance Institution-building Program (RUFIN) seeks to boost the rural poor's access to low-credit to improve the access of women, young people and other marginalised groups to financial services. To remove obstacles to borrowing, the scheme will lend funds based on character references as opposed to assets.

OPIUM CULTIVATION IN AFGHANISTAN DROPS BY A FIFTH, FINDS UN SURVEY

Opium cultivation in Afghanistan has gone down by a fifth as compared to last year, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) reported, attributing the decrease to good local leadership coupled with bad weather (25/8/08).

The Afghanistan Opium Survey 2008 showed a 19 per cent decrease in opium cultivation to 157,000 hectares, down from a record harvest of 193,000 in 2007, according to a news release by **UNODC**.

"Last year the world got hit by a heroin tsunami, almost 700 tons," said UNODC Executive Director Antonio Maria Costa. "This year the opium flood waters have started to recede."

The survey also found that 18 of the country's 34 provinces were now opium-free – up from 13 last year. In addition, cultivation now takes place “almost exclusively” in provinces affected by insurgency. Some 98 per cent of Afghanistan's opium is grown in seven provinces in the southwest of the country – Helmand, Kandahar, Uruzgan, Farah, Nimroz, Daykundi and Zabul. Helmand alone accounted for two thirds of the national total.

REPORT: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=27819&Cr=afghan&Cr1=drug>

FOCUS ON WILD AREAS

A study has found that more than 40 per cent of Australia remains undamaged by humans, the ABC reported (27/8/08).

Scientists from the Pew environment group and the Nature Conservancy have identified Australia alongside Antarctica and the Amazon as one of the five most important wild areas on earth. But the study also found Australia has the world's highest rate of species extinction because of threats from feral animals, invasive weeds and bushfires.

Report author Dr Barry Traill is concerned that only 10 per cent of Australia's wilderness is protected. REPORT: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/08/27/2347361.htm>

NEW SENATOR PLEDGES FOCUS ON NUCLEAR ISSUES

New WA Greens Senator Scott Ludlam was sworn in on August 26 in the Senate Chamber, pledging to put nuclear issues and climate change at the top of Australia's agenda (26/8/08).

"Key priorities in the next six years will be helping Australian communities prepare for the challenges of peak oil and climate change, and continuing the important work of campaigning for a nuclear-free world and ensuring that Australia does not fall for the fallacy that nuclear power could be a solution to climate change," he said.

"I am also determined to continue my work for a nuclear-free world, starting with holding the government to its promise to repeal the Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management Act 2005 - a retrograde Act that would impose a radioactive dump on unwilling communities in the Northern Territory." DETAILS: Felicity Hill on 0417 174 302.

CALL TO DUMP RADIOACTIVE WASTE MANAGEMENT ACT

The Rudd government should keep its election promise to rule out a radioactive dump in the Northern Territory by announcing when it will repeal the Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management Act 2005, Senator Scott Ludlam, Australian Greens nuclear spokesperson said in Canberra (27/8/08).

"Labor was strongly against this legislation when it was forced through the Senate - they must not forget about it now they are the government," Senator Ludlam said.

"When the Act was forced through the Senate, Labor described it as, 'extreme, arrogant, heavy-handed, draconian, sorry, sordid, extraordinary and profoundly shameful'. The Greens agree with the Labor's assessment and we call on the prime minister to repeal the Act immediately.

"The Rudd government promised a "scientific, transparent, accountable and fair" method of addressing radioactive waste issues, ensuring "full community consultation," but one year later we have no timeline and no action from the government.

"The Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, Paul Henderson, has also written to Kevin Rudd stating the Northern Territory's opposition in the strongest terms and seeking confirmation of the government's commitment and proposed timing of the repeal. He reminded the prime minister that as soon as the Commonwealth legislation is repealed, the Northern Territory's legislation that prohibits nuclear dumping will come into effect.

"Nobody wants nuclear waste. The answer is to stop creating it. But in the meantime the Prime Minister should announce the timetable for delivering this election promise immediately," Senator Ludlam said.

Both the NT Chief Minister's letter and the Question on Notice are available to download at <http://scott-ludlam.greensmps.org.au/> DETAILS: Felicity Hill 0417 174 302.

PLAN TO INVESTIGATE SAVING COORONG

A landmark agreement by all sides of politics to urgently investigate how to save the Coorong and lower lakes of the Murray could be a blueprint for future action by the Senate, the Greens suggested (27/8/08).

Greens Senator for South Australia Sarah Hanson-Young moved that the Rural and Regional Affairs Committee "urgently inquire into the availability of water for the Murray River's lower lakes and Coorong regions, to save our Storm Boy country", which was supported unanimously.

"Today we moved from talk to action to save a national icon and help Australians in need. There's nothing Australians can't achieve when all sides of politics work together," Senator Hanson-Young said.

The motion for the inquiry was co-sponsored by Greens Senators Rachel Siewert and Bob Brown, as well as South Australian Senators Nick Xenophon, Simon Birmingham and Mary Jo Fisher.

"The multi-party support indicates the scope of this environmental crisis. It shows acceptance by all sides of politics that we have to act," Senator Hanson-Young said.

"There is an opportunity for water holders throughout the entire system to provide the water needed to address this crisis, with compensation systems to be investigated to ensure their water needs are met in the future," said Senator Rachel Siewert. "Now all the states must also get behind this initiative."

Senator Hanson-Young's moving of the Senate Inquiry motion was her first act in parliament, following her swearing-in as a new Senator the day before.

"Now that the inquiry can get underway, the focus will turn to how the Senate can assist the government to locate, purchase and transmit water to the Coorong before Christmas," she said.

INQUIRY'S TERMS OF REFERENCE:

Urgent provision of water to the Coorong and Lower Lakes
Senators Hanson-Young, Brown, Siewert, Xenophon, Birmingham and Fisher

- 1) That the Rural and Regional Committee report to the Senate, urgently, but no later than 30 September 2008 on the following:
 - A. The volume of water which could be provided into the Murray-Darling system to replenish the lower lakes and Coorong;
 - B. Options for sourcing and delivering this water, including:
 - i) Possible incentive and compensation schemes for current water holders who participate in a once-off voluntary contribution of water to this national emergency;
 - ii) Alternative options for the acquisition of sufficient water;
 - iii) Likely transmission losses and the most efficient and effective strategies to manage the delivery of this water;
 - iv) Commonwealth powers to obtain and deliver water and possible legislative or regulative impediments;
 - v) Assessment of the potential contribution of bringing forward irrigation infrastructure spending under the COAG agreement to deliver water to save the Coorong and lower lakes;
 - C. The impact of any water buybacks on rural and regional communities and Adelaide including compensation and structural adjustment; and

D. Any other related matters.

2) That the Rural and Regional Committee report to the Senate no later than 4 December 2008 on implications for the long-term sustainable management of the Murray Darling Basin system of the following:

A. The adequacy of current whole-of-basin governance arrangements under the Intergovernmental Agreement;

B. The adequacy of current arrangements in relation to the [implementation of] the Basin Plan and water sharing arrangements;

C. Long-term prospects for the management of RAMSAR wetlands including the supply of adequate environmental flows;

D. The risks to the basin posed by unregulated water interception activities and water theft;

E. The ability of the Commonwealth to bind State and Territory Governments to meet their obligations [under the National Water Initiative]

F. The adequacy of existing State and Territory water and natural resource management legislation and enforcement arrangements;

G. The impacts of climate change on the likely future availability of water.

DETAILS: Gemma Clark on 0427 604 760; Ebony Bennett, Media Adviser Senator Bob Brown, leader of the Australian Greens, ebony.bennett@aph.gov.au ; on 0409 164 603; 02 6277 3170; www.bobbrown.org.au; <http://www.bobbrown.org.au/> ; <http://www.greens.org.au>.