

UNITY

THE NATIONAL PUBLICATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA

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

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BAN HOPES FOR NEW ERA OF US-UN PARTNERSHIP WITH OBAMA

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon extended his congratulations to United States President-Elect Barack Obama, voicing hope that his election will usher in a new era of multilateralism and enhanced partnership with the United Nations (5/11/08).

“As Secretary-General of the UN, I look forward to working with the new administration to fulfil our common goals and enormously important objectives,” Mr Ban said here in New York. “This is, I believe, an historic opportunity.”

He recalled previous statements by Mr Obama, who will take office next January, in which he spoke about the strong stake the US has in the UN.

This will be a “good opportunity not only for, not only the United States, but the United Nations as a whole to resolve all issues through dialogue,” the Secretary-General said, expressing confidence that there will be greater cooperation between the organisation and the US.

“If ever there were a time for the world to join together, it is now,” he said, pointing to the global financial turmoil, climate change, reaching the anti-poverty Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by their 2015 deadline and the twin food and energy crises.

REPORT: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28821&Cr=ki-moon&Cr1=United+states>

OBAMA ‘HAS OPPORTUNITY TO WORK WITH THE UNITED NATIONS’

Starting today, President-elect Obama has the opportunity to engage with the world and renew American leadership at the United Nations, the world’s platform for finding shared solutions to global problems, writes US Senator Timothy E. Wirth and the UN Foundation Team (6/11/08).

“The challenges we face are immense. But working together with other nations ensures that we don’t have to shoulder all of the burdens or take all of the risks to make the world a safer and better place, says Senator Wirth.

“Join us in urging President-elect Obama to [renew American leadership in the world by strengthening US-UN relations.](#)

“As President-elect Obama said so eloquently last night, ‘our stories are singular but our destiny is shared.’ We couldn’t agree more. In today’s interconnected world, America can’t go it alone.

“Only by working with our allies and the United Nations can we solve the major problems we face today.

“The world waited anxiously for the outcome of the presidential election, and is now eager to work with a new administration to address the big issues that we all face together, from climate change, to the financial and food crises, and global insecurity.

“Answer the call and urge President-elect Obama to work with our allies and through international organisations like the UN to tackle these daunting challenges. _

“Today we have a new opportunity for our nation and the world to work together. We can solve the climate crisis, end the wars, and fix the economy. But we must act together, and we must act now. Join us in answering President-elect Obama’s call to ‘summon a new spirit of

patriotism; of service and responsibility where each of us resolves to pitch in and work harder and look after not only ourselves, but each other.'

"We send our sincere congratulations to President-elect Obama on his historic victory yesterday. The American people voted for change; now it is time to make it happen."

- **Senator Timothy E. Wirth & the UN Foundation Team**

<http://www.unfoundation.org/>

AUSTRALIAN ELECTED TO UN COMMITTEE

Professor Ron McCallum AO has been elected as one of 12 experts to the first monitoring committee for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities at the United Nations headquarters in New York. Australia ratified the convention in July.

"Professor McCallum's election is a great honour for Australia," said Australian Human Rights Commissioner Graeme Innes (4/11/08). "It will further enhance the respect Australia has recently attracted on international human rights issues."

Professor McCallum, former Dean of the Faculty of Law at the University of Sydney and an expert in industrial law, won his place from a large field of candidates from other countries. Professor McCallum has lived an experience of disability which further qualified him for the role. He is the only Australian currently serving on a UN treaty body.

"This convention at last gives specific human rights to the 600 million people around the world who are living with disability - and a distinguished Australian will now play a role in its implementation," he said.

"The appointment of Professor Ron McCallum will also continue Australia's progress towards a national disability strategy which will allow all Australians with disability to be able to enjoy equal access to all aspects of Australian life and to participate as full citizens," he said.

DETAILS: Brinsley Marlay 02 9284 9656 or 0430 366 529

UN SEA TRADE CHIEF CALLS FOR FORCE TO COUNTER SOMALI PIRATES

Efthimios Mitropoulos, the UN International Maritime Organization chief, has called for the UN to authorize a force to quell the piratical activity in the Gulf of Aden. Preferring a larger UN mandate to a NATO force, he cited fears that international shippers could begin diverting shipments around the Cape of Good Hope rather than through the Suez Canal, reports [Financial Times](#) (2/11/08).

US WEIGHS UN OPTION TO REMAIN IN IRAQ

The Bush administration is looking to the UN to extend a mandate for troops to remain beyond December 31 – a move that would require Iraqi Government cooperation but not necessarily Iraqi acceptance, the *Washington Post* reported (3/11/08). **REPORT:** <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2008/nov/03/us-mulls-un-extension-of-iraq-mandate/>

TERRORISM FINANCING BLACKLISTS AT RISK

The global blacklisting system for financiers of [al-Qaeda](#) and other terrorist groups is at risk of collapse, undermined by legal challenges and waning political support in many countries, according to counterterrorism officials in Europe and the US, the *Washington Post* reported (2/11/08).

In September, the European Court of Justice threw the future of the [United Nations'](#) sanctions program against al-Qaeda and the [Taliban](#) into doubt when it declared the blacklist violated the "[fundamental rights](#)" of those targeted. The Luxembourg-based court said the list lacked accountability and made it almost impossible for people to challenge their inclusion.

Courts in Britain and France have also questioned whether European countries can enforce the UN sanctions and other blacklists without violating local laws, including a defendant's right to see evidence. The UN keeps such evidence secret.

The UN blacklist is the backbone of an international effort to prevent al-Qaeda supporters from raising or transferring money. All UN members are required to impose a travel ban and asset freeze against the 503 individuals, businesses and groups [on the list](#). About \$85 million in al-Qaeda and Taliban assets is frozen worldwide.







REPORT: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/11/01/AR2008110102214.html>

UN DEMOCRACY FUND INVITES ORGANISATIONS TO APPLY FOR FUNDING

The UN Democracy Fund is inviting civil society organisations to apply for funding for projects to promote democracy.

This is the third round of funding launched by the UNDEF, which was established by the UN Secretary-General in 2005 as a United Nations General Trust Fund. UNDEF funds projects that build and strengthen democratic institutions, promote human rights, and ensure the participation of all groups in democratic processes. Some 35 UN member states, spanning all continents, have so far made voluntary contributions to UNDEF.

As with previous UNDEF rounds, the thematic categories for applications are:

-  democratic dialogue and support for constitutional processes;
-  civil society empowerment, including the empowerment of women;
-  civic education and voter registration;
-  citizen's access to information;
-  participation rights and the rule of law in support of civil society;
-  transparency and integrity.

Priority will be given to projects that enhance inclusiveness and gender equality.

PROJECT PROPOSALS SUBMISSIONS: on-line **up to December 31 2008** at www.un.org/democracyfund; only on-line applications in either English or French accepted.

DETAILS: [Project Proposal Guidelines](#) at www.un.org/democracyfund/XProjectProposalGuidelines.htm.

UNIC OFFICE: Julia Dean on 61-2-62738200; 61-2-62738205(d); F 61-2-62738206. or <http://www.edna.edu.au/edna/go/events/cache/offonce?nbpath=1981.&action=item>

2009 WILL BE YEAR OF RECONCILIATION

The United Nations General Assembly has expressed its steadfast determination to pursue reconciliation processes in those societies that are affected and/or divided by conflicts; and decided to proclaim 2009 the International Year of Reconciliation.

Countries are invited to support reconciliation processes among affected and/or divided societies and to plan and implement adequate cultural, educational and social programs to promote the concept of reconciliation, including by holding conferences and seminars and disseminating information.

DETAILS: <http://daccessdds.un.org/...6/495/45/PDF/N0649545.pdf?OpenElement>

UNity, UN AND UNAA CONTACTS

[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.

UNity: <http://www.unityunaa.info>

The World Federation of United Nations is a global network of people linked through United Nations Associations in over 100 UN member states.

WFUNA website: <http://www.wfuna.org/who/>; newsletter at <http://www.wfuna.org/news/newsletter/index.cfm>.

United Nations Association of Australia by state:

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 mail@unaasa.org.au; 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.

Earlier editions of UNity 2004-05, 2006 and 2007 are on the UNAA website: www.unaa.org.au
or email the editor. As a regular reader of UNity, please make sure you notify us if you change
your email address by sending your new email address to judycnnn@yahoo.com.au

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>

Nautilus Institute Australia puts out a free email edition of Austral Peace and Security Network (APSNNet) Bulletin, together with policy forum essays and briefing notes. APSNNet Bulletin covers national and regional security issues in Australia and the surrounding region. The twice-weekly bulletin includes news and analysis of military affairs, defence, foreign policy and other aspects of hard security; also on climate change, infectious diseases and human security. **DETAILS:** Nautilus Institute Australia, hosted at RMIT:
<http://www.globalcollab.org/>

B. CLIMATE CHANGE

UN CHIEF URGES CLIMATE CHANGE HELP DESPITE SLOWDOWN

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon urged developed countries not to neglect climate change as they tend to a global economic slowdown and called on rich nations to help poor countries prone to global warming (2/11/08).

"The leaders of the developed countries should not neglect the issue of global warming," he said after a two-day visit to Bangladesh. "A one-metre rise in sea levels would displace 30 million Bangladeshis and deal a catastrophic blow to economic growth and development," he said.

Experts say climate change will hit Bangladesh's nearly 150 million people from all sides over the next 50 years with sea levels rising in the south, droughts in the north, river erosion as glaciers melt and disease risk growing with greater humidity.

Mr Ban said Bangladesh had been at the forefront of disaster prevention, and was a good example of how a vulnerable developing country can strengthen its resilience against catastrophic events such as super cyclone Sidr. Cyclone Sidr ravaged southern Bangladesh killing some 3,500 people and displacing some two million on Nov. 15 2007, following twin floods that killed some 1,500 people and damaged about 2 million tonnes of food.

Aid organisation Oxfam said urgent help and a comprehensive climate deal were crucial to Bangladesh where production of staple foods is forecast to drop steeply by 2050 due to accelerated melting of Himalayan glaciers from global warming.

REPORT: <http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/DHA250491.htm>

WONG: US LEADERSHIP NEEDED ALONG WITH CHINA AND INDIA

Climate Change Minister Penny Wong says Australia will look to the new US administration for leadership in tackling global warming, Yahoo/7 News reported (6/11/08).

"We have always said that for an effective global agreement to be in place we will need leadership from the United States and we will need the engagement particularly with China and also with India," she said.

"We know that the United States is key to an effective global agreement. So we will continue to work with the United States through the international negotiating process."

Ms Wong was speaking in Melbourne at the launch of a report on the Assessment of Impacts of Climate Change on Australia's Physical Infrastructure.

A major conference is set to be held in the Danish capital Copenhagen in 2009 to decide what will replace the Kyoto framework, which expires in 2012.

SEEKING LARGEST ONLINE PETITION FOR AUSTRALIA

The Australian Treasury had crunched the numbers and declared that action on climate change was affordable, reported GetUP this week. It says the Prime Minister would make his decision on carbon reduction targets shortly and "we'll only get there by telling the government: We're up for it. GetUp claims it has passed 100,000 names but seeks 110,000 names to achieve the largest online petition in Australian history.

CLIMATE CHANGE REFUGEES RELOCATE IN PNG

The world's first climate change refugees will be relocated from their Pacific island home to Papua New Guinea by March next year, the ABC reported (5/11/08).

The Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation says 40 families from north of Ontong Java in the Solomon Island's Malaita Province will be relocated to Bougainville. Flooding has made parts of their islands completely uninhabitable and the islands are expected to be fully submerged by 2015.

INFRASTRUCTURE AT RISK FROM CLIMATE CHANGE: REPORT

All forms of infrastructure in Australia including electricity, dams, roads and even footpaths will be severely affected by climate change, a new report has found. Experts from the Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering have assessed the impact of global warming on infrastructure.

The report, just released, warned that electricity would be hardest hit and more interruptions to supply could be expected. Drought would slash hydroelectric generation, while hot temperatures interfered with power plants and increased demand for electricity.

More frequent bushfires would interrupt supply. Water infrastructure would also suffer because of more droughts across southern Australia. Major investment in water was needed to see these regions through extended droughts, the report advised.

But while the south dries out, climate change is expected to bring more floods and storms to the rest of the country - and that poses risks for low-lying buildings and roads. [REPORT: http://www.news.com.au/story/0,23599,24611152-1702,00.html?from=public_rss](http://www.news.com.au/story/0,23599,24611152-1702,00.html?from=public_rss)

C. HUMAN RIGHTS

GIRL, 13, STONED TO DEATH IN SOMALIA

A 13-year-old girl who said she had been raped was stoned to death in Somalia after being accused of adultery by Islamic militants, a human rights group reported (2/11/08).

Dozens of men stoned Aisha Ibrahim Duhulow to death on October 27 in a stadium packed with 1,000 spectators in the southern port city of Kismayo, Amnesty International and Somali media reported, citing witnesses.

The Islamic militia in charge of Kismayo had accused her of adultery after she reported that three men had raped her, the rights group said. Initial local media reports said Duhulow was 23, but her father told Amnesty International she was 13.

"This child suffered a horrendous death at the behest of the armed opposition groups who currently control Kismayo," David Copeman, Amnesty International's Somalia campaigner, stated.

Somalia is among the world's most violent and impoverished countries. The nation of eight million people has not had a functioning government since warlords overthrew a dictator in 1991 then turned on each other.

Islamic militants with ties to al-Qaeda have been battling the government and its Ethiopian allies since their combined forces pushed the Islamists from the capital in December 2006.

REPORT: <http://au.news.yahoo.com/a/-/newshome/5117013>

UNICEF DEPLORES CHILD'S STONING

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has deplored last week's stoning to death of a 13-year-old Somali girl who was a victim of rape.

Aisha Duhulow was stoned to death in a stadium full of spectators in the southern port city of Kismayo on 27 October after authorities found her guilty of adultery. But reports indicate that she had been raped by three men while walking to visit her grandmother in the capital Mogadishu. After the attack, Aisha asked for protection from prosecutors, who in turn accused her of adultery and sentenced her to death.

"This is a tragic and deplorable incident," said Christian Balslev-Olesen, **UNICEF** Representative for Somalia. "A child was victimized twice – first by the perpetrators of the rape and then by those responsible for administering justice."

According to media reports, Aisha pleaded for her life before she was forced into a hole, buried up to her neck and then pelted with stones by some 50 men until she died in front of more than 1,000 people.

UNICEF said that this incident underscores the vulnerability of girls and women in the war-ravaged Horn of Africa nation, where it says sexual and gender-based violence is commonplace and gender inequalities persist in access to essential services.

"Authorities and institutions of civil society have a role to play in supporting and protecting the rights of every child," Mr Balslev-Olesen said, noting that this killing reflects the great effort that must be undertaken to protect the rights of Somali girls and women.

"UNICEF is committed to promote the status of females and will continue to work with local authorities and partners to reduce the risks to them through the promotion of girls' education, HIV prevention and support to services for survivors of all forms of sexual and gender-based violence."

REPORT: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28809&Cr=somali&Cr1=>

BALI BOMBERS: CHANCE TO PUSH FOR END OF DEATH PENALTIES

The Australian Government should take the impending execution of the Bali Bombers as a chance to encourage their Indonesian counterparts to abolish the death penalty, according to an ANU legal expert.

Professor Don Rothwell, from the ANU College of Law, says that although the Rudd Government needs to be careful not to be seen meddling in Indonesia's affairs, it also needs to remind our neighbours about their obligations under the recently signed International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

"The Rudd Government cannot let the executions of the Bali Bombers pass without comment," he said. "If Australia's position opposing the death penalty is to have any credibility

within our region then it is important for Australia to be consistently making the point that Australia is opposed to the death penalty. To that end, it needs to be encouraging our neighbours and friends who still practice the death penalty to move towards abolition of capital punishment.

“This will be a hard argument to make, because it will also require a consistent message being made to China and the United States. In the case of Indonesia, however, Australia can also point to Indonesia’s recent acceptance of the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights, making it one of the few South East Asian countries to accept this key human rights treaty.

“Australia can quietly remind Indonesia of its obligations under the Covenant to move towards the abolition of capital punishment consistent with its international legal obligations,” he said.

“Australia has no right nor does it have an obligation to protest about individual executions of Indonesian citizens in Indonesia. It does, however, have the capacity to quietly work with a neighbour in building greater respect for the rule of law, human rights and democratic values. This will ultimately be a much more successful strategy in seeking to save Australian lives on death row,” he said.

Professor Rothwell said the Bali Bombers’ case has demonstrated a maturing of the Indonesian legal system through a series of legal appeals to the Indonesian Constitutional Court. [DETAILS](#): Martyn Pearce on 02 6125 5575 / 0416 249 245.

14 COUNTRIES IN ASIA STILL EXECUTE UNDER DEATH PENALTY

More than two thirds of the world’s countries have abolished the death penalty in law or practice, CLA reports:

- 91 countries have abolished the death penalty for all crimes;
- 11 have abolished for all except extraordinary crimes such as those in times of war;
- 35 countries are de facto abolitionists: the death penalty is still provided for in legislation but no executions have been carried out for at least 10 years.

Therefore, 137 countries have abolished the death penalty de jure or de facto. However, 60 countries and territories still kill people judicially: 24 countries carried out executions in 2007. Asia executed more than 664 people in 2007, even though 27 countries have abolished the death penalty in law or in practice while only 14 continue to execute.

The Saudi Arabian Government is executing an average of more than two people a week, almost half foreign nationals from poor and developing countries, according to an Amnesty report.

In 2007, there was a sharp increase in executions, with a total of at least 158 people (three a week) put to death compared with 39 executions in 2006. So far in 2008, there have been a further 71 executions to the end of August.

BUSINESS RELATIONS WITH ASEAN AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN FOCUS

Opportunities for Australian businesses in ASEAN was on the discussion agenda when Federal Parliament’s Foreign Affairs Sub-Committee resumed its inquiry into Australia’s relationship with ASEAN (6/11/08).

Sub-Committee Chairman Michael Danby said the committee had received evidence that trade in services to ASEAN needed to be boosted.

“The Australia-ASEAN Business Council has commented that the anticipated signing of the FTA with ASEAN should create a ‘head-turning affect’ and focus Australian business on the opportunities in ASEAN—collectively Australia’s biggest trading partner,” Mr Danby said. Attention had been drawn to the foreign ownership rules imposed by ASEAN countries which limits long-term foreign ownership to 49 per cent.

Human rights issues were also to be discussed with Indonesian Solidarity and the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies.

"There are some 140 000 Burmese refugees along the Thai-Burmese border. The committee will examine suggestions as to how they might be assisted by the international community. The ASEAN Charter has provision for a human rights body and this might provide an opportunity to address abuses in Burma and abuses of migrant workers in ASEAN countries," Mr Danby said. The hearing was also to be addressed by witnesses from the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation which has been cooperating with its ASEAN counterparts through the Regional Security Radioactive Sources Project.

"The effective control and storage of radioactive materials has environmental and international security implications. ANSTO has commented that many countries in South East Asia require assistance to develop the expertise needed to embed security measures in legislation and to ensure radioactive materials remain secure," Mr Danby said.

DETAILS: Sub-Committee Secretary John Carter, on 02 6277 4306; www.aph.gov.au/jfadt

AUSTRIAN KIDNAPPED COUPLE FREED

One of the two Austrians held hostage eight months by Islamist militants in the Sahara desert has spoken of their relief at being freed, the BBC reported (1/11/08).

Wolfgang Ebner, 51, spoke briefly to reporters in the Malian capital Bamako as he and Andrea Kloiber, 43, waited to be flown home. He said they had been treated "normally" though conditions were hard.

"We are happy to be Austrians. Our compatriots can't imagine how secure their lives are in Austria, and what the rest of the world lives like."

It is still unclear how they were freed, with Austria and Mali denying that any ransom was paid. The Austrians disappeared while holidaying in Tunisia. The North African branch of al-Qaeda later said it had seized them and threatened to kill them should any rescue attempt be made. **REPORT:** <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7704016.stm>

MORE SCHOLARSHIPS FOR INDIGENOUS STUDENTS

The Australian Government will fund a big expansion of the country's main Indigenous boarding school scholarship scheme to allow an extra 2000 Aboriginal students to attend top secondary schools (31/10/08).

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd said this week the government would contribute \$20 million to the Australian Indigenous Education Foundation and said it would be matched by business contributions. The extra funding will increase the foundation's existing \$5 million in endowments almost tenfold, increasing the numbers of indigenous children who would be supported. **REPORT:** <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/10/30/1224956238396.html>

FALUN GONG FOLLOWERS CAUGHT IN DANGEROUS IMMIGRATION CATCH-22

The Australian Immigration Department is endangering failed Falun Gong asylum seekers by forcing them to apply for travel documents from the Chinese consulate in Sydney, exposing their status to authorities and putting them in danger of persecution, refugee advocates say, according to the Sydney Morning Herald (3/11/08).

A spokesman for the department had denied that it alerted foreign authorities about former protection visa applicants. Australia deported 770 Chinese nationals in 2007-08 but the department could give no figure on the percentage who were failed protection visa applicants. **REPORT:** <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/11/02/1225560645026.html>

'A-G SIGNALS CHANGED EMPHASIS ON TERRORISM LAWS': CLA

Attorney-General Robert McClelland signalled a clear intention to fold Australia's excessive anti-terrorism legislation back into laws against criminal behaviour, Civil Liberties Australia reported this week. .

It reported that speaking late last month in Melbourne at a counter-terrorism conference, the minister commented on a recent meeting with the UK's independent reviewer of terrorism laws since 2001, Lord Alex Carlile.

"My visit to the UK brought home the importance of continuing to deliver the message that terrorism is nothing more than a base and despicable criminal act - where innocent civilians are the target of choice," Mr McClelland said.

"It also reinforced my belief that successful prosecutions necessarily support broader community counter-radicalisation efforts by sending a clear warning to those who are tempted by extremism. Conviction and imprisonment can help open their eyes to what terrorism really is - cowardly criminal behaviour," he said.

CLA reported that most civil liberties and legal groups expressed precisely the same opinions as the Howard Government enacted 50-plus pieces of legislation that glorified terrorists by treating them as 'special cases'. From the outset, CLA said terrorists were criminals and should be dealt with by Australia's criminal laws.

Since new counter-terrorism offences became operative in Australia in 2002, 29 individuals have been charged with terrorism offences, Mr McClelland told the conference nine had been convicted with a number of cases still before the courts. Most recently, a jury in Melbourne had returned guilty verdicts against seven defendants.

CLA's CEO Bill Rowlings commented later that the Attorney-general omitted to mention that four defendants in the same case were totally exonerated and freed, after spending three years in 'super max' jail lockdown for what was proved in court to be no reason whatsoever,

"Nine convictions from 29 charged is a success rate of 31 per cent, which suggests that security services and police are either not very accurate in their targeting or astute in gathering evidence," Mr Rowlings said. The Attorney-General had spoken the day before Jack Thomas was cleared in Melbourne last month.

INDEPENDENT PANEL TO REVIEW TERRORISM LAWS?

CLA reported that a parliamentary committee reported last month there should be a three-person panel to independently review terrorism legislation,

The cross-party Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee of the Senate also recommended that the Tri-Terror Panel should report on each inquiry to Parliament, but also table an annual report. In other recommendations the committee called for better definition of the rules and procedures around such a committee. CLA reported it was now up to the Rudd Government to implement the recommendation.

DO-NOT-EXPORT DATA REGISTER PROPOSED TO SAFEGUARD INFORMATION

Privacy advocates have fallen in line with a CLA proposal for a 'Do Not Export Data' scheme to stop organisations sending data about Australians out of this country without approval. CLA proposed to the Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) that no Australian data should leave Australia unless an individual had given formal permission.

The scheme now proposed is like a Do Not Call phone register. The Do Not Export Data register would ensure that personal details and data, no matter who held it, stayed in Australia rather than being exported to prime or back-up sites anywhere in the world.

The problem with offshore export of Australian data is that it becomes subject to the laws where the data is held. Personal details - phone calls and internet logs, buying habits, health information, friends and contacts - could be tapped for FBI and CIA analysis under provisions of the US Patriot Act, for example.

PAY EQUITY: THE TIME IS RIGHT

The House of Representatives Employment Committee is holding public hearings in relation to the federal parliamentary inquiry into gender pay equity and related issues. in:

The committee is consulting with the WA Equal Opportunity Commission, WA Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Local Government Association of South Australia, Working Women's Centre, the National Centre for Vocational Education Research and state union organisations, as well as representatives of Flinders University, Curtin University, and the WA University.

Discussions were to cover: current structural arrangements in the negotiation of wages that may impact disproportionately on women, the adequacy of recent and current equal remuneration provisions in state and federal workplace relations legislation; and the need for further legislative reform to address pay equity in Australia.

The Committee will continue to welcome submissions to the inquiry, and will meet with as many contributors as possible at various hearings across Australia during the coming months. Further details on the inquiry, including the terms of reference, background documents, membership of the Committee and advice on making submissions can be obtained on the **COMMITTEE WEBSITE**: <http://www.aph.gov.au/ewr>, 02 6277 4162; ewr.reps@aph.gov.au. **BACKGROUND**: Committee Secretary, on 02 6277 4162.

WORDS THAT WOUND: FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND HATE SPEECH IN AUSTRALIA

The Australian Human Rights Commission is presenting the fourth of its seminar series celebrating the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) on November 18 at 5.30pm at the Australian Human Rights Commission, 133 Castlereagh Street, Sydney.

It is entitled *Words that Wound: Freedom of speech and hate speech in Australia*.

The speakers will include Catherine Branson QC, President of the Australian Human Rights Commission. Ms Branson has served for over 14 years as a judge of the Federal Court of Australia and was the trial judge in *Jones v Toben*, the first case on internet hate speech brought under section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth), seeking removal from a website of material offensive to people on the basis of their race or ethnic origin.

Hanifa Deen is a Melbourne-based award winning author of Pakistani-Muslim ancestry who writes narrative non-fiction. Her books include *Caravanserai: A Journey Among Australian Muslims*, *Broken Bangles*, and *The Crescent and the Pen*. Her most recent book, *The Jihad Seminar* (UWA Press) has just been released. She was formerly Deputy Commissioner of the Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs Commission of WA; Hearing Commissioner with the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission.

Gail Mason is Associate Professor of Law at the Faculty of Law and the director of Sydney Institute of Criminology at Sydney University. Earlier she taught Gender Studies at Sydney University and Criminology at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. She has also worked for the Australian Institute of Criminology in Canberra. Her research revolves around the issues of hate crime and discrimination. She is especially interested in the ways in which legal and social discourse constitute understandings of what it means to 'hate' others.

DETAILS: li.zhou@humanrights.gov.au

D. PEACE & SECURITY

RULES OF WAR MADE SIMPLE FOR WORLD MILITARY LEADERS

Senior military officers from 50 countries gathered in Geneva to put international humanitarian law into simple language that can be understood in theatres of war worldwide (3/11/08).

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), which organised the two-week course with the Swiss Armed Forces, said that civilians accounted for the overwhelming majority of war casualties despite being protected in the Geneva Conventions laying out the rules of war.

"By making international humanitarian law more easily understandable and accessible to military personnel, the ICRC hopes to give combatants the guidance they need to make the right choices," the neutral aid organisation said.

Top brass from the United States, Britain, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Burundi were among those participating in the workshop held in Swiss army barracks in Geneva.

REPORT: <http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/L3635182.htm>

ASIA/SOUTH EAST ASIA

BOTCHED US BOMBING KILLS 40

US troops fighting off a Taliban ambush bombed a wedding party in southern Afghanistan and killed about 40 civilians, mainly women and children, local people and government officials said (6/11/08).

American officials confirmed last night that an incident was under investigation by the US military and the Afghan Government. Colonel Greg Julian, a US army spokesman, told *The Times*: "We are taking this very seriously. We are extremely sorry if there have been civilian casualties sustained during this operation. It is the worst possible outcome if civilians are harmed as a result of our trying to defend them."

REPORT: <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/asia/article5092346.ece>

BANGLADESH AND BURMA TALK OVER BORDER DISPUTE

Bangladesh says it will send diplomats to Burma to try to resolve a territorial dispute between the two nations in the Bay of Bengal, the BBC reported (3/11/08).

Naval vessels from both countries are facing one another after the Burmese side reportedly began exploring in the area for oil and gas. Bangladesh insists that the area lies well within its waters and has formally protested over the issue. Burma has so far made no public statement on the dispute.

According to Bangladeshi sources, the dispute is taking place about 50 nautical miles south-west of an island called St Martin's. It protested to Burma over "an incursion" by Burmese vessels over the weekend. There were reportedly four exploration ships escorted by two naval craft.

Bangladesh has demanded that the Burmese withdraw until the maritime boundary can be agreed through negotiations.

REPORT: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7706261.stm

CHINA, TAIWAN BEGIN HISTORIC TALKS ON CLOSER TIES

Taiwan and China began historic talks in Taipei aimed at bringing the formerly bitter rivals closer economically after almost 60 years of cross-strait hostility, the Sydney Morning Herald (4/11/08).

Beijing's representative Chen Yunlin and his local counterpart, Chiang Pin-kung, shook hands as they took their seats at Taipei's Grand Hotel for the discussions that are expected to ink deals potentially worth billions of dollars.

Later the two sides announced they had agreed to triple direct passenger flights to 108 per week and expand services to a total of 21 Chinese cities. The deals will introduce cargo flights, with up to 60 round trips per month crossing the 180km. Taiwan Strait that separates the island from China, officials said.

REPORT: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/11/04/1225560847872.html>

ABU BAKAR BASHIR PLAN TO ATTEND FUNERALS

The radical cleric and co-founder of Jemaah Islamiah, Abu Bakar Bashir, said he expected to attend the funerals of Amrozi and Mukhlas in Tenggulun as his followers began descending on the men's village, the Sydney Morning Herald reported (5/11/08). In an interview with the *Herald*, Bashir said that ideally he would attend both funerals.

Imam Samudra - the other Jemaah Islamiah member on death row for orchestrating the bombings on Kuta Beach that killed 202 people, including 88 Australians - comes from

Serang, West Java. Bashir, who was released from prison in 2006 after serving a short sentence for his alleged role in inspiring the bombings, said Muslims would be angry if the men were executed.

REPORT: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/11/04/1225560842116.html>

AFRICA

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon was due to leave for Nairobi on Thursday to attend a United Nations-backed summit aimed at ending the crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), where fighting continues for a second straight day despite a recent ceasefire and aid agencies are trying to assist hundreds of thousands of displaced people.

Also expected to participate in the summit, which is hosted by the African Union (AU), are the Presidents of Kenya, DRC, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi and South Africa.

Mr Ban **said** he will sit down together with Presidents Joseph Kabila of the DRC and Paul Kagame of Rwanda and “encourage them to find a path to peace.” **REPORT:** <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28820&Cr=Democratic&Cr1=Congo>

UN MAY BOOST PEACEKEEPER NUMBERS IN CONGO CONFLICT

UN agencies step up their efforts to assist people displaced by violence in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) as reports that fighting has resumed in rebel-held territory in North Kivu. The ceasefire seems to be holding in Goma (4/11/08).

According to the UN peacekeeping mission in the DRC, known as **MONUC**, fighting continues intermittently between PARECO, an ethnic militia, and rebels led by renegade general Laurent Nkunda in the village of Kiwanja, some two kilometres outside Rutshuru, in rebel-held territory. MONUC peacekeepers at a nearby base appeared trapped in crossfire, but had not reported any casualties.

The mission had temporarily suspended a humanitarian assessment mission and workers were in a safe house to wait out the gun battle. Meanwhile, the ceasefire between Congolese armed forces (known as FARDC) and the rebel National Congress for the Defence of the People (CNDP) seems to be holding in Goma, the capital of North Kivu province.

UN peacekeepers are boosting their presence there; two more companies and a Formed Police Unit (FPU) were expected. The 17,000-strong MONUC – which has been mandated by the Security Council to protect civilians – has been overstretched in recent weeks.

The mission currently has 5,000 peacekeepers in North Kivu, including some 1,700 in Goma, which has a swelling population of between 700,000 and one million.

Ambassador Jorge Urbina of Costa Rica, which holds the rotating presidency of the Security Council for November, stated the 15-member body would discuss boosting the UN's largest peacekeeping force later this month.

Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Alain Le Roy and the Secretary-General's Special Representative for the DRC, Alan Doss, were continuing their visit to North Kivu, to visit camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) and UN military bases in the region, before meeting with humanitarian workers. They also met with Congolese Prime Minister Adolphe Muzito, as well as EU and US representatives.

OBASANJO APPOINTED UN SPECIAL ENVOY TO CONGO

On November 3 UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon appointed former Nigerian president Olusegun Obasanjo to serve as his Special Envoy to work with leaders in the Congo region and the broader international community to end the crisis. An estimated 250,000 people have fled in recent months. Mr Ban is travelling to the region to push forward peace efforts.

Up to 100,000 people – around 60 per cent of whom are children – have fled their homes in the last week alone, according to the UN Children's Fund (**UNICEF**), which noted that this

brings the total number of IDPs in North Kivu to around one million or 20 per cent of the entire population of the province.

The World Health Organisation (**WHO**) reported that increasing quantities of medical supplies are being provided by foreign governments but more support is needed to meet urgent health needs.

The World Food Program (**WFP**), said it will soon start distributing a 10-day ration to more than 135,000 people in six camps around Goma. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (**UNHCR**) was looking for tens of thousands of IDPs from three camps near Rutshuru that were destroyed and emptied last week. Refugees from the DRC are also continuing to cross over into neighbouring Uganda, UNHCR reported.

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (**OHCHR**) said a mobile UN human rights team was allowed into the area controlled by CNDP forces on Tuesday for the first time since the crisis began.

The prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (**ICC**), Luis Moreno-Ocampo, said his office is closely monitoring information about attacks against civilian populations, forced displacement of populations, murders, rapes, pillaging and looting, reported to be taking place amid the recent fighting.

REPORT: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28811&Cr=drc&Cr1=>

FRENCH CALL FOR MORE TROOPS IN CONGO

French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner has called for the mandate of UN forces in the Democratic Republic of Congo to be strengthened, the BBC reported (4/11/08).

"We need different soldiers, and different rules of engagement," he said after briefing his EU counterparts about his weekend visit there.

Rebels routed the army in the eastern North Kivu province last week, and are now threatening the regional capital. Tens of thousands of people have been forced from their homes in the area.

The rebel leader, renegade General Laurent Nkunda, has declared a ceasefire and said he will guarantee "humanitarian corridors" through rebel lines. But his spokesman Bertrand Bisimwa told AFP news agency that the Congolese government was "waging war" by refusing to hold direct negotiations. Mr Nkunda's forces are positioned outside Goma, the regional capital.

The UN has a 17,000-strong force in the country, called Monuc. It is its biggest mission in the world, but correspondents say it is struggling to contain the conflict.

REPORT: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7706917.stm>

ANC BREAKAWAY SIGNALS MAJOR SHIFT

The public breakaway of African National Congress members signals a major shift in post-apartheid South African politics. Defectors argue the ANC has become hypocritical and corrupt, and they hope they will be able to mount a successful challenge in next year's elections. [The New York Times](#) (3/11/08); [The Globe and Mail \(Toronto\)](#) (2/11/08).

MIDDLE EAST

ISRAEL LAUNCHES GAZA AIRSTRIKE

Israel launched an airstrike on Gaza after its troops fought a fierce gunfight with Hamas militants who fired mortars into southern Israel, THE Sydney Morning Herald reported (6/11/08). The fighting killed five Palestinians and threatened to unravel a June truce that had mostly kept a lid on violence in the volatile territory.

The violence was sparked after the Israeli army said its forces uncovered a tunnel about 250m inside the central Gaza strip that militants planned to use to abduct Israeli soldiers.

The Israelis said a special army unit had headed to the area to destroy the tunnel. The army claimed the move did not violate the truce, but instead it was a legitimate step to remove an immediate threat to Israel from Gaza, which is controlled by the Islamic militant group Hamas.

A Palestinian Health Ministry official, Dr Moaiya Hassanain, said heavy gunfights erupted, killing one Palestinian and wounding three, including one woman. Residents identified the dead man as a Hamas militant. Hamas also insisted it had not violated the truce and was acting to prevent an Israeli incursion.

REPORT: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/11/05/1225560947464.html>

SOME ISRAELIS FEEL URGENCY TO ATTACK IRAN

With international efforts to increase sanctions against Iran at a standstill, many Israelis believe their nation alone stands in the way of Tehran eventually building nuclear weapons, the Los Angeles Times reported (2/11/08).

But officials and analysts in Jerusalem also acknowledge that a unilateral attack is fraught with danger and might fail to cripple Iran's bomb-making abilities. Much of the international community quietly wants Israel to launch a strike, the officials say, but only if it can succeed.

"They will be very happy if we do their dirty work for them," said Efraim Inbar, director of the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies at Bar-Ilan University near Tel Aviv. "The world is moving into 'What can we do about it?' mode. There is a strong instinct here to do it on our own."

To many in Israel, the situation is reminiscent of 1981, when the Jewish state acted on its own in bombing the Osirak reactor in Iraq, and last year, when it launched a unilateral strike on an alleged nuclear site in Syria.

REPORT: http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-iziran2-2008nov02_0_5562691.story

ISRAEL ACTS TO CUT OFF FUNDS TO ILLEGAL SETTLEMENTS

[Ehud Olmert](#), the departing prime minister of [Israel](#), announced a series of measures on Sunday in response to a rise in violence by extremist Jewish settlers in the [West Bank](#), including a halt to all direct or indirect government financing of illegal outposts (2/11/08).

The announcement amounted to an acknowledgment that public funds were still being spent on the outposts, contrary to government policy and despite a longstanding pledge to the United States to remove at least two dozen settlements immediately.

Militant settlers in the southern West Bank clashed over the weekend with Israeli soldiers and border police officers who came to remove an illegal home built near the settlement of Kiryat Arba, adjacent to Hebron.

Settlers also have damaged [Palestinian](#) property in the area in recent days as part of a policy they call "price tag," in which a price is exacted against Palestinians for actions against the outposts by the army or the police.

In the weekly cabinet meeting here, Mr. Olmert said the overwhelming majority of Jewish settlers were law-abiding citizens. "But," he said, "there is also a not small group of wild people who behave in a way that threatens proper law and governance, not only in the areas in which they live, but also in the overall atmosphere of the state of Israel."

AMENDMENT TO ELECTORAL LAW BODES WELL FOR IRAQ'S MINORITIES, SAYS UN

The UN has welcomed the decision by the Iraqi legislature to allocate a specific number of seats for representatives of the country's minority communities ahead provincial elections, slated to be held sometime before the end of January 2009 (4/11/08).

"The adoption of the amendment to the electoral law should be seen as a contribution towards furthering the respect for human rights and democracy in Iraq, through the

commitment of the Iraqi institutions to recognize and guarantee minority representation in their elected governing bodies,” the UN Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) **said**.

The mission did note that the amendment adopted by the Council of Representatives (CoR) does not reflect a larger number of seats for Iraqi minorities consistent with UNAMI’s original proposal.

However, UNAMI respects the council’s decision, which was adopted by a majority of 106 votes and is binding for the current elections.

The mission also notes that the timing of the vote will allow for the inclusion of minority candidates in the Independent High Electoral Commission’s ballot lottery.

“UNAMI hopes that the Presidency Council will therefore expeditiously ratify the decision approved by the CoR. This will allow IHEC to abide by operational timelines for the holding of the provincial elections within the mandated deadline of 31 January 2009.”

Last month the Secretary-General’s Special Representative for Iraq and head of UNAMI, Staffan de Mistura, called on the Council of Representatives to reinstate the provision on minority rights into the newly-approved provincial election law, stressing that protecting those rights is fundamental to a democratic Iraq.

REPORT: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28806&Cr=Iraq&Cr1=>

EUROPE

MEDVEDEV RAISES HOPES ON NAGORNO-KARABAKH

The leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan have agreed to intensify talks to end a 20-year conflict over the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, the UK Independent reported (3/11/08).

Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan and his Azeri counterpart, Ilham Aliyev also agreed after talks outside Moscow with Russian President Dmitry Medvedev to develop confidence building measures as they search for a way to resolve the conflict.

Nagorno-Karabakh's mostly ethnic Armenian population broke away from Azerbaijan in a war in the early 1990s as the Soviet Union collapsed. It now runs its own affairs, with support from Armenia. **REPORT:** <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/medvedev-raises-hopes-on-nagornokarabakh-987120.html>

RUSSIA HOPES TO DOUSE REBELLION

In a bid to put a cap on a rising rebellion, Moscow has removed its appointed president of the republic of Ingushetia, Murat Zyazikov, who has proved divisive. The Kremlin hopes Ingush respect for the military and Zyazikov's replacement, Colonel Yunus-Bek Yevkurov's reputation as an honest man, will diffuse tensions, **TIME** reported (1/11/08).

E. HEALTH & MEANS

SINGAPOREANS DRINK LITTLE RECYCLED SEWAGE

The Queensland Government has hailed Singapore as a prime example of the success of introducing recycled sewage to the drinking water supply, but most of the water the island nation derives from recycled sewage is used for industrial and commercial purposes, Greg Roberts reported in *The Australian* (5/11/08).

The revelation came as it emerged that the Bligh Government was examining ways of reducing flows of hospital wastes to Queensland's sewerage system. Recycled sewage will comprise between 10 per cent and 25 per cent of the water supply for the 2.6 million residents of South East Queensland after flows to the Wivenhoe Dam from the Western Corridor Recycled Water Project begin early next year.

Singapore Department of Environment and Water communications manager Joy Tan said less than one per cent of the city state's drinking supply was NEWater, its term for recycled

water. Ms Tan said this would rise to no more than 3 per cent over the next three years. "The primary purpose of NEWater is to supply industrial and commercial customers in Singapore," Ms Tan said.

The Australian reported (4/11/08) that Queensland Health had no role in approving the Western Corridor project. Nor did Queensland Health know how much hospital waste would be recycled as drinking water after it was dumped into the sewerage system.

REPORT: <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,24604169-11949,00.html>

MALNUTRITION SHOWING IN NORTH KOREAN CHILDREN REPORT

While North Korea makes a great effort to hide evidence of the nation's hunger problem, signs of the increasingly dire epidemic proliferate around the countryside. Aid agencies report that the level of hunger has not yet reached famine but that collective listlessness is apparent and children show signs of malnutrition. [Los Angeles Times](#) (2/11/08).

FRENCH AID WORKER KIDNAPPED IN AFGHANISTAN

Gunmen have kidnapped a French aid worker in Afghanistan's capital Kabul, killing an Afghan driver who tried to stop them, the ABC reported (4/11/08).

A second foreigner managed to escape, but a passing driver who worked for the provincial security intelligence agency was shot dead as he tried to stop the abduction. Several foreign aid groups have increased security measures after a series of abductions and killings in the capital. Last month, a female aid worker was killed by two gunmen and a South African and a Briton working for an international courier company were also shot dead.

REPORT: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/11/04/2409305.htm>

PAKISTAN: ICRC APPEALS FOR FUNDS FOR EARTHQUAKE VICTIMS

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) launched a preliminary appeal for nine million Swiss francs to help the victims of the earthquakes that jolted south western Pakistan (3/11/08). The funds will enable the ICRC and the Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) to step up their emergency assistance operations.

The death toll in Baluchistan province is estimated at over 200; the number of wounded remained unclear, but overall the ICRC estimates 20,000 to 30,000 were affected.

Immediately after the tremors hit, the ICRC and the Pakistan Red Crescent provided medical supplies to local health facilities and assessed the capacities of hospitals in Quetta. Tents, tarpaulins and blankets have been distributed, along with food and essential household items. The aid organisations are working closely with Pakistani authorities.

DETAILS: Sydney Support Office to the Regional Delegation for the Pacific
Pauline Wall on 61 2 9388 9039/mob 61 2 418 485 120; <http://www.icrc.org>

AFRICA

FRENCH SECTION OF MÉDECINS SANS FRONTIÈRES FORCED TO LEAVE NIGER

On July 18 the Niger Government terminated, suddenly and without explanation, the medical and nutritional activities of the French section of Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) in the Maradi region – with grave consequences on mortality among young children.

Over the last three months, MSF reported it had made every effort to determine the reasons for the suspension, clarify its medical work and redefine, with the Niger authorities, the modes of its intervention. On October 21, in Niamey, in the face of the government's refusal to authorise MSF to resume its activities, MSF called on the republic's president to arbitrate. MSF said it had received only silence in response. The French section of MSF has therefore chosen to take formal note of the government's position that "MSF leave."

The cessation of MSF activities has occurred at the most difficult time of year for young children—between the harvests, when malnutrition rises, and the height of the malaria season. On the suspension date, more than 3,000 children were undergoing treatment and 500 new children were admitted into the program weekly.

In addition, the latest nutritional survey, conducted in June 2008 by the government and UNICEF, estimated the number of children in the Maradi region suffering from acute malnutrition at between 35,000 and 67,000. These official statistics contradict the Nigerian Government's publicly stated reasons for its decision to suspend MSF activities in Maradi.

MSF has called on the government, UNICEF and the World Food Program to take swift action in Maradi so that malnourished children receive treatment and on donors to establish an international policy and treatment approaches adapted to the major areas affected by malnutrition. MSF has been working in Niger since 2001.

DETAILS: Sally McMillan on 0447 482 379.

REPORT: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/11/04/2409278.htm>;

WFP EXPANDS FOOD SUPPLIES TO CONGO CRISIS

The UN World Food Program (WFP) began food distributions to more than 135,000 displaced people in six camps around Goma in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (5/11/08) .

The distributions are part of WFP's response to assist victims of the recent fighting in eastern DRC, which has included the delivery of high-energy biscuits to displaced children stalked by malnutrition. WFP also participated in an assessment mission into Rutshuru district, the region worst affected by last week's fighting.

"WFP is responding as quickly as possible to deliver food to people who've been brutalised too many times over many years," said Mustapha Darboe, WFP Regional Director for Southern, Eastern and Central Africa. "Now they are suffering again. Tens of thousands have been uprooted in North Kivu and we are doing everything we can to find them and help them."

WFP is bolstering its food supplies in Goma by drawing on a 1,000-metric-ton contingency stock held at its office in Bukavu in South Kivu, as well as expediting deliveries from Uganda and Tanzania. A further 1,200 tons is being loaned to the operation by WFP Rwanda. The WFP Goma office is also being reinforced by staff from within DRC and abroad.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) will take charge of distributions to the estimated 65,000 displaced people now gathered at Kibati camp, 15km north of Goma.

"This is a dangerous and unstable environment and it's going to be challenging to deliver food to where it is needed most. We need proper security in place to ensure everyone involved is safe and that we reach the most vulnerable," a spokesperson said.

WFP welcomed a \$US3.1 million cash donation from ECHO -- the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid Office. The cash contribution permits WFP's operation in the eastern DRC to use the funds directly where they are most needed in the current emergency.

WHO GETS FOREIGN AID TO DRC VICTIMS

Increasing quantities of medical supplies are being provided by foreign governments to save lives in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, but the World Health Organisation (WHO) is calling for more support to meet urgent health needs.

The Norwegian Government has confirmed it will provide almost 30 tonnes of medicines to treat up to 150 000 people for diarrhoeal diseases, trauma and other critical conditions for a month. Norway is also sending eight sets of water purification equipment to provide clean drinking water for at least 60 000 people.

This follows the Italian Government's commitment last week to send 10 tonnes of medical supplies to treat up to 60 000 patients for multiple conditions, including diarrhoeal diseases and malaria for one month.

"The World Health Organisation is extremely grateful for the aid it is receiving from our partners," said Dr Eric Laroche, Assistant Director-General for WHO Health Action in Crises

Cluster. "But it is essential that foreign medical support increases if we are going to save the lives of thousands affected in the DRC crisis."

DETAILS: Paul Garwood on +41 22 791 3462/mob +41 794 755546; garwoodp@who.int; also <http://www.who.int/about/licensing/rss/en>

EMERGENCY FOOD AND WATER FOR NORTH KIVU

In the Kibati area six km from Goma, the North Kivu provincial capital, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) began a further distribution of 365 tonnes of food – enough to cover the needs of 65,000 displaced people for 10 days (6/11/08).

"The humanitarian situation is terrible. In the Kibati camps, I saw people in extreme distress, including women and children, and elderly people," said Max Hadorn, ICRC head of delegation, currently visiting North Kivu. "To help them, we have set up an emergency operation to meet the most urgent needs: water, food and hygiene." The aid distributions are organised in close partnership with the Red Cross Society of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. **DETAILS:** Sydney Support Office to the Regional Delegation for the Pacific: Pauline Wall on 61 (0 2) 9388 9039/mob 61 (0)2 418 485 120.

GLOBAL FUND CLAIMS ZIMBABWE MISSPENT MILLIONS IN AID MONEY

Zimbabwean President Mugabe's government misspent more than \$7m intended to fight disease and refuses to restore the money, impeding efforts to expand life-saving treatment, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria: [The New York Times](#) (3/11/08).

COOKING CLASSES GIVE NEW HEART TO HOMELESS PEOPLE

Cooking classes are so popular at the Matthew Talbot hostel that the modest kitchen is always packed tight with homeless men keen to learn how to prepare hearty dishes such as butter chicken, the Sydney Morning Herald reported (8/11/08).

Space will be no problem after the Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, opens a lavish four-storey education and learning centre next to the hostel, to be used exclusively by the city's homeless (people).

With its dream kitchen, state-of-the-art computer laboratory, yoga room, music workshop and vast spaces for classes, counselling and therapy, the Ozanam Learning Centre will be the biggest of its kind in Australia.

But that prompts the question: could the \$20 million spent on the new building by the St Vincent de Paul Society - made possible by last year's sale of its nursing homes - have been better spent providing accommodation for the homeless people)?

The society's chief executive, John Picot, is sympathetic to the "housing first" philosophy, but said chronically homeless people needed intense support to raise their self-esteem and hone their living skills before they could contemplate moving into the simplest flat or group house.

These days NSW Housing wanted evidence that homeless people, if offered its accommodation, had the skills to maintain a tenancy. "If you don't feel entitled to what everyone else takes for granted, you're set up for failure," he said.

REPORT: <http://www.smh.com.au/news/national/how-the-homeless-help-themselves/2008/11/05/1225560945076.html>

F. MEDIA MATTERS

'WOWSER GOVERNMENT' CENSORS AUSTRALIAN INTERNET

The Australian Government is about to censor Australians access to the internet, says Civil Liberties Australia (CLA): "They will decide what you will be allowed to see and read, hear and view." (5/11/08). The censorship would ban websites "they' don't want you to know about, maybe euthanasia, anorexia, drugs, guns, alternative religions and ... democracy, obviously."

CLA is forming 'Action Email Cells' - groups prepared to take the fight to the government on this issue at secretary@cla.asn.au

CLA reported that Digital Minister Stephen Conroy told a Senates Estimates Committee last month that the government's \$44.2 million internet censorship plan would include two tiers:

one level of mandatory filtering for all Australians, and
an optional level that will provide a 'clean feed', censoring 'adult' material.

"Australia's level of net censorship will put it in the same league as countries including China, Cuba, Iran and North Korea, and the government will not let users opt out of the proposed national internet filter when it is introduced," News Ltd technology correspondent Jennifer Dudley-Nicholson reported last month.

The minister's mandatory censorship breaks a promise, CLA President Dr Kristine Klugman said.

"The Labor Party promised an opt-in system where parents could choose to censor children's access. What is now to be introduced is broad-brush, nationwide, mandatory censoring of every Australians' access to information. It's like the government deciding which bookshop you're allowed to go into, and which book you're permitted to pick up.

"This wowser government appears intent on creating a dumbed-down society. The move will lead to the antithesis of the Clever Country. Quite apart from taking away freedoms, it will slow the internet down dramatically and actively promote lack of inquiry."

Giving government exclusive control over an information flow chokepoint is a recipe for societal disaster and damage to Australia's democracy, she said.

A spokesman for Communications Minister Stephen Conroy was reported as saying the filters will be mandatory for all Australians.

"Labor's plan for cyber-safety will require ISPs to offer a clean feed internet service to all homes, schools and public Internet points accessible by children. The upcoming field pilot of ISP filtering technology will look at various aspects of filtering, including effectiveness, ease of circumvention, the impact on internet access speeds and cost."

Internet Service Providers (ISPs) were reported to have warned blanket content filtering would cripple Internet speeds because the technology was not up to scratch. There was a further danger that the blacklists would be expanded to censor a wide range of material.

MISSION TO SRI LANKA CONCERNED OVER DETERIORATION

The third visit of the International Press Freedom Mission to Sri Lanka took place between October 25/29, and the IFJ subsequently participated in a statement concerning the deterioration of the situation in Sri Lanka since the mission's visit in June 2007, IFJ reported (30/10/08).

Among the most serious developments the mission encountered was the use of terrorism legislation to punish journalists for what they have written. J.S. Tissainayagam, B. Jasiharan and V. Vallarmathy have been detained since March and in the case of Mr Tissainayagam, the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) was invoked well after the period of three months stipulated for bringing charges.

The mission reported that in recent months journalists and media institutions seeking to report independently on the ongoing conflict had been attacked and intimidated. They had also been explicitly pressured to reveal their sources.

The mission was told lives of journalists in the eastern province of Sri Lanka were constantly threatened by parties to the conflict in an effort to curtail independent reporting. The mission also condemned the murder of P. Devakumar, a journalist with the Sirasa TV channel, in Jaffna in May.

A legislative effort to curb media independence was identified. Media rules gazetted on October 10 by the Sri Lankan Government provide for a number of contingencies under which broadcasting licences could be cancelled, including seven different grounds related to broadcast content. Broadcast channels will now have to apply annually for licence renewal.

The mission placed on record its dismay at the repeated instances of elected representatives and high officials of the government using violence and inflammatory language against media workers and institutions.

The mission team applauded the solidarity and resolve shown by the five organisations of journalists in Sri Lanka – the Free Media Movement, Sri Lankan Working Journalists' Association, Federation of Media Employees' Trade Unions, Sri Lankan Tamil Media Alliance and Sri Lankan Muslim Media Forum – in a tough and challenging situation. Moreover, the mission expressed its appreciation for the solidarity displayed by media owners and editors in seeking to bring the perpetrators of recent attacks to justice.

The mission is coordinated by International Media Safety of Copenhagen, Denmark, and includes 12 international professional organisations. The delegation for last visit included the IFJ, International Media Support (IMS), International News Safety Institute (INSI), International Press Institute (IPI) and Reporters Without Borders (RSF).

DETAILS: International Media Support at: <http://www.i-m-s.dk/>

TAIWAN: An attack on an independent documentary filmmaker by authorities in Taipei (5/11/08) has been condemned by the International Federation of Journalists. According to the Association of Taiwan Journalists (ATJ), documentary film maker Chen Yu-ching was set upon by police after filming protests on November 4 at the Grand Hotel, Taipei, over the visit of a mainland China Government envoy.

It was reported that a group of police forced her into a police vehicle and detained her for over an hour at Yuanshan Precinct police station, after she refused to produce identification. The ATJ reports that Ms Chen sustained heavy bruising in several places and was later examined in hospital to rule out serious injury.

The visit from a mainland China envoy to meet Taiwan Government negotiators was reported to have sparked the protest. **DETAILS:** IFJ Asia -Pacific on +612 9333 0919.

PHILIPPINES: Ongoing disrespect shown towards journalists and press freedom in the Philippines has been taken up by the IFJ after receiving new reports of bullying by government officials and threatening text messages (6/11/08).

According to the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines (NUJ P), radio reporter for dxND – Notre Dame Broadcasting Corporation in Kidapawan City, Gil Bautista received threats over the radio station's hotline regarding his report of alleged extortion activities concerning the Land Transportation Office (LTO).

The threats sent in two text messages suggested Mr Bautista was "worth only one bullet" and "surely would be exterminated", the NUJ P said.

Two Lucena City radio anchors and two Davao City radio journalists also reported receiving threatening text messages after broadcasting allegations of extortion or corruption in October.

Reports were also received that an army officer threatened Loreto Rosario, a reporter for dxMS radio and member of the NUJ P chapter in Cotabato City on October 31. A mobile phone and press card were confiscated during a confrontation.

DETAILS: IFJ Asia -Pacific on +612 9333 0919.

NEPAL: A new wave of local violence from the general public against journalists during Nepal's October festival season was reported by the IFJ (6/11/08).

According to the Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ), a correspondent for the *Gorkhaptra* national daily, Siddharaj Upadhyay, was physically abused by a local Doti businessman on October 28 in Dapayal, a mid western region of Nepal. It was reported the businessman warned his life was at risk if he wrote unfavourable coverage about gambling.

In a similar incident, the president of the FNJ Pyuthan chapter Sushil Pokharel was allegedly threatened by a former chairperson of the Village Development Committee for not including the name of a business in his local radio program in Pyuthan, in mid-western Nepal.

MALAYSIAN INDEPENDENT PUBLISHER RECEIVES AWARD

Malaysian independent publisher and development communications advocate Chin Saik Yoon, founder and managing director of Malaysian-based publishing house Southbound Press, received the 2008 School of Journalism and Communications International Communication and Social Change Award from Queensland University Vice Chancellor Professor Paul Greenfield this week.

The first Meritorious Commendation Award was presented to development communication volunteer worker John Dada, founder of Nigerian rural women's NGO, the Fantsuam Foundation. [DETAILS](#): Marsali Mackinnon, Centre for Communication and Social Change, on 0417 209 027; m.mackinnon@uq.edu.au

IRISH PARENT PUTS APN ON SALES BLOCK

The global financial meltdown looks set to trigger a major realignment of Australian media, The Australian reported (3/11/08). This came as the debt-laden Irish parent of APN News announced its stake was for sale, after it received "unsolicited offers".

Independent News & Media (INM), controlled by Ireland's Dr Tony O'Reilly, has launched a review of its 39.1 per cent holding in APN -- one of Australasia's largest media groups. Its assets include The New Zealand Herald, Australia's largest outdoor media group, half of the Australian Radio Network (owner of the MIX FM stations) and a mass of regional newspapers across Australia and NZ.

INM, which also owns The Independent newspaper in London, is hoping to raise E800 million (\$1.53 billion) from the APN sale to reduce its debt from E1.4 billion to under E600 million. [REPORT: http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,24591318-7582,00.html](http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,24591318-7582,00.html)

IFJ ASIA -PACIFIC BULLETIN: DECEMBER ISSUE

Inaugural Winners of Sri Lanka Human Rights Prize Announced
IFJ Runs Safety Program for Pakistan Journalists
Stand up for Journalism Global Event on November 5
IFJ Joins International Mission Visit to Sri Lanka
Afghan Journalist Escapes Death Penalty, Faces 20 Years Prison
Jailed Chinese Free Speech Activist wins Sakharov prize
Taiwan Journalists Angered at Government Interference
Landmark Libel Case Thrown Out in Philippines But Death Threats Continue
Sri Lankan Journalist Killed in Suicide Bombing
Right to Information Action Passes in Bangladesh as Akash faces trial
IFJ Makes New Connection with Pacific Neighbours
New Online Legal Resource Launched
World Press Photo Competition Calling for Entries
[DETAILS](#): IFJ Asia -Pacific on +612 9333 0919.

G. OTHER NEWS

OBAMA ELECTED PRESIDENT AS RACE BARRIER FALLS

Barack Hussein Obama was elected the 44th president of the United States on Tuesday, sweeping away the last racial barrier in American politics with ease as the country chose him as its first black chief executive, the New York Times reported (4/11/08).

The election of Mr Obama amounted to a national catharsis — a repudiation of a historically unpopular Republican president and his economic and foreign policies, and an embrace of Mr Obama's call for a change in the direction and the tone of the country.

But it was just as much a strikingly symbolic moment in the evolution of the nation's fraught racial history, a breakthrough that would have seemed unthinkable just two years ago.

Mr Obama, 47, a first-term senator from Illinois, defeated Senator [John McCain](#) of Arizona, 72, a former prisoner of war who was making his second bid for the presidency.

To the very end, Mr McCain's campaign was eclipsed by an opponent who was nothing short of a phenomenon, drawing huge crowds epitomised by the tens of thousands of people who turned out to hear Mr Obama's victory speech in Grant Park in Chicago.

REPORT: <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/05/us/politics/05elect.html?th&emc=th>

SEE ALSO ARTICLES IN FOCUS PAGE

Extracts from the Sydney Morning Herald (6/11/08):

INDONESIA At Menteng one primary school in central Jakarta, where Barack Obama spent his third and fourth grade, 200 children ran screaming into the courtyard despite the rain when vice principal Akhmad Solikhin announced the former pupil had become US president. An "O-bam-a" chant spread as the children hugged each other and jumped around.

KENYA At Kogelo Barack Obama's Kenyan family erupted in cheers, singing, "We are going to the White House!" as he became the first African American elected president in the United States. In the western village of Kogelo, where the Democratic candidate's late father was born, police had tightened security to prevent media and others from entering the rural homestead of Senator Obama's step-grandmother, Mama Sarah. She and several other relatives came outside to cheer for Senator Obama in a country where the Democrat is seen as a "son of the soil".

AMERICA Yes, he could. What impossibly strange confluence of circumstance led to this moment, when a junior senator from Illinois, a man with a spindly public record leavened with a gift for oratory from God, stood in front of a quarter of a million hysterical people in his own home town and claimed his country's highest honour? Something weird and magical hastened Barack Obama along this path.

INDONESIA INTERCEPTS AUSTRALIA-BOUND ASYLUM SEEKERS

Indonesian authorities have detained at least 20 asylum seekers who were about to head to Australia, the ABC reported (4/11/08).

Indonesia's national police spokesman, General Abubakar Natapriwira, told media in Jakarta that the 12 Afghans and eight Pakistanis were arrested early on Sunday. Police claim they were attempting to travel by boat from West Java to Christmas Island, within Australia's territorial waters.

Ten Indonesians, described as the boat's owners and crew, were also been detained after they were intercepted near a small port in Bojonegara, in the West Java regency of Serang.

REPORT: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/11/03/2409252.htm>

RAMOS-HORTA URGES AUSSIES BACK TO EAST TIMOR

East Timor's President is urging Australians wanting to make a difference to his country to travel there for a holiday (1/11/08). Jose Ramos-Horta was almost killed during a botched coup attempt in Dili in early February. Investigations into the shooting are continuing.

But Dr Ramos-Horta says people just want peace and he believes Dili is now one of the safest cities in the region.

Prior to Indonesia's invasion in 1975, East Timor was a popular destination, particularly for Northern Territory travellers. Tourism has been rebuilding since the 1999 unrest; there were 3,000 tourists in 2005, but the country has been dogged by outbreaks of violence.

The current travel advisory from the Department of Foreign Affairs advises Australians to reconsider travelling there because of the risk of civil unrest, but Dr Ramos-Horta says it is time tourists ventured there.

REPORT: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/11/01/2407597.htm>

CHINESE RULE A DEATH SENTENCE FOR TIBET: DALAI LAMA

Chinese rule is handing down a "death sentence" to Tibetans, the Dalai Lama has said, ahead of a meeting to decide Tibet's future approach to Beijing (2/11/08).

The region's exiled leader was on a week-long visit to Japan for talks on spirituality, just as a new round of talks between his envoys and Chinese officials was set to begin, and days after he said he had lost hope of any productive dialogue with Beijing.

"Tibetans are being handed down a death sentence. This ancient nation, with an ancient cultural heritage is dying," he told reporters. "Today, the situation is almost like a military occupation in the entire Tibetan area. It is like we're under martial law. Fear, terror and lots of political education are causing a lot of grievance."

REPORT: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/11/02/2408008.htm>

ILLEGAL SEAFARERS ON INCREASE: UN

The number of people illegally crossing the Gulf of Aden and the Mediterranean Sea is on the rise, the UN refugee agency reported, confirming that 12 people fleeing Somalia in the past week have been found dead on a Yemen beach and 28 others remained missing (4/11/08).

Smugglers forced up to 40 people overboard into the deep waters of the Gulf of Aden as they were on the last leg of the 36-hour journey from strife-torn Somalia to Yemen, 75 survivors told the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) at the Ahwar reception centre.

They said the boat left on Friday with 115 passengers, mainly Somalis and Ethiopians. The passengers paid \$100 each before leaving, but when the Yemeni coast was in sight, the smugglers demanded more money. Those who did not or could not pay, mostly Ethiopians, were severely beaten and thrown overboard.

UNHCR also **reported** that figures from the first 10 months of the year show a significant increase in the number of people being smuggled across the Gulf of Aden and the Mediterranean Sea compared to the whole of 2007.

By the end of October, some 30,000 boat people arrived on Italian shores, compared to 19,900 during the whole of 2007. The number of people reported dead or missing at sea on their way to Italy and Malta in the first 10 months of 2008 was 509, up from 471 in 2007.

Figures for those crossing to Malta show a similar trend. Nearly 2,600 boat people arrived by the end of September, compared to 1,800 for 2007. By the end of July in Greece an estimated 15,000 arrived, compared to 19,900 from all 2007. The trend is the same in mainland Spain and the Canary Islands.

UNHCR says it is stepping up its efforts in Yemen by improving reception centres for those who survive the journey, while improving conditions of people with protection needs in the Horn of Africa so that they do not feel the need to risk their lives on the crossing.

REPORT:

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28808&Cr=UNHCR&Cr1=Smuggling>

60 REFUGEES FOUND DEAD ON YEMEN BEACH

Sixty corpses of would-be refugees from Somalia and Ethiopia were found on a Yemen beach after smugglers forced many of them overboard, an international aid agency said (4/11/08).

Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) said the latest victims on the notoriously perilous smuggling route had come across the Gulf of Aden from the Somali port city of Bosasso, fleeing war and poverty in their homelands.

In one of two incidents that caused the deaths, smugglers tipped the refugees into the sea at night after noticing lights on land and fearing they would be spotted by the coastguard, MSF were quoted survivors as saying. "They forced us into the sea, even if the water was too deep. Several people did not know how to swim and they drowned," one survivor said. An eight-month pregnant woman was injured by the boat's propeller after being forced overboard.

MSF workers also discovered another group who had made it to shore after their boat capsized who said they had buried 23 fellow passengers.

"The boat was stuck almost upside down in the sand, not far from the beach. The fishermen were trying to find survivors underneath but they could not," said an MSF worker. "So I had to dive under. I managed to get in the hull and with God's help, we got two women and a man out safe." **REPORT:** <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/11/04/2409285.htm>

BOOKS STACK UP FOR INDONESIAN CHILDREN

Indonesian students from The University of Queensland are embarking on an ambitious plan to collect 1.5 tonnes of books to help disadvantaged children back home, UQ Communications reported (6/11/08).

The 'English Books for Indonesian Children' initiative is organised by the UQ Indonesian Student Association and coordinator, UQ student Mika Halpin Hasanah, said it involved book hunting at various venues and culminated in an annual group donation to disadvantaged Indonesian schools and libraries.

"UQISA members regularly visit book festivals, markets, garage sales, school fetes and warehouses to buy second-hand books at a lower cost," she said. "In 2007 we collected books throughout the year and shipped them in early December to the many communities who applied for book donations."

But the program didn't stop when the books were handed over, as the students monitored the fate of each book, including where and how they were used, who managed them and general usage progress.

"We have identified potential partners in Indonesia, including the UQ alumni and education networks of UQ Indonesian students, to distribute and facilitate the use of the books at schools in Indonesia," she said. "One recipient school in the East Kalimantan province reported that the books were useful not only for students but also for teachers to learn and teach English."

During 2008 Indonesian Student Associations from Adelaide, Perth, Melbourne, Canberra and Sydney joined in the effort.

"During 2007, over 4800 books weighing no less than 830kgs were sent to at least 15 disadvantaged schools and libraries spread across the Indonesian provinces," Ms Hasanah said. The university students are still looking for English books for beginners or children and secondary school or university level textbooks for all subjects, including biology, natural sciences and maths.

DETAILS: Mika on 0404 609 008; Asti on 0401 798 843;
<http://bukuuntukanakbangsa.blogspot.com>.

CLARK CONFIDENT HEADING INTO NZ ELECTION BATTLE

New Zealanders were due to go to the polls on November 8 and after nine years as Prime Minister, Helen Clark is facing the toughest fight of her career, the ABC reported (5/11/08).

Those who know her say since she was elected in 1999, Miss Clark's passion for politics has not waned.

"Not every day is perfect, nor is every week or month, but what I know is I give it 1,000 per cent and we can point to the most extraordinary results for New Zealand, whether it's been on the level of economic growth, the low level of unemployment," she said.

Miss Clark was gearing up to face her main opponent, National Party leader John Key, in the country's third and final televised leaders' debate.

Later polls suggested change and the National bloc was pulling ahead.

H. ARTICLES IN FOCUS

[New York Times Editorial](#)

'PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA'

○ An American with the name Barack Hussein Obama, the son of a white woman and a black man he barely knew, raised by his grandparents far outside the stream of American power and wealth, has been elected the 44th president of the United States.

Showing extraordinary focus and quiet certainty, Mr Obama defeated first Hillary Clinton, who wanted to be president so badly that she lost her bearings, and then John McCain, who forsook his principles for a campaign built on anger and fear.

Mr Obama won the election because he saw what is wrong with this country: the utter failure of government to protect its citizens. He promised to lead a government that does not try to solve every problem but will do those things beyond the power of individual citizens: to regulate the economy fairly, keep the air clean and the food safe, ensure that the sick have access to health care, and educate children to compete in a globalized world.

Mr Obama spoke candidly of the failure of Republican economic policies that promised to lift all Americans but left so many millions far behind. He committed himself to ending a bloody and pointless war. He promised to restore Americans' civil liberties and this country's tattered reputation around the world. With a message of hope and competence he drew in legions of voters who had been disengaged and voiceless

EDITORIAL: http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/05/opinion/05wed1.html?_r=1&hp&oref=slogin

A NEW ERA FOR AMERICA

Yes, it is time to hope again. Time to hope that the era of racial backlash and wedge politics is over, writes E.J. Dionne Jnr in the Washington Post (5/11/08). Time to imagine that the patriotism of dissenters will no longer be questioned and that the world will no longer be divided between "values voters" and those with no moral compass. Time to expect that an ideological label will no longer be enough to disqualify a politician. Above all, it is time to celebrate the country's wholehearted embrace of democracy, reflected in the intense engagement of Americans in this campaign and the outpouring to the polls all over the nation. For years, we have spoken of bringing free elections to the rest of the world even as we cynically mocked our own ways of conducting politics. Yesterday, we chose to practice what we have been preaching. [Barack Obama's](#) sweeping electoral victory cannot be dismissed merely as a popular reaction to an economic crisis or as a verdict on an unpopular president, though the judgment rendered on [President Bush](#) is important. In choosing Obama and a strongly Democratic Congress, the country put a definitive end to a conservative era ...

ARTICLE: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/11/04/AR2008110404476.html?wpisrc=newsletter&wpisrc=newsletter>

THE NATION THAT STOPS A RACE ... UNTIL NOW

Sometimes when Barack Obama waited outside a restaurant for the valet to bring his car, a white couple would toss him their car keys. He endured this and all the petty humiliations of the black man in America, Peter Hartcher writes in the Sydney Morning Herald (5/11/08). Yet he never allowed his anger to take over and he never surrendered to the tightly boxed

confines of racial expectations. He was always determined to break what he calls "the psychological shackles of slavery and Jim Crow [segregation]" ... But what's Obama's secret? He goes to today's US election as the favourite to become the most powerful man in the world. How did he resist the mindset of racial limitations that has bound generations of African-Americans for the 143 years since the abolition of slavery?

ARTICLE: <http://www.smh.com.au/news/us-election/the-nation-that-stops-a-race--until-now/2008/11/05/1225560842110.html>

THE CHRISTMAS ISLAND CHALLENGE

The arrival of two boatloads of asylum seekers is the first test of Labor's new detention policy, writes Michelle Dimasi in a report from Australian Policy Online (5/11/08). Five weeks ago, Christmas Island made headlines when two groups of boat people were taken to this remote Australian island, 300km south of Java. These were the first boat arrivals since the Rudd Government announced its changes to detention policy in late July, so their treatment gives an insight into how Labor's new approach will work in practice ... Who are the eighteen people living in the builder's camp, and should they be there? Currently, eight of the new arrivals are attending the Christmas Island school; because they are children they wouldn't be held in the Phosphate Hill centre under Labor's new policy. Of the other ten living in the builder's camp, some could be unaccompanied minors and some or all could be parents of those attending the school. So at least eight children and an unknown number of family members are being held in alternative detention rather than being accommodated in community detention. Michelle Dimasi is a PhD student at the Institute for Social Research, Swinburne University of Technology, and is living on Christmas Island while researching the impact of Australia's asylum seeker policy.

ARTICLE: <http://inside.org.au/the-christmas-island-challenge/>

INDONESIA FIGHTS ITS REPUTATION FOR GRAFT

Once a byword for corruption, Indonesia has begun to fight back against the well-connected bribers, brokers, and embezzlers who have for decades fed off its public sector, Simon Montlake reports in the Christian Science Monitor (3/11/08). Almost every day brings news of another arrest or trial hearing on corruption charges, and the faces of the accused are familiar: lawmakers, judges, police, and other government officials. Once ensnared, these high-fliers try to wriggle off the hook, as was so often the case during past anticorruption drives. But these days they usually find their efforts are in vain ... At the forefront of Indonesia's battle with public-sector graft is the elite Corruption Eradication Commission, known as the KPK, which reports directly to President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono ... Transparency International, a watchdog group that compiles a widely watched corruption index, gave Indonesia a score of 2.6 out of 10 for 2008, up from 1.9 in 2003, and ranked it 126th out of 180 countries surveyed. This turnaround underpins an often turbulent overhaul of governance in Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim country, since the ouster in 1998 of US-backed President Suharto. Mr Yudhoyono took office in 2004 on an anti-graft platform.

ARTICLE: <http://www.csmonitor.com/2008/1103/p07s02-woap.html>

THE MAKING OF MARTYRS

Behind the inanity of the grinning Bali bombers is an expert alliance drawing out the headlines, and some handsome profits, writes Tom Allard, in the Sydney Morning Herald (1/11/08). For three men who say they welcome death, the Bali bombers have spent a lot of time trying to avoid it. In the five years since Mukhlas, Amrozi and Imam Samudra greeted their guilty verdicts and death sentences with fist-pumping glee and shouts of "Infidel die", they have fought at every turn their moment with the firing squad. Perhaps these killers of 202 people are not so comfortable with meeting their maker. But they are truly fanatics and a far more worrying explanation for their antics offers itself. This spectacle was engineered by hardline Islamists, high-powered lawyers and wealthy businessmen to keep the headlines running, to increase the killers' notoriety, to publicise their cause and, along the way, to make money on the side. "The Bali bombers want to be martyrs," says Sidney Jones, Jakarta-based terrorism expert from the International Crisis Group. "It's much easier to be a martyr if a lot of people are following your every word. In this respect, their strategy has worked."

ARTICLE: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/10/31/1224956332786.html>

A QUIET DEAL WITH PAKISTAN

Pakistan is publicly complaining about US airstrikes. But the country's new chief of intelligence, Lt General Ahmed Shuja Pasha, visited Washington last week for talks with America's top military and spy chiefs, and everyone seemed to come away smiling, according to David Ignatius in the Washington Post (4/11/08). They could pat themselves on the back, for starters, for the assassination of Khalid Habib, [al-Qaeda's](#) deputy chief of operations. According to Pakistani officials, he was killed on October 16 by a Predator strike in the Pakistani tribal area of South Waziristan. Habib, reckoned by some to be the No. 4 leader in al-Qaeda, was involved in recruiting operatives for future terrorist attacks against the United States. The hit on Habib attests to the growing cooperation -- in secret -- between the United States and Pakistan in the high-stakes war along Pakistan's border with Afghanistan, which US intelligence officials regard as the crucial front in the war on terrorism.

ARTICLE: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/11/03/AR2008110302638.html?wpisrc=newsletter>

PAKISTANI CITY BATTLES FEAR AND MILITANCY

Pakistan's most liberal city has increasing fallen prey to fear as extremist elements step up their terror efforts. The situation has exposed divides between Lahore's wealthy liberal elite and the more conservative working class. [The New York Times](#) (3/11/08).

CLEAN UP OUR OWN BACKYARD, DODSON TELLS AUSTRALIA

Australia was trying to strut the international stage, talking about improving the world, when problems needed fixing in our own backyard, the Aboriginal leader Pat Dodson said, according to Tony Stephens in the Sydney Morning Herald (5/11/08). Mr Dodson said Australia risked being condemned as a pariah nation unless it ratified the UN Declaration on Indigenous Rights, passed last year. "We don't come to the table with clean hands," he said. "We behave schizophrenically. Internationally, we present a front about Australia as a tolerant nation, about mateship and the land of the fair go. But domestically we don't acknowledge that we are swimming in a backwater because we haven't advanced our social discourse on change." Mr Dodson was speaking before his delivery of the Sydney Peace Prize Lecture and his receipt of the 2008 Sydney Peace Prize. He said the nation would lose absolutely if the riches of one of the world's oldest living cultures were squandered, abused or simply denied. Mr Dodson is co-convenor, with the former WA Governor John Sanderson, of The Australian Dialogue, which aims to move on from the apology and avoid more dropping of the ball.

ARTICLE: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/11/04/1225560841980.html>

I. ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT

NATIONAL BRIEFING ON HARSH REALITIES AUSTRALIA FACES

As Australia enters the eighth year of the worst drought on record, managing water issues over the coming summer months will be crucial for communities, farmers and regional industries. Because of this, the country's best water experts have been assembled to brief the media on the current water situation and the harsh realities to be confronted.

The briefing, on November 7 at the Bureau of Meteorology, Melbourne, was scheduled to include a drought update from the Murray Darling Basin Commission, a review of rainfall and temperatures from the Bureau of Meteorology and the latest on water supplies for each of the capital cities. The Australian Science Media Centre will make the briefing available online.

The scheduled speakers included Dr Andrew Watkins, Senior Climatologist, National Climate Centre, Bureau of Meteorology; Dr Wendy Craik AM, Chief Executive, Murray-Darling Basin Commission; and Claude Piccinin, Deputy Executive Director of the Water Services Association of Australia.

DETAILS: Audio files will be posted on: www.aussmc.org after the event; AusSMC on 08 8207 7415; info@aussmc.org; www.mdbc.gov.au; sam.leone@mdbc.gov.au;

DROUGHT AID DOWN THE DRAIN

Billions of dollars in drought assistance to farmers and rural businesses has been inequitable, ineffective and divisive, and encouraged poor farming practices, the Australian Productivity Commission reported (31/10/08).

In a draft report requested by the Federal Government, the commission recommends most forms of drought assistance be scrapped by 2009-10 and replaced by spending on things such as climate research and business training that help farmers better manage risk so they can survive drought without taxpayer assistance.

REPORT: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/10/30/1224956238414.html>

ORD VALLEY FARMERS HEAD CHIA CROP REVIVAL

It was once an important part of the Aztecs' diet and culture but now farmers in north western Australia are bringing chia back. In just a few years the Ord Valley in the Kimberley region has become the world's largest producer of the tiny oil seeds, the ABC reported (1/11/08).

Chia originated in Mexico and is still grown primarily for domestic consumption across central and South America. Chia is said to contain omega 3, dietary fibre, anti oxidants, protein and calcium.

Ord Valley chia producer Robert Boshammer said: "Chia virtually disappeared and hadn't been heard of until the early 80s and 90s when the United States Department of Agriculture was doing work looking at alternative crops." He is excited by the potential of the crop which he says can improve the diet of the Australian people.

REPORT: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/11/01/2407530.htm>

KASHIWAZAKI-KARIWA NUCLEAR POWER PLANT IN JAPAN

A team of global experts led by the UN International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) will visit Japan next month in the latest round of assessments on the impact of a strong earthquake last year on the world's largest nuclear power plant located at the centre of Japan. The Kashiwazaki-Kariwa Nuclear Power Plant in Niigata Prefecture has been shut down since last July's tremors.

Last month, the IAEA launched a centre in Vienna to coordinate global efforts to protect nuclear facilities from earthquakes. The International Seismic Safety Centre (ISSC), which is part of IAEA's Department of Nuclear Safety and Security, brings together high-level experts and was created after the July 2007 earthquake in Japan revealed the need for international cooperation to protect such facilities from tremors.

"With safety as our first priority, it is vital that we pool all expert knowledge available worldwide to assist nuclear operators and regulators to be well-prepared for coping with major seismic events," said Antonio Godoy, who heads the new body.

REPORT: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28805&Cr=IAEA&Cr1=>

ETHIOPIAN DROUGHT LIKELY TO CONTINUE NEXT YEAR

The prolonged drought across much of Ethiopia is likely to continue into next year, and the outlook for crop production in the east of the country remains grim, the United Nations humanitarian wing said (5/11/08).

The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (**OCHA**) said a recent UN crop assessment found that at least six areas of eastern Ethiopia have recorded near total crop failure because of inadequate rainfall.

An inter-agency UN assessment team also began this week to determine the emergency needs for the first half of 2009, as the wider Horn of Africa region continues to suffer from the combined effects of drought and high food prices.

OCHA said the key emergency needs are expected to include food, health care, nutrition, water and sanitation, agriculture and livestock.

Last month OCHA appealed for \$265 million to fund its relief operations across Ethiopia for the next three months to meet the widening scale of the crisis, which has left an estimated 6.4 million people dependent on food aid to survive. An immediate scale-up of government and donor support is essential to meet even the basic needs of drought communities, OCHA said.

COMMUNITY GROUPS OFFERED NEW WEAPON IN WAR ON CARP

New carp cages, which have recently removed around seven tonnes of breeding carp from the Murray River in just 10 weeks at a single wetland, are now available to community groups, NRM Boards and catchment managers throughout the Murray-Darling Basin.

The Murray-Darling Basin Commission (MDBC) funded the development of the cages as part of its Native Fish Strategy which aims to return native fish populations to 60 per cent of pre-European settlement numbers.

Researchers at the South Australian Research and Development Institute (SARDI) have modified the cages to work with carp in wetlands.

MDBC Chief Executive Dr Wendy Craik said that together with a range of other options being investigated under the Native Fish Strategy, the cages will boost efforts to control carp in the Murray.

DETAILS: Groups interested in using cages are urged to seek advice from the Invasive Species team at SARDI Aquatic Sciences: smith.ben2@saugov.sa.gov.au or Dr Leigh Thwaites at thwaites.leigh@saugov.sa.gov.au. Designs for carp push traps on SARDI website/Invasive Species Sub Program Home Page <http://tinyurl.com/653umo>; or www.mdbc.gov.au/NFS

SOUTHERN, NORTHERN HEMISPHERES DROUGHT MANAGEMENT STUDIED

An ANU conference is to be held on November 14/15 to look at how Australia has historically managed drought and climate change planning compared with northern hemisphere countries. It is the first stage of an ANU Water Initiative international project to compare the world's southern and northern temperate zones - southern Australia, southern Africa, south west US, the Mediterranean rim (Portugal, Spain and Turkey), northern China and South America. **DETAILS:** Noel.Chan@anu.edu.au; www.water.anu.edu.au/events/dpf/index.php

DESERT KNOWLEDGE SYMPOSIUM

LIFTING REGIONAL AUSTRALIA OUT OF DEPENDENCY

Small communities in regional Australia should be cautious of becoming too dependent on governments or they risk becoming unhealthy and ineffective, warned renowned American thinker and writer Meg Wheatley at the Desert Knowledge Symposium in Alice Springs (5/11/08).

"Worldwide, we have created dependent societies and it can take years, and a lot of patience and effort to pull a community out of this way of thinking. "People have to be engaged in their own lives and in creating benefits for themselves; otherwise we will continue with dependency."

Ms Wheatley, who has worked with Indigenous people from all over the world, cited the Federal Government Intervention as an example of the blanket 'fix it approach'.

"From what I see, the Intervention has been a disaster; you can tell it is going to be disaster when you don't engage with people and it is probably not even working on the right issues, but is simply applying a blanket over the issues.

"The whole issue about no alcohol and no pornography is someone else's idea about what the problem is, and all this creates is opposition, resistance and disgust.

"We can learn a lot about community after a natural disaster. It is human nature for neighbours and strangers to rush in and help each other. Self organisation is a basic human drive, and we should draw on that strength to mobilise our communities in any situation."

The Desert Knowledge Symposium, in Alice Springs, was sponsored by Desert Knowledge Australia, the Desert Peoples Centre and the Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre. **DETAILS:** <http://www.desertknowledge2008.com/>; Laurelle Halford, Creative Territory, on 0417 222 211; laurelle@creativeterritory.com
BRIEF ABSTRACTS: <http://www.desertknowledge2008.com/abstracts.asp>;

INTERNATIONALS LEARN LESSONS FROM DESERT AUSTRALIA

A group of South African researchers have claimed that desert Australia is revolutionary in the way some of its organisations are approaching economic development for its desert inhabitants.

Professor Doreen Atkinson, from the University of the Free State in South Africa, made the claim at the Desert Knowledge Symposium this week in Alice Springs, and with her seven colleagues hopes to learn more about how people in remote Australia are addressing issues such as distance, infrastructure, service delivery and governance.

“Climate change, tourism, agriculture, uranium mining, labour shortages and urban drift are all shared desert issues that we want to talk about and learn from,” she said. “The similarities between South Africa and Australia’s arid regions are strikingly similar; our arid areas comprise about 85 per cent of each nation, and we both have less than 5 per cent of our populations living in these regions.

“We want to lobby our government to encourage inter-provincial cooperation or collaboration, much like Desert Knowledge Australia is doing with its \$10 million cross-border business networking project to strengthen business opportunities for small to medium enterprises across nine regions of desert Australia.”

DETAILS: <http://www.desertknowledge2008.com/>

BRIEF ABSTRACTS: <http://www.desertknowledge2008.com/abstracts.asp>

DESERTS TO POWER AUSTRALIA

The Australian deserts have enough clean, renewable energy to power the entire nation into the future – at the same time generating massive clean energy exports to Asia and unprecedented opportunities for remote communities.

A vision of the deserts as Australia’s power plant of the future will be presented by physicist Dr Barrie Pittock at the Desert Knowledge Symposium.

“Australia is blessed with a wider and greater choice of renewable energies than almost any nation on Earth,” Dr Pittock says. “Most of those are located in the desert regions. Our deserts have some of the highest sunlight intensities anywhere. An area no larger than 50 kilometres square could meet the nation’s entire electricity needs.”

Dr Pittock says that resources company Worley Parsons announced recently it was looking to build the world’s largest solar thermal power station to capture this energy, followed by 33 more by 2020.

DETAILS: <http://www.desertknowledge2008.com/>

GROWING UNUSUAL AND RARE BUSH FOODS

A surge in global interest and demand for unusual and rare bush foods from Australian deserts is posing a challenge to the fledgling industry, estimated to be worth between \$10–16 million dollars per annum, Jenny Cleary, DKCRC Bush foods project leader, reported (5/11/08). DKCRC stands for Desert Knowledge Co-operative Research Centre.

She says demand is high for a range of desert foods such as wattle seed, and in the case of bush tomato – which contributes to over half of the industry’s value – demand is currently outstripping supply.

The opportunity for the bush foods industry to build a sound value chain reaching from the landscapes and people of the deserts into the world's supermarkets will be one of the major issues to be canvassed at the Desert Knowledge Symposium (6/11/08).

"Demand for Australian bush foods is definitely rising, and this means the industry is now demand-driven rather than supply-driven," says Jenny Cleary, said.

"If supply cannot meet demand we won't have the investment into the industry that is required to help it grow. This is an industry founded primarily on traditional Aboriginal knowledge about the collection, preparation and uses of desert plants and other foods – but so far there are not many Aboriginal commercial ventures operating successfully in the area. Our research aims to find out how to help them to participate."

DETAILS: Jenny Cleary on 08 8648 5160/ 0429 699 387;

<http://desertknowledgecrc.com.au/research/bushproducts.html>

<http://www.desertknowledge2008.com/>

<http://www.desertknowledge2008.com/abstracts.asp>