



# UNITY

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### CLIMATE CHANGE COUNTDOWN

Australia's Chief Scientist Penny Sackett, in March 2009, said the world had only six years to radically lower emissions or face calamitous, unstoppable global warming. **This week there are 227 weeks left in which to radically lower emissions.**

## UNITED NATIONS & AGENCIES

### Europe's future 'more uncertain than ever', says IMF chief

**AFP – 9 December**

**The head of the IMF Dominique Strauss-Kahn** said overnight the situation in Europe, which is battling a debt crisis, remains troubling and that the future looked uncertain. However, he insisted that the euro was not in danger, although the eurozone risked posting very slow growth if it failed to pull itself together.

"The situation in Europe remains troubling, and the future is more uncertain than ever," said Mr Strauss-Kahn, managing director of the International Monetary Fund, in Geneva.

Despite the crisis gripping the EU, Mr Strauss-Kahn indicated confidence in the single currency, "I don't believe that the euro is in danger," he told a public forum organised by the United Nations.

"On the other hand, I think that if the eurozone does not pull itself together quickly enough, it would risk having periods of very slow, difficult growth, that it could avoid on condition that its governance is greatly improved."

**Pascal Lamy, director-general of the World Trade Organisation**, noted that at the moment "there is one place on this planet where we are talking about restrictions, and that's Europe."

He explained that the region is suffering from a budgetary problem as it is unable to finance its social model as its workforce ages. Reforms were necessary to help Europe adjust, but "these reforms are politically difficult." In order "for this population to continue to benefit from this system would require either immigration or change."

Europe is suffering from a public debt crisis, with Greece and Ireland forced to tap into EU-IMF rescue funds to keep afloat.

European Union leaders have in recent days been debating whether to increase the size of an overall EU-IMF rescue fund.

Portugal, which like Greece and Ireland is reeling under its public debt burden, is now firmly in the firing line to need help next. Mr Strauss-Kahn said nevertheless that the international community should begin bolstering supervision to head off future crises.

"Without waiting for calm to be restored, we need to start rebuilding these governance structures. It's time for a triple comeback," **said the IMF chief**.

For more information: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/business/news/europes-future-more-uncertain-than-ever-says-imf-chief/story-e6frg90f-1225968052952>

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### Countries meet to boost Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources

**Food and Agriculture Organisation - 8 December**

Senior representatives of more than 60 countries including 22 cabinet ministers have met in Rome as part of a new push to galvanise support behind the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources and its Benefit-sharing Fund, considered essential to conserve and utilise the

world's threatened plant genetic resources for food and agriculture.

The meeting was opened by its **governmental organiser, Italian Agriculture Minister Giancarlo Galan**, who called on Governments to use the Treaty "to overcome the ancient and harmful clash between peasant agriculture and modernity".

He explained that the Treaty facilitates access to genetic material of plant species and pointed out that since the agreement took effect in 2004 there have been more than 800 daily transfers of seeds and other plant material from a pool of more than 1.3 million samples.

The Government of Italy, together with Spain and Norway and Australia, is one of the major donors to the Benefit-sharing Fund (BSF) set up by the Treaty to support poor farmers in developing countries in conserving and adapting to climate change the most important food crops.

### **Adaptation to climate change**

"This high-level forum has made more evident that the Treaty is able to address simultaneously several challenges, including biodiversity loss, global food crises, climate change adaptation and poverty alleviation and agricultural development", said **Shakeel Bhatti, Secretary of the International Treaty**.

The Fund, operational since 2008/2009, has been accepted as a key international instrument for adaptation to climate change by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change while the Treaty has been recognised by Conference adopting the recent ground-breaking Nagoya Protocol as one of the four pillars of the new international regime on access and benefit-sharing for genetic resources.

In the next three months a further amount of US\$10 million dollars will be devoted to help ensure sustainable food security by assisting farmers to adapt to climate change.

The Round Table also reiterated the need to work towards the target of raising \$116 millions by 2014.

### **Dealing with crop diversity loss**

The Treaty is the first fully operational international mechanism for access and benefit-sharing for any component of plant biological diversity and its ratification by 126 countries plus the EU represents the fastest pace of adhesion in the history of treaties and agreements negotiated under the aegis of FAO.

The Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources was conceived to facilitate international cooperation and the fair exchange of genetic resources.

FAO estimates that 75% of crop diversity was lost between 1900 and 2000. A recent study predicted that as much as 22% of the wild relatives of important food crops such as peanut, potato and beans could disappear by 2055 because of a changing climate.

On the positive side, awareness of the problem has been growing rapidly. There are now some 1 750 gene banks worldwide, which together hold more than seven million samples.

For more information: <http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/48559/icode/>

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## UN International Day of Persons with Disabilities

### 3 December

**Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the United Nations human rights chief** have called on governments to do more to support people with disabilities, stressing that they play a vital role in efforts to reach the globally agreed anti-poverty MDG targets by their 2015 deadline.

In a message marking the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, **Mr Ban** said "People with disabilities account for roughly 20% of those living in poverty in developing countries. Worldwide, they suffer high rates of unemployment and often lack access to adequate education and healthcare. In many societies, there are simply no provisions made for this group and they end up living in isolation, disconnected from their own communities."

"On this International Day, let us recognise that the battles against poverty, disease and discrimination will not be won without targeted laws, policies and programmes that empower this group.

"Let us pledge to keep the promise of the goals alive in the community of persons with disabilities. And let us include them not only as beneficiaries, but as valued agents of change in our five-year push to reach the Goals by the internationally agreed deadline of 2015," said Mr Ban.

The Secretary-General's call for governments to give more support to the 650 million people with disabilities worldwide was echoed by **the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay**, who said it made no sense that governments did not do more to bring such a large, potentially productive group in from the sidelines.

Ms Pillay praised the fast adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, saying it had been signed and ratified faster than any other treaty in history. The Convention came into force in May 2008, as the first new human rights convention of the 21st Century. It has so far been signed by 147 States and ratified by 96. This has allowed the formation of a broad, 18-member committee to monitor States' records against their obligations under the Convention

The Australian Government also marked the International Day for Persons with Disabilities with the release of its first report on AusAID's work overseas to improve the lives of people with disabilities.

**Foreign Minister Kevin Rudd** said people with disability are benefiting from increased access to Australia's aid program, including through education and scholarship programs, more access to public infrastructure, and stronger disabled people's organisations.

The Government also reaffirmed its commitment to improving the lives of people with disability by announcing \$11.6 million for four new partnerships - UNICEF, the Government of Papua New Guinea, the Pacific Island Forum Secretariat and World Health Organisation.

The new partnerships are funded from the \$30.2 million May budget initiative for disability-specific measures.

**The Disability Discrimination Commissioner Graeme Innes** welcomed the release of the final report into *Access to Electronic Media for the Hearing and Vision Impaired* by the Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, Senator Conroy. The report included 22 recommendations that the Government will employ and include:

- A move towards 100% captioning on free to air TV between 6 am and 12 midnight by 2014
- Establishing captioning levels for subscription TV following further discussion

- Amending the Broadcasting Services Act to better address captioning for both free to air and subscription TV
- Strengthening the power of ACMA to investigate complaints
- Improving access to emergency service announcements
- Trialing audio description on the ABC
- Providing online information for consumers on access features of set-top boxes

The UN release:

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=36943&Cr=DISABILITIES&Cr1=>

The AusAID report:

[http://www.ausaid.gov.au/publications/pubout.cfm?ID=8879\\_935\\_304\\_1644\\_2484&Type=](http://www.ausaid.gov.au/publications/pubout.cfm?ID=8879_935_304_1644_2484&Type=)

The Foreign Minister's release: [http://foreignminister.gov.au/releases/2010/kr\\_mr\\_101203.html](http://foreignminister.gov.au/releases/2010/kr_mr_101203.html)

The AHRC release: [http://www.hreoc.gov.au/about/media/media\\_releases/2010/119\\_10.html](http://www.hreoc.gov.au/about/media/media_releases/2010/119_10.html)

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## UN air service crew freed in Darfur

### **WFP – 8 December**

The United Nations World Food Program (WFP) today welcomed the news that three Latvian men working as helicopter aircrew for the WFP United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) in the western Sudanese region of Darfur, have been freed after more than a month in captivity.

WFP said that the three Latvians, a pilot, co-pilot and mechanic seized by gunmen in the South Darfur capital of Nyala on 4 November, would be flown to Khartoum before travelling home to Latvia.

“We are so grateful that these three men have been freed and our thoughts are with their families in Latvia who will be reunited with them in the coming days,” said **WFP Executive Director, Josette Sheeran**. “Now we can all celebrate their freedom.”

“WFP has worked tirelessly with the government of Sudan and the government of Latvia to bring about their release,” Sheeran said, adding that they were abducted while carrying out vital humanitarian work for the United Nations in Sudan.

For more information: <http://www.wfp.org/news/news-release/three-latvian-air-crew-working-un-air-service-freed-captivity-darfur>

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## UNESCO film recognition for Sydney

### **Garry Maddox, SMH – 10 December**

Sydney has been named as a UNESCO City of Film, only the second time the title has been bestowed. The other City of Film is Bradford in Northern England.

The United Nations organisation has approved a bid for the city to join a global network of 26 creative centres for literature, music, design, media arts, gastronomy and crafts and folk arts.

The Arts Minister, Virginia Judge said "There will be concrete benefits because having that international relationship will bring a renewed focus and energy - and resources, hopefully - in terms of exchange between the cities," she said. "Having that title gives you a bit of extra clout."

The director Baz Luhrmann said the city had gone ahead in leaps and bounds since he made *Strictly Ballroom*.

"From a coffee shop film festival that becomes a global phenomenon in Tropfest, to world-class soundstages to ritual visits to outdoor cinemas during the summer and a rich breeding ground for the next round of Australian cinematic creativity, it's a culture that embraces and celebrates all things cinematic."

For more information: <http://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/movies/film-recognition-for-sydney-despite-hollywood-cold-shoulder-20101209-18rhu.html>

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## UN International Volunteer Day

### **Foreign Affairs – 5 December**

More babies are being delivered safely in Cambodia, more children are getting a basic education in Papua New Guinea, and farmers in Ghana have increased rice production, all thanks to the work of more than a thousand Australian volunteers.

Through programs such as Australian Volunteers International, Volunteering for International Development Australia and Australian Business Volunteers, Australians are volunteering in 29 countries across the world including Asia, the Pacific, the Middle East and Africa, with expansion into Latin America and the Caribbean expected to begin next year.

**Foreign Minister Kevin Rudd** said on International Volunteers Day "In the past 45 years, AusAID has supported 12 000 volunteers. Today we are funding 1 150 placements. From young Australians spending a year after university through to business executives, these Australians are giving their time and experience to create opportunity and a brighter future for some of the world's poorest people," said Mr Rudd.

This financial year, the Government has committed \$42 million to deliver Australian volunteer programs, as part of the Government's overseas development assistance program aimed at reducing poverty and promoting sustainable development.

International Volunteer Day, 5 December, has been recognised by the United Nations and celebrated worldwide since 1985.

To find out more about volunteering overseas: <http://www.ausaid.gov.au/partner/volunteer.cfm>

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## International Anti-Corruption Day – UN guided

### **Attorney-General – 9 December**

Attorney-General, Robert McClelland, and Minister for Home Affairs and Justice, Brendan O'Connor, today announced Australia will help establish an International Anti-Corruption Academy in Vienna to mark International Anti-Corruption Day Australia. It is expected to be fully operational next year.

The *UN Convention Against Corruption*, to which Australia is a party, will guide the new Academy's activities. Mr O'Connor also affirmed Australia's commitment to conducting a comprehensive, open and inclusive review of its compliance with the *UN Convention against Corruption* in 2011. This review will be one of the first to be conducted under the UN's newly instituted review mechanism.

For more information:

[http://www.ministerhomeaffairs.gov.au/www/ministers/oconnor.nsf/Page/MediaReleases\\_2010\\_FourthQuarter\\_9December2010-Strengtheningtheglobalfightagainstcorruption](http://www.ministerhomeaffairs.gov.au/www/ministers/oconnor.nsf/Page/MediaReleases_2010_FourthQuarter_9December2010-Strengtheningtheglobalfightagainstcorruption)

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## HUMAN RIGHTS

### Villawood Detention Centre death

#### **Department of Immigration and Citizenship - 8 December**

The Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) has confirmed a 29-year-old British man died on 8 December at the Villawood Immigration Detention Centre.

The man was discovered not breathing in his accommodation at the centre at about 3.20am.

"CPR was commenced immediately and an ambulance called but the man was pronounced dead by NSW Ambulance officers," said a **DIAC spokesman**.

"Police will investigate the circumstances around the man's death which may become the subject of a Coroner's inquest.

"The deceased had been detained for breaching his visa conditions and was on a removal pathway."

**Pamela Curr from the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre** comments "This is the third tragedy since 20 September."

"Refugee advocates are calling for an urgent inquiry into the health provision for people in detention in Villawood. There are grave concerns about IHMS [International Health and Medical Services], an international company which has a contract to provide health assessments and treatment of people in detention.

We cannot wait for the Coroners Court to investigate these deaths and make recommendations which may save lives. This could take 18 months or more."

For more information: [http://www.newsroom.immi.gov.au/media\\_releases/880](http://www.newsroom.immi.gov.au/media_releases/880) and <http://refugeeaction.org.au/2010/12/08/three-deaths-in-three-months-refugee-advocates-call-for->

[urgent-enquiry/](#)

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## Self-harm in detention centres on rise

**Sean Parnell and Lanai Vasek, *The Australian* – 9 December**

The Immigration Department is experiencing an increase in self-harm cases and violent incidents at detention centres.

The rise comes a year after receiving advice that mandatory detention was bad for asylum-seekers.

As investigations continue into the apparent suicide of a detainee at Villawood, in western Sydney on Wednesday, *The Australian* has learned the department paid the University of NSW about \$80 000 to review the international research on resolving immigration status only to then sit on the report.

Between July 1 and November 18, there were 79 recorded incidents of self-harm in detention centres, compared with 39 the previous financial year.

**The report, by the Social Policy Research Centre**, was completed in November last year and concluded mandatory detention "has a negative impact on both the physical and the mental health of a population that is already vulnerable".

"A clear picture emerges that the more punitive approaches, in particular detention, are expensive to administer and also have deleterious effects on individuals," the report says. "These negative effects appear not to be counteracted by speedier or more efficient status resolution.

"On the other hand, the emerging evidence indicates that community-based case management interventions may offer the best response for individuals, securing dignity and facilitating improved understanding of the immigration process."

The report also questioned whether tougher policies acted as a deterrent to asylum-seekers, highlighting how many rely on agents and people-smugglers rather than determine their own routes based on the likelihood of success.

The report was obtained by *The Australian* under Freedom of Information laws, along with the latest data on self-harm and other incidents at detention centres.

**A spokesman for Immigration Minister Chris Bowen** - who received the report only a few weeks ago - said the government wanted the majority of vulnerable families and children in community-based accommodation, and had sought to improve the culture in detention centres.

"While there has been an increase in incidents in immigration detention from 2009 to 2010, the rate of incidents remains historically low and is in proportion to the number of people in immigration detention," he said. "The statistics are a marked improvement on the statistics from a decade ago under the Howard government."

For more information: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/nation/self-harm-in-detention-centres-on-rise/story-e6frg6nf-1225967906031>

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## UN report: Afghan women still suffer horrendous abuse

**Jon Boone, The Guardian - 9 December**

Bibi Aisha, the Afghan girl whose nose and ears were cut off by her husband, was a "lucky victim" because she survived her attack and got help, **a top human rights official in the country** said on Wednesday.

While Aisha escaped her abusive family, **the deputy chairman of the country's Independent Human Rights Commission, Ahmad Fahim Hakim**, said that many women in similar circumstances were less lucky. "For sure, we have hundreds of Bibi Aishas in Afghanistan."

His remarks came after the news that one of the men responsible for attacking Aisha had been arrested, a development hailed by human rights workers as a sign the Afghan authorities are starting to take deep-rooted abuse of women seriously.

Hakim was speaking during the publication of a major UN report that showed that, despite improvements in women's rights – long touted as a major goal of the US-led intervention in Afghanistan – the country is still blighted by forced marriages, the giving away of infant girls to future husbands to settle disputes, 'honour' killings and desperate women resorting to death by self-immolation.

**The report by the UN's Afghanistan mission** said that such practices are problem in all communities and cause "suffering, humiliation and marginalisation for millions of Afghan women and girls".

Despite recent efforts to toughen laws designed to protect women, the government does little to combat abuses. For example, the law on elimination of violence against women, which was regarded by rights activists as a major step forward when it came into effect in August last year, is not being enforced in many rural areas, where officials have not even heard of it, the report said.

One long-observed tradition covered by the report is the concept of *baad*, where a young girl will be given in marriage to settle disputes between families.

"Many of the women told us that, instead of the murderer being punished, an innocent girl is punished and has to spend her life in slavery and subject to cruel violence," said **Georgette Gagnon, the UN's director of human rights in Kabul**.

The head of Afghanistan's only specialist burns unit is quoted saying that forced marriages are the main cause of women who try to kill themselves by setting themselves on fire.

According to figures quoted in the report, in 57% of Afghan marriages one of the partners is younger than 16.

For more information: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/dec/09/afghan-women-abuse-united-nations>

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**2010 Human Rights Medal to Thérèse Rein**

### **AHRC - 10 December**

A lifetime of dedication to helping people reach their full potential has delivered the prestigious Human Rights Medal for 2010 to Thérèse Rein.

Already well known for her high profile advocacy and patronage of major social causes in Australia, Ms Rein was announced today as the winner of Australia's major human rights accolade at the Australian Human Rights Commission's annual Human Rights Medals and Awards ceremony in Sydney.

**Commission President Catherine Branson QC**, said "Thérèse Rein has demonstrated throughout her career, a strong and enduring commitment to ensuring that people, especially those who experience disability and disadvantage, are given the opportunity to realise their full potential," Ms Branson said.

"In her capacity as wife of the former Prime Minister, she was deeply and genuinely committed to a wide range of issues including homelessness, Indigenous literacy, child health and disability.

"In particular, her support and commitment to improving the design of housing for all Australians, including people with disability stand out. Her role in supporting and encouraging the National Dialogue on Universal Housing Design culminated in the coming together of Australia's leading residential and building industry players to pursue a universal housing design standard by 2020."

Thérèse Rein's passion and commitment to eliminating discrimination and helping people reach their potential was inspired by the experiences of her father who lost the use of his legs after a flying accident in World War Two.

Ms Rein established Work Directions Australia in 1989 to assist people with disability, illness or injury to return to meaningful employment. The organisation soon expanded into providing individually-tailored services and support to assist unemployed people to get back to work.

In 2002, it became Ingeus and partnered with governments in United Kingdom, France, Germany, Sweden, South Korea and Switzerland providing back-to-work, health and well-being services to the long-term unemployed, people with disability, people with health conditions, young people, mature age workers, migrants and refugees.

**Ms Rein** is currently in London on business but in a video address to the audience, said "It's tough having a disability. It makes life more complicated. It makes life more challenging - not just for the person with a disability but for their families and those who care for them."

"This medal belongs to those people who, because of their disability, have faced prejudice and assumptions from other people about what they can and cannot do."

Also recognised in today's ceremony was 25 year-old Jack Manning Bancroft who was awarded the Human Rights Young People's Medal for his efforts in improving opportunities for young Indigenous Australians.

"At the age of 19, Jack was already planning to start a mentoring program for Indigenous high school kids to help them through school and university," **Ms Branson** said.

"Jack established the Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience while still at university by recruiting 25 Indigenous and non-Indigenous university mentors from Sydney University to partner one-on-one with 25 local school students.

"Following extensive research, he developed the AIME model to enhance skills and knowledge and build confidence and belief in success.

AIME has been operating now for six years, and provides mentoring to approximately 1 000 Indigenous students from High Schools across three states.

“Jack’s contribution to protecting and promoting human rights was a stand out from a truly inspirational group of young people,” Ms Branson said.

For more information:

[http://www.humanrights.gov.au/about/media/media\\_releases/2010/123\\_10.html](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/about/media/media_releases/2010/123_10.html)

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## UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples meeting

### **AHRC – 3 December**

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner Mick Gooda** has joined with Indigenous People’s Organisations from 15 countries in the Asia Pacific Region in a bid to breathe life into the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

“Importantly, the meeting agreed on the need for urgent action to protect, respect, promote and fulfill the inherent rights of Indigenous Peoples, especially in relation to the impact of climate change on the human rights of Indigenous Peoples,” Commissioner Gooda said.

The historic meeting also threw its weight behind the central role of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) in advocating for the protection, promotion and fulfillment of Indigenous Peoples rights and agreed to encourage the United Nations to support and promote the participation of NHRIs in international forums.

“The call has gone out to encourage States to ratify all UN human rights conventions to assist the implementation of the Declaration in the Asia-Pacific region.

“One of the main themes in the Declaration is the importance of resetting relationships between Indigenous Peoples, the broader community and governments.

“The Declaration is a document for our time – a living, breathing document that can ultimately only lead to more respect, improved well being and greater participation of Indigenous Peoples in Australian society,” he said.

For more information: [http://www.hreoc.gov.au/about/media/media\\_releases/2010/120\\_10.html](http://www.hreoc.gov.au/about/media/media_releases/2010/120_10.html)

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## Claims Sakineh Mohammadi-Ashtiani freed

### **AFP – 10 December**

Photographs have been released of Sakineh Mohammadi-Ashtiani while on home leave last week but without any official Iranian confirmation of a report that she had been released.

In Germany, a campaign group said Sakineh had been freed, along with her son and lawyer. “We have got news from Iran that they are free,” **Mina Ahadi, spokeswoman for the Anti-Stoning Committee**, told AFP.

But there was no confirmation from the authorities in Tehran or the state media, and a **German foreign ministry spokesman** also said: "We cannot confirm the news."

**Italian Foreign Minister Franco Frattini**, however, immediately hailed the reported release and lauded it as "a great day for human rights."

Amid the confusion, the pictures secured by Western media earlier the same day apparently showing Sakineh at her house last Sunday during a brief home leave for a television interview could have sparked false reports of a release.

Sakineh, a 43-year-old mother of two, was initially given death sentences by two different courts in the northwestern city of Tabriz in separate trials in 2006. A sentence to hang for her involvement in the murder of her husband was commuted to a 10-year jail term by an appeals court in 2007. But a second sentence of death by stoning on charges of adultery levelled over several relationships, notably with the man convicted of her husband's murder, was upheld by another appeals court the same year.

Sakineh's current lawyer, Javid Houtan Kian, was arrested in the northwestern city of Tabriz in September along with two Germans who were conducting an interview with her son. The Germans, who entered Iran on tourist visas and worked for the *Bild am Sonntag* Sunday newspaper, are accused of spying.

For more information: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/world/claims-iranian-stoning-sentence-woman-sakineh-mohammadi-ashtiani-freed/story-e6frg6so-1225968776782>

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## PEACE & SECURITY

### UN affirms Ivory Coast vote

#### **Roland Lloyd Parry, SMH – 10 December**

Pressure on Laurent Gbagbo to quit power in Ivory Coast after a disputed presidential poll intensified Thursday with world powers freezing him out and domestic rivals seeking the army's allegiance.

After the African Union (AU) suspended Ivory Coast from its ranks and the United States warned of sanctions, the rival administration set up by Alassane Ouattara demanded the national military recognise him as head of state.

"The government demands that the Security and Defence Forces carry out their republican mission under President Alassane Ouattara, the supreme chief of the armed forces," said **Ouattara's government** in a statement.

The call intensified efforts to squeeze Gbagbo, who faces growing isolation amid pressure to step down from major international powers including the UN Security Council, the African Union and other regional players.

Ouattara's side earlier said it aimed to make "effective" its authority in Ivory Coast this week, but Gbagbo has not yet formally responded and Ivorians were waiting anxiously for his next move.

Ouattara's side also demanded "all state officials and agents... to stop working with Laurent Gbagbo's illegitimate government immediately and wait for instructions from Prime Minister Guillaume Soro," the former rebel named as head of the rival cabinet.

The 53-nation AU's decision to suspend Ivory Coast until Ouattara is formally in charge capped Gbagbo's growing diplomatic isolation, while the United States also intensified threats to squeeze him.

A letter from US President Barack Obama to Gbagbo "made clear that if he makes the wrong choice ... we would look at possible sanctions against him and others if necessary," **State Department spokesman Philip Crowley** said.

**Kenya's Prime Minister Raila Odinga** also demanded Gbagbo accept defeat, warning that Ivory Coast faced "a tragedy Africa cannot afford".

"The international community must hold Mr Gbagbo responsible for the chaos, the loss of lives and destruction of property" in Ivory Coast, Odinga said, as Kenya followed South Africa in rallying behind Ouattara.

**France** meanwhile said it was on alert to evacuate thousands of its nationals from its former star colony if the situation turned ugly.

"For now violence and tensions have been avoided, and I'm glad about that," **Defence Minister Alain Juppe** said in Brussels. "There has not been any particular threat aimed at our citizens but this (evacuation) mechanism is on alert."

The United Nations has already ordered 460 non-essential staff out of the country and foreign companies have evacuated expatriates.

Gbagbo, who retains nominal control of the army and state television, has shown no signs of relaxing his 10-year grip on power in the West African cocoa producer, and has unveiled his own new government.

He remained president after his term expired in 2005 as elections were postponed six times. The second-round runoff was finally held on November 28.

The electoral commission results, endorsed by the United Nations, gave Ouattara victory, but Gbagbo's allies overturned them, alleging irregularities. Both men then declared themselves president.

Clashes surrounding the election left at least 20 people dead, according to Amnesty International.

The UN Security Council late Wednesday gave its backing to Ouattara, an international seal of recognition for the leader from the northern, mostly Muslim, half of the divided country.

Amid fears the standoff could signal a return to open conflict in the country, which was split in two by a 2002 civil war, **Soro** has warned his thousands of New Forces troops could be mobilised if Gbagbo does not give in.

But he stressed: "We are not yet at the stage of using force."

For more information: <http://news.smh.com.au/breaking-news-world/gbagbos-rivals-bid-for-backing-of-icoast-military-20101210-18rmh.html>

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[Rudd announces \\$50 million aid for Indonesia](#)

### **Foreign Affairs – 9 December**

Australia has continued to support the UN Democracy Fund and their work in strengthening the voice of civil society, promoting human rights and encouraging the participation of all groups in the democratic process.

Australia also strongly supports UN women and the emancipation and empowerment of women throughout Asia and the world. Women represent half of our human family. The empowerment of women, through democratic processes, is fundamental to economic development, education, health and security. Some 28% of Australia's total aid in 2009-10 was directed to areas such as public administration, political governance, law, justice, anti-corruption, civil society.

I am pleased to confirm that Australia will contribute a further \$50 million over the five years ahead to the Australia Indonesia Partnership for Justice, which will help Indonesians access justice services and promote and protect human rights. I had the privilege of meeting many women from Indonesia from across this vast archipelago, from Flores to West Java, whose empowerment is supported by this program.

The program will help extend Australia's decade-long support for Indonesia's law and justice sector. Australia will also support for a further two years the Indonesian-initiated Institute for Peace and Democracy, which helps support the forum which we attend today. This funding will help the institute fulfill its potential as a regional think-tank on peace and security.

For more information: [http://foreignminister.gov.au/speeches/2010/kr\\_sp\\_101209.html](http://foreignminister.gov.au/speeches/2010/kr_sp_101209.html)

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## **Red Cross and AusAID team up to help vulnerable communities**

### **Red Cross & AusAID - 3 December**

Australian Red Cross and AusAID have signed an historic Partnership Agreement to pool their expertise, experience and capacity to benefit vulnerable communities across the Asia/Pacific and around the world.

"The aim of this agreement is to enhance Australian Red Cross and AusAID's contribution to the provision of humanitarian support worldwide. In a nutshell it's about helping the most vulnerable people and communities to achieve healthier, safer, more protected and sustainable lives," **Australian Red Cross Acting CEO, Michael Raper** said.

"It will also create opportunities to try innovative ideas and new ways of working in communities and countries dealing with situations of need and conflict – be it an earthquake-ravaged developing nation or a resource-poor community facing a disease epidemic."

**AusAID Director General Peter Baxter** said the agreement would provide approximately \$20 million to the Australian Red Cross over the next three years and reflected AusAID's long-standing cooperation with the Red Cross in providing funds and expertise to ease suffering in conflicts and following natural disasters.

"In the past year we have provided support through the Australian Red Cross for natural disasters in Pakistan, Haiti, Mongolia, Fiji, Burma, Vietnam and Tajikistan; to support the International Federation of the Red Cross in responding to situations of conflict; and to promote humanitarian values.

**Mr Raper** said: "Almost 40% of the world's disasters each year occur in the Asia and Pacific. The

pressure of the region's rapidly increasing population is forcing more and more communities to live in areas exposed to natural disasters – disasters such as major earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and monsoon flooding.”

“The Agreement recognises that the Red Cross movement – along with Governments, the United Nations and the NGO community – is one of the world's leaders in the humanitarian field. It also makes a commitment to helping increase public awareness of International Humanitarian Law and humanitarian values – a body of law and principles that underpin and drive the work of Red Cross worldwide.”

For more information: <http://1.redcross.org.au/?fuseaction=newsroom.latestnews&sub=638>

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## Ambassador appointments– Federated States of Micronesia and Brazil

### **ALP - 8 December**

**The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Kevin Rudd** announced Mr Martin Quinn as Australia's new ambassador to the Federated States of Micronesia with non-resident accreditation to the Republic of Marshall Islands and the Republic of Palau. Mr Quinn replaces Ms Susan Cox OAM who has been Ambassador since October 2007, and he is expected to take up his appointment in February 2011.

Mr Rudd also announced that Mr Brett Hackett is Australia's new ambassador to Brazil. Mr Hackett is expected to take up his appointment in February 2011, and he replaces Mr Neil Mules who has been Ambassador since January 2008.

For more information: <http://alp.org.au/federal-government/news/diplomatic-appointment---federated-states-of-micro/> and <http://alp.org.au/federal-government/news/diplomatic-appointment-ambassador-to-brazil/>

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## HEALTH & MEANS

### WHO endorses new rapid TB test

#### **WHO - 8 December**

The World Health Organisation (WHO) endorsed a new and novel rapid test for tuberculosis (TB), especially relevant in countries most affected by the disease. The test could revolutionise TB care and control by providing an accurate diagnosis for many patients in about 100 minutes, compared to current tests that can take up to three months to have results.

"This new test represents a major milestone for global TB diagnosis and care. It also represents new hope for the millions of people who are at the highest risk of TB and drug-resistant disease." said **Dr Mario Raviglione, Director of WHO's Stop TB Department.**

Evidence to date indicates that implementation of this test could result in a three-fold increase in the diagnosis of patients with drug-resistant TB and a doubling in the number of HIV-associated

TB cases diagnosed in areas with high rates of TB and HIV.

"There has been a strong commitment to remove any obstacles, including financial barriers, that could prevent the successful roll-out of this new technology," said **Dr Giorgio Roscigno, FIND's Chief Executive Officer**. "For the first time in TB control, we are enabling access to state-of-the-art technology simultaneously in low, middle and high income countries. The technology also allows testing of other diseases, which should further increase efficiency."

WHO is also releasing recommendations and guidance for countries to incorporate this test in their programs. This includes testing protocols (or algorithms) to optimise the use and benefits of the new technology in those persons where it is needed most.

Though there have been major improvements in TB care and control, tuberculosis killed an estimated 1.7 million people in 2009 and 9.4 million people developed active TB last year.

For more information:

[http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2010/tb\\_test\\_20101208/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2010/tb_test_20101208/en/index.html)

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## Australia contributes to UN Haiti Cholera Appeal

### **Foreign Affairs – 7 December**

Australia is joining the fight to help Haiti combat one of the most severe outbreaks of cholera seen in the last century through \$1 million to the UN Haiti Cholera Appeal.

Australia's contribution will be channelled through the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), which is providing clean water, water purification tablets, hygiene kits and other essential life saving supplies to communities in Haiti.

More than 1 700 people have died from the disease since the Haiti Ministry of Health confirmed an outbreak of cholera on 21 October, with more than 34 000 cases reported.

'The cholera outbreak in Haiti is made more complex by the devastating humanitarian impact of the 12 January earthquake, which killed an estimated 230 000 people and made nearly 1.5 million people homeless,' **Mr Rudd** said.

'The United Nations forecasts that up to 200 000 Haitians could contract cholera over the next six to 12 months as the outbreak extends across the country, and there is great concern for the 1.3 million people still living in makeshift camps throughout Port-au-Prince and other parts of the country following January's earthquake.'

This assistance is in addition to Australia's \$24 million contribution in response to the 12 January earthquake.

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## CLIMATE & THE ENVIRONMENT

## Crunch time at UN climate-change talks

**Simon Mann, SMH – 10 December**

Australia has added its voice to increasingly urgent pleas for progress at United Nations-backed climate change talks, as negotiators look to find common ground between deadlocked nations.

**Climate Change Minister Greg Combet** told representatives of almost 200 countries that the integrity of the UN process was at stake.

“Too often we allow ourselves to be distracted by process issues and by negotiating tactics,” he said.

“It is imperative for the credibility of this process that we are able to make progress here at this conference.”

But the UN-brokered negotiations appeared unlikely to resolve the core issue of reconciling the legally binding Kyoto Protocol with the commitments on carbon emissions made more loosely under last year's Copenhagen Accord by 85 countries.

Several top negotiators have indicated that a deal between big industrialised nations and developing countries is unlikely to be sealed by tomorrow's 11am (Melbourne time) deadline. But they insisted there was ample time over coming months to resolve their differences and that their prevarication would not slow world action to curb greenhouse gas emissions and combat climate change.

The most likely outcome for the talks being held in the Mexican resort town of Cancun was a carefully worded statement, enough to build momentum towards next year's conference in Durban, South Africa.

**Canada's Guy St Jacques** was the latest negotiator to hose down expectations of a concrete deal, noting that there were two years before the first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol expired.

There was no immediate need to secure an agreement on extending Kyoto. “I think our goal is to be further ahead in reaching a legally binding agreement while finding language that will not compromise the Kyoto protocol,” he said.

Developing nations want the 40 or so industrialised countries bound by Kyoto to commit to a second period with new targets for cutting their carbon emissions. But those bound by Kyoto are insisting that developing nation targets should also be binding.

Strings have been attached also to matters regarding the establishment of an annual \$US100 billion “green fund” to finance ongoing support for poor nations to cope with climate change, as well as to details regarding transparency and verification of cuts. But progress is assured on key measures to protect rainforests.

**Mr Combet**, who also announced fresh details of Australia's \$A599 million commitment to \$US30 billion of fast-start financing for developing nations, said Australia was committed to an outcome that included legally-binding mitigation contributions by all major economies.

“A single treaty for all parties would be the simplest and most transparent option,” he said. “However, we can be flexible on this question in the context of a comprehensive legal outcome.”

Australia has allocated \$A169 million of its “fast-start” money to new adaptation projects in the Pacific, south and south-east Asia and Africa, as well as \$A15 million to a general adaptation fund.

A further \$A32 million has been earmarked for protecting forests in Indonesia, along with funds for renewable energy and market mechanisms.

**The Climate Institute** praised the package as striking a good balance between support for countries to reduce their dependency on practices causing pollution and assistance in fighting the effects of climate change.

“Importantly, the roughly 50/50 split ... accords with developing countries' calls for a more balanced approach to climate finance,” said **the institute's Erwin Jackson**.

Australia, together with Bangladesh, heads a key panel that is trying to cement plans for the bigger, long-term fund of public and private money that will provide ongoing finance for developing countries.

For more information: <http://www.smh.com.au/environment/climate-change/crunch-time-at-un-climatechange-talks-20101210-18rrw.html>

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## OTHER NEWS

### Remarks to the press on the release of confidential documents

#### **Hillary Rodham Clinton, US Department of State – 29 November**

The United States strongly condemns the illegal disclosure of classified information. It puts people's lives in danger, threatens our national security, and undermines our efforts to work with other countries to solve shared problems. This Administration is advancing a robust foreign policy that is focused on advancing America's national interests and leading the world in solving the most complex challenges of our time, from fixing the global economy, to thwarting international terrorism, to stopping the spread of catastrophic weapons, to advancing human rights and universal values. In every country and in every region of the world, we are working with partners to pursue these aims.

So let's be clear: this disclosure is not just an attack on America's foreign policy interests. It is an attack on the international community – the alliances and partnerships, the conversations and negotiations, that safeguard global security and advance economic prosperity.

I will not comment on or confirm what are alleged to be stolen State Department cables. But I can say that the United States deeply regrets the disclosure of any information that was intended to be confidential, including private discussions between counterparts or our diplomats' personal assessments and observations. I want to make clear that our official foreign policy is not set through these messages, but here in Washington. Our policy is a matter of public record, as reflected in our statements and our actions around the world.

I would also add that to the American people and to our friends and partners, I want you to know that we are taking aggressive steps to hold responsible those who stole this information. I have directed that specific actions be taken at the State Department, in addition to new security safeguards at the Department of Defense and elsewhere to protect State Department information so that this kind of breach cannot and does not ever happen again.

Relations between governments aren't the only concern created by the publication of this material. US diplomats meet with local human rights workers, journalists, religious leaders, and

others outside of governments who offer their own candid insights. These conversations also depend on trust and confidence. For example, if an anti-corruption activist shares information about official misconduct, or a social worker passes along documentation of sexual violence, revealing that person's identity could have serious repercussions: imprisonment, torture, even death.

So whatever are the motives in disseminating these documents, it is clear that releasing them poses real risks to real people, and often to the very people who have dedicated their own lives to protecting others.

Now, I am aware that some may mistakenly applaud those responsible, so I want to set the record straight: There is nothing laudable about endangering innocent people, and there is nothing brave about sabotaging the peaceful relations between nations on which our common security depends.

There have been examples in history in which official conduct has been made public in the name of exposing wrongdoings or misdeeds. This is not one of those cases. In contrast, what is being put on display in this cache of documents is the fact that American diplomats are doing the work we expect them to do. They are helping identify and prevent conflicts before they start. They are working hard every day to solve serious practical problems – to secure dangerous materials, to fight international crime, to assist human rights defenders, to restore our alliances, to ensure global economic stability. This is the role that America plays in the world. This is the role our diplomats play in serving America. And it should make every one of us proud.

The work of our diplomats doesn't just benefit Americans, but also billions of others around the globe. In addition to endangering particular individuals, disclosures like these tear at the fabric of the proper function of responsible government.

People of good faith understand the need for sensitive diplomatic communications, both to protect the national interest and the global common interest. Every country, including the United States, must be able to have candid conversations about the people and nations with whom they deal. And every country, including the United States, must be able to have honest, private dialogue with other countries about issues of common concern. I know that diplomats around the world share this view – but this is not unique to diplomacy. In almost every profession – whether it's law or journalism, finance or medicine or academia or running a small business – people rely on confidential communications to do their jobs. We count on the space of trust that confidentiality provides. When someone breaches that trust, we are all worse off for it. And so despite some of the rhetoric we've heard these past few days, confidential communications do not run counter to the public interest. They are fundamental to our ability to serve the public interest.

In America, we welcome genuine debates about pressing questions of public policy. We have elections about them. That is one of the greatest strengths of our democracy. It is part of who we are and it is a priority for this Administration. But stealing confidential documents and then releasing them without regard for the consequences does not serve the public good, and it is not the way to engage in a healthy debate.

In the past few days, I have spoken with many of my counterparts around the world, and we have all agreed that we will continue to focus on the issues and tasks at hand. In that spirit, President Obama and I remain committed to productive cooperation with our partners as we seek to build a better, more prosperous world for all.

Source: <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2010/11/152078.htm>

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## Don't shoot messenger for revealing uncomfortable truths

### **Julian Assange, editor-in-chief of WikiLeaks, *The Australian* – 8 December**

In 1958 a young Rupert Murdoch, then owner and editor of Adelaide's *The News*, wrote: "In the race between secrecy and truth, it seems inevitable that truth will always win."

His observation perhaps reflected his father Keith Murdoch's expose that Australian troops were being needlessly sacrificed by incompetent British commanders on the shores of Gallipoli. The British tried to shut him up but Keith Murdoch would not be silenced and his efforts led to the termination of the disastrous Gallipoli campaign.

Nearly a century later, WikiLeaks is also fearlessly publishing facts that need to be made public. I grew up in a Queensland country town where people spoke their minds bluntly. They distrusted big government as something that could be corrupted if not watched carefully. The dark days of corruption in the Queensland government before the Fitzgerald inquiry are testimony to what happens when the politicians gag the media from reporting the truth.

These things have stayed with me. WikiLeaks was created around these core values. The idea, conceived in Australia, was to use internet technologies in new ways to report the truth.

WikiLeaks coined a new type of journalism: scientific journalism. We work with other media outlets to bring people the news, but also to prove it is true. Scientific journalism allows you to read a news story, then to click online to see the original document it is based on. That way you can judge for yourself: Is the story true? Did the journalist report it accurately?

Democratic societies need a strong media and WikiLeaks is part of that media. The media helps keep government honest. WikiLeaks has revealed some hard truths about the Iraq and Afghan wars, and broken stories about corporate corruption.

People have said I am anti-war: for the record, I am not. Sometimes nations need to go to war, and there are just wars. But there is nothing more wrong than a government lying to its people about those wars, then asking these same citizens to put their lives and their taxes on the line for those lies. If a war is justified, then tell the truth and the people will decide whether to support it. If you have read any of the Afghan or Iraq war logs, any of the US embassy cables or any of the stories about the things WikiLeaks has reported, consider how important it is for all media to be able to report these things freely.

WikiLeaks is not the only publisher of the US embassy cables. Other media outlets, including Britain's *The Guardian*, *The New York Times*, *El Pais* in Spain and *Der Spiegel* in Germany have published the same redacted cables.

Yet it is WikiLeaks, as the co-ordinator of these other groups, that has copped the most vicious attacks and accusations from the US government and its acolytes. I have been accused of treason, even though I am an Australian, not a US, citizen. There have been dozens of serious calls in the US for me to be "taken out" by US special forces. Sarah Palin says I should be "hunted down like Osama bin Laden", a Republican bill sits before the US Senate seeking to have me declared a "transnational threat" and disposed of accordingly. An adviser to the Canadian Prime Minister's office has called on national television for me to be assassinated. An American blogger has called for my 20-year-old son, here in Australia, to be kidnapped and harmed for no other reason than to get at me.

And Australians should observe with no pride the disgraceful pandering to these sentiments by Julia Gillard and her government. The powers of the Australian government appear to be fully at the disposal of the US as to whether to cancel my Australian passport, or to spy on or harass

WikiLeaks supporters. The Australian Attorney-General is doing everything he can to help a US investigation clearly directed at framing Australian citizens and shipping them to the US.

Prime Minister Gillard and US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton have not had a word of criticism for the other media organisations. That is because *The Guardian*, *The New York Times* and *Der Spiegel* are old and large, while WikiLeaks is as yet young and small.

We are the underdogs. The Gillard government is trying to shoot the messenger because it doesn't want the truth revealed, including information about its own diplomatic and political dealings.

Has there been any response from the Australian government to the numerous public threats of violence against me and other WikiLeaks personnel? One might have thought an Australian prime minister would be defending her citizens against such things, but there have only been wholly unsubstantiated claims of illegality. The Prime Minister and especially the Attorney-General are meant to carry out their duties with dignity and above the fray. Rest assured, these two mean to save their own skins. They will not.

Every time WikiLeaks publishes the truth about abuses committed by US agencies, Australian politicians chant a provably false chorus with the State Department: "You'll risk lives! National security! You'll endanger troops!" Then they say there is nothing of importance in what WikiLeaks publishes. It can't be both. Which is it?

It is neither. WikiLeaks has a four-year publishing history. During that time we have changed whole governments, but not a single person, as far as anyone is aware, has been harmed. But the US, with Australian government connivance, has killed thousands in the past few months alone.

US Secretary of Defence Robert Gates admitted in a letter to the US congress that no sensitive intelligence sources or methods had been compromised by the Afghan war logs disclosure. The Pentagon stated there was no evidence the WikiLeaks reports had led to anyone being harmed in Afghanistan. NATO in Kabul told CNN it couldn't find a single person who needed protecting. The Australian Department of Defence said the same. No Australian troops or sources have been hurt by anything we have published.

But our publications have been far from unimportant. The US diplomatic cables reveal some startling facts:

- The US asked its diplomats to steal personal human material and information from UN officials and human rights groups, including DNA, fingerprints, iris scans, credit card numbers, internet passwords and ID photos, in violation of international treaties. Presumably Australian UN diplomats may be targeted, too.
- King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia asked the US to attack Iran.
- Officials in Jordan and Bahrain want Iran's nuclear program stopped by any means available.
- Britain's Iraq inquiry was fixed to protect "US interests".
- Sweden is a covert member of NATO and US intelligence sharing is kept from parliament.
- The US is playing hardball to get other countries to take freed detainees from Guantanamo Bay. Barack Obama agreed to meet the Slovenian President only if Slovenia took a prisoner. Our Pacific neighbour Kiribati was offered millions of dollars to accept detainees.

In its landmark ruling in the Pentagon Papers case, the US Supreme Court said "only a free and unrestrained press can effectively expose deception in government". The swirling storm around WikiLeaks today reinforces the need to defend the right of all media to reveal the truth.

Source: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/in-depth/wikileaks/dont-shoot-messenger-for-revealing-uncomfortable-truths/story-fn775xjq-1225967241332>

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## Australia says US, not WikiLeaks founder, responsible for leaks

### **Reuters – 8 December**

The Australian government on Wednesday blamed the United States, not the WikiLeaks founder, for the unauthorised release of about 250 000 secret US diplomatic cables and said those who originally leaked the documents were legally liable.

**Foreign Minister Kevin Rudd** also said the leaks raised questions over the "adequacy" of US security over the cables.

"Mr Assange is not himself responsible for the unauthorised release of 250 000 documents from the US diplomatic communications network," Rudd told Reuters in an interview.

"The Americans are responsible for that," said Rudd.

Source: <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE6B713420101208>

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## UN rights boss concerned at targeting of WikiLeaks

### **Reuters - 9 December**

**UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay** voiced concern on Thursday at reports of pressure being exerted on private companies to halt financial or Internet services for WikiLeaks.

Pillay said that taken together, the measures could be interpreted as an attempt to prevent WikiLeaks from publishing, thereby violating its right to freedom of expression.

"I am concerned about reports of pressure exerted on private companies including banks, credit card companies and Internet service providers to close down credit lines for donations to WikiLeaks, as well as to stop hosting the website," she told a news conference.

For more information: <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSLDE6B81RO20101209>

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## ARTICLES IN FOCUS

### Five steps to becoming a more effective UN member

**John Langmore is a Professorial Fellow at the University of Melbourne. He is a former federal member for Fraser and was a divisional director at the United Nations. 9 November.**

Speaking at the opening of the sixty-fifth session of the UN General Assembly in late September, **foreign minister Kevin Rudd** called for a renewed commitment among governments to the United Nations. Global conditions, he said, “create an imperative for responsive, representative and, most critically, effective systems of global governance.” The United Nations has most of the necessary structures in place, he went on. “But for the structures to work, we must harness the political will necessary to make them work. In other words we must enable the institutions we have created to do the job for which they were created. Put even more starkly, we must do that which we say.”

The foreign minister listed three examples of the way in which the current system is not meeting expectations: efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals are falling short of the targets set in 2001; the outcome of the Copenhagen conference on climate change didn't reflect the seriousness of consequences of growing greenhouse gas emissions; and the Conference on Disarmament has been inert for twelve years despite the urgency of its task. But he was not principally blaming the United Nations for these and other problems – he was challenging member states to fulfil the commitments of their membership of the organisation, so clearly and strongly articulated in the UN Charter.

During the time that Kevin Rudd was prime minister the Australian government took a series of steps to renew and strengthen Australian engagement with the United Nations. It made explicit the centrality of Australia's commitment to the international rule of law. It became more attentive to and involved in the discussion of issues in UN forums. It nominated for membership of the Security Council in 2013–14. It set a target for increasing overseas aid to 0.5% of national income by 2015–16 and emphasised Australian participation in peacekeeping missions. And it established the International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament, co-chaired by the former Australian foreign minister, Gareth Evans. These were striking advances compared with the Howard government's disdain for multilateral participation.

But now a second round of policy renewal is needed to strengthen Australia's role as a fully engaged UN member state. This involves addressing the inconsistencies between existing Australian policy and the responsibilities of member states, as spelt out in the UN Charter. There are five glaring inconsistencies: the offensive orientation of the 2009 Defence White Paper; the continuing underfunding of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade; the practical neglect of peaceful conflict resolution; the inadequacies of our voluntary financial contributions to UN programs and to overseas aid; and the failure to support public education and scholarship on multilateral cooperation.

Labor's Defence White Paper, published in April 2009, moved Australian defence strategy further from “defensive defence” towards “offensive defence.” It focused on forward projection of forces, strike capability and high-technology weapons systems. It proposed enormous purchases of weapons, which would be paid for by automatic annual increases of 4 to 5% in military spending for each of the next twenty years, regardless of the circumstances. No other type of Australian public expenditure has ever been promised such largesse for such a long period.

The White Paper discussed Australian defence as if it could be dealt with in isolation from other dimensions of global affairs. An early and astonishing result was the \$1.57 billion increase in the defence budget for 2010–11, bringing the total to \$26.8 billion. In the same budget the allocation for the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade was \$1.1 billion. So the *increase* in Australian military spending this year is 50 per cent greater than the *total* allocation for diplomacy. At a time when we have a quarter fewer diplomats posted overseas than in 1996, and when we are threatened by no country nor are likely to be in the foreseeable future, this seems utterly irresponsible. Australia has only ninety-three overseas missions compared with the average among western governments of 150. Yet diplomacy is the prime means of avoiding conflict as well as of representing Australian interests overseas. Why should Australia stand out among developed countries in lacking an adequately funded diplomatic service?

Recent media reports suggest that a “stringent” review of the White Paper is under consideration, a welcome development that should lead to a decision to abandon or cut back some of the misconceived and wasteful proposed equipment purchases. If this happened it would release funds for the activities in which the defence department is actually engaged at the moment – predominantly peacekeeping – and for a rapid expansion in diplomacy, peacemaking and peacebuilding.

The White Paper failed to mention the first and principal requirement of UN member states, which is to attempt by all reasonable means to avoid the threat or use of force and to seek non-violent means of minimising and resolving conflict. The UN Charter is the foundational document of postwar multilateral relations, and its first article describes the prime purpose of the United Nations as being:

*To maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and the removal of threats, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace, and to bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace.*

Since the end of the Cold War the number of military conflicts and the number of war deaths have declined significantly. In the early 1990s the number of conflicts each year causing 1000 or more battle deaths was over fifty; that has fallen to thirty-six. The end of colonialism and of the Cold War, and the growth of economic interdependence have been influential factors, but so too has been the growth in international peacemaking efforts by the United Nations and particularly by Norway. The Norwegian approach offers valuable lessons for Australia.

Norway’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs very rarely acts alone: it often cooperates with the good offices of the UN secretary-general and the new UN Mediation Support Unit and with other countries and NGOs working on mediation. Major development assistance has commonly been a feature of peace processes. Norway also has the advantage not only of having never been a colonial power but also of being largely free of exploitative corporate or military involvement in developing countries. The Peace and Reconciliation Section was established in the ministry in 2001 and now has fourteen professional officers and an annual budget of about US\$100 million supporting activities in twenty areas of conflict.

Australia could become a peacemaker too. Australia has a proud record of support for UN peacekeeping, most recently within our region in Timor-Leste, Bougainville and the Solomon Islands. Australian leaders on all sides of politics have frequently talked of our geographic location as the basis for building a bridge between developed and developing countries, though rarely have they been sufficiently imaginative or generous about policies to implement that vision. One of the many interesting discussions I had while in Oslo recently was with Kristian Harpviken, director of the Peace Research Institute Oslo. When I asked him whether he thought there was room for Australia to become involved in peacemaking he said that within Norway there is currently much talk of the *dugnad* principle – the value of *community effort* in resolving a conflict. As an example he mentioned the international effort to resolve the conflict between the Luos and the Kikuyu after the presidential election in Kenya in December 2007. That successful peacemaking effort involved concerted engagement by several countries and international NGOs led by the former UN secretary-general, Kofi Annan.

As far as I know, not a single Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade officer is working full-time on peaceful conflict resolution. The department would have to build its capacity in the field by, for example, establishing a branch of professional staff trained in mediation and the other means suggested in the UN Charter for peaceful settlement of disputes. Establishment of such a unit would be made possible if the essential substantial improvement in the department’s funding was forthcoming.

Little needs to be said about the fourth inconsistency between Australia's obligations as a UN member state and our actual performance. Our overseas aid this year is 0.33% of national income, far short of the UN target (0.7%), the actual performance of the European Union (0.48%), and Norway's contribution (1%). Both Kevin Rudd and Julie Bishop have promised to reach 0.5 % by 2015–16, but even if that is achieved we will still be notable for our meanness. And that lack of funds prevents Australia from providing voluntary support for UN programs that currently receive much higher levels of support from northwestern European countries.

And finally, returning to the Norwegian model, one of its most striking features is the importance it places on the role that NGOs and academic bodies play in Norway's support for the international rule of law, understanding about the United Nations, approach to peaceful conflict resolution and economic and social development. The outstanding Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, for example, has a staff of about seventy largely paid for by the government. If we learnt that lesson alone, Australian scholarship and public debate about international relations would be transformed.

If the government is serious about strengthening engagement with the United Nations those five steps are essential. Each would contribute towards the goal of a more effective United Nations.

Source: <http://inside.org.au/five-steps-to-becoming-a-more-effective-un-member/>

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## On the position of the Hazara minority in Afghanistan

***Opinion by Professor William Maley - 5 December. Only excerpts of the report have been included here. The full report and references are available at:***

***<http://ataullahnaseri.wordpress.com/2010/06/28/on-the-position-of-the-hazara-minority-in-afghanistan/>***

***William Maley was asked to provide an expert opinion on the position of members of the Hazara minority in Afghanistan. He is Professor and Director of the Asia-Pacific College of Diplomacy at the Australian National University. He has published extensively on Afghan politics for over two decades.***

### The general situation in Afghanistan

The general situation in Afghanistan remains profoundly threatening. As of 5 December 2010, **Australia's official travel advice for Afghanistan**, issued by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, refers to the 'extremely dangerous security situation'. It states that 'The security situation *throughout Afghanistan*, particularly in the south of the country, remains extremely dangerous'. It goes on to say that 'Warlords control many areas in Afghanistan and overland travel is dangerous'.

The **official US travel advice for Afghanistan**, current for 5 December 2010, states that 'No part of Afghanistan should be considered immune from violence ... Afghan authorities have a limited ability to maintain order and ensure the security *of citizens* and visitors ... The security environment remains *volatile and unpredictable*'.

These observations are mirrored in **recent reports to the UN Security Council on Afghanistan by the Secretary-General**: 'The *deterioration of Afghanistan's security situation has continued*, with 2009 being the most volatile year since the fall of the Taliban in 2001, averaging 960 security incidents per month, as compared with 741 in 2008. The situation worsened in January 2010,

with the number of security incidents 40% higher than in January 2009 ... Overall, the intensification of the armed conflict in the south, and its expansion *into areas previously considered stable*, made 2009 *the worst year for civilian fatalities since the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001*'.

In his **second 2010 report**, the **Secretary-General** stated that 'Overall, the number of security incidents increased significantly, compared to previous years *and contrary to seasonal trends* ... The rise in incidents involving improvised explosive devices constitutes *an alarming trend*, with the first four months of 2010 recording a 94% increase compared to the same period in 2009 ... The shift to more complex suicide attacks demonstrates a growing capability of the local terrorist networks linked to Al-Qaida.' His most recent report states that 'The security situation has continued to deteriorate in many parts of the country, the overall number of security incidents having increased by 69% compared to the same months in 2009 ... The reporting period recorded a rise in the number of incidents using improvised explosive devices, by 82% compared to the same period in 2009.'

When a country has suffered as much as Afghanistan, the consolidation of new political structures takes many years. In 2004, according to poll data collected by the Asia Foundation, 64% of Afghans felt that the country was going in the right direction, and only 11% felt it was going in the wrong direction. It is a measure of the deterioration in Afghanistan that when the same question was asked in a 2010 survey, only 47% of Afghan felt that the country was going in the right direction. Furthermore, to a degree that had not previously been experienced, sampling for this survey was adversely affected by the broader security environment, which means that the 47% figure may considerably overstate the real level of confidence in the country.

The hopes that were initially entertained that the fall of the Taliban regime would rapidly produce a secure and stable Afghanistan have not been vindicated by the passage of time. Instead, a range of factors have frustrated the hopes that initially prevailed, notably the failure to build a state with appropriate capacity and legitimacy. There is little reason to be confident that the general situation in Afghanistan will take a turn for the better in the foreseeable future.

### **The position of Hazaras in Afghanistan**

Hazaras have been subject to discrimination and persecution at least since the 'Hazara Wars' of 1891-1893, and there is no reason to believe that the underlying factors (both ethnic and sectarian) fuelling hostility towards Hazaras have dissipated. Under the Taliban, however, discrimination against Hazaras took a murderous form. When the Taliban occupied Mazar-e Sharif on 8 August 1998, they embarked on a three-day massacre which Ahmed Rashid described as 'genocidal in its ferocity'. The most conservative estimate of the number killed was 2000 and others went much higher. In an article protesting how little attention it received at the time, **Rupert Colville of UNHCR**, writing in his personal capacity, described some of the things that happened to the Hazara victims:

*Some were shot on the streets. Many were executed in their own homes, after areas of the town known to be inhabited by their ethnic group had been systematically sealed off and searched. Some were boiled or asphyxiated to death after being left crammed inside sealed metal containers under a hot August sun. In at least one hospital, as many as 30 patients were shot as they lay helplessly in their beds. The bodies of many of the victims were left on the streets or in their houses as a stark warning to the city's remaining inhabitants. Horrified witnesses saw dogs tearing at the corpses, but were instructed over loudspeakers and by radio announcements not to remove or bury them.*

This frenzy of killings was in all probability the worst single massacre in the entire history of modern Afghanistan. It was in the immediate aftermath of these killings that a substantial flow of Hazara refugees from Afghanistan commenced.

The overthrow of the Taliban regime and its replacement by the Interim Administration under Hamid Karzai put an end to official discrimination against Hazaras, but did nothing to secure them against Taliban attack in the vast tracts of Afghanistan where the Kabul Government is ineffectual. A recent example came in late June 2010 - the bodies of 11 men, their heads cut off and placed next to them were found in the Uruzgan Province. It is particularly alarming that this occurred in Uruzgan, the province in which substantial numbers of Australian troops are deployed to boost local security.

I understand that in assessing claims for refugee status, decision-makers have referred to Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Cable number CX240092 dated 21 February 2010 and entitled *Afghanistan: Situation of the Hazara Minority*. At the outset, one should note that while the Australian Embassy in Afghanistan is staffed by dedicated officials, their ability to conduct field research of their own is extremely limited, given the tight security constraints under which they operate. This applies also to a number of the organisational informants on whom they rely in other embassies and in international agencies such as UNHCR. This poses a problem in relying on such sources for an assessment of the general situation for Hazaras, namely that the scale of persecution and abuse of power in Afghanistan tends to be under-reported.

**The Human Rights Watch report** "*Killing You Is A Very Easy Thing For Us*": *Human Rights Abuses In Southeast Afghanistan* refers to a particularly unpleasant case of harassment in Afghanistan, and directly quotes a UN official, interviewed on 14 March 2003, as stating: 'This incident is not unique. It has happened to a lot of Afghans, who haven't reported it. There is a need for monitoring. We find it extraordinarily difficult to get information'.

Much in **Cable number CX240092** is naïve in the extreme, especially the view of an unidentified UNHCR informant that Hazaras 'were experiencing a relative "golden age" in light of their tragic past'. That such a view could be expressed when Hazaras are vulnerable to mass decapitations reflects very poorly on the knowledge and judgment of the informant.

Many asylum seekers in Australia have come from the province of Ghazni. The Taliban are now active in parts of Ghazni. As early as 20 May 2003, it was described by **Todd Pitman in an Associated Press** despatch as 'a hotbed of suspected Taliban activity southwest of Kabul'. The former governor was assassinated in 2006, and an analysis in April 2006 concluded that 'A fierce Taleban-led insurgency in recent months has placed Ghazni, which lies just 135 km south of Kabul, among the most volatile provinces in southern Afghanistan'. The situation since then has arguably become even worse. No part of Ghazni can realistically be considered safe for Hazaras, even in districts where they might seem numerically predominant.

Most disturbingly, **the June 2010 study by the Afghanistan Analysts Network** warns of a risk to these areas: 'The Taleban successfully have infiltrated Northern and Northeastern Afghanistan and destabilised certain areas, mainly in Kunduz province. Now, there are signs that they might attempt to push forward into mainly Hazara-settled areas [in] the central region. The main road into Jaghori, an important Hazara area, has been blocked raising fears of a new economic blockade or event an attack'.

### **Past experience**

Finally, reports on returns to Afghanistan need to be used with caution when assessing asylum claims. Managed return programs can exist to serve a number of interests: **in one study, two highly-regarded specialists** concluded that 'it was precisely UNHCR's "weak position" in relation to "the policies of its funders and hosts" that led it to launch a "facilitated" repatriation programme early in 2002 which was, arguably, in the best interests neither of its intended beneficiaries nor of the long term reconstruction of Afghanistan'. But more importantly, most returnees are of a fundamentally different background from the Shiite Hazaras who make up the

bulk of the onshore caseload from Afghanistan in Australia. The Afghan refugee population in Pakistan was and is overwhelmingly Sunni and non-Hazara, and even those who returned from Iran with UNHCR assistance in the years first following the overthrow of the Taliban were typically non-Hazara. Very little can be read into these mass repatriations that is at all relevant to the special vulnerabilities of the Hazara minority.

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