Security: at what cost?

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In an age that seems so defined by fear and uncertainty, it is no wonder that one of the key issues of our time is security. Most of us long to feel safe and we work hard to build secure lives for ourselves and our families. But what are the hidden costs of this drive for security? What is lost when the drive for security becomes a primary force in our lives? Where does God fit in? How might the Gospel be calling us live?

“Security: at what cost?” is the theme for the resource being produced by the Social Justice Network for this year’s Social Justice Sunday. This project offers all member churches an opportunity to designate one Sunday this year as Social Justice Sunday. This year’s kit (replacing the one produced in the last two years by the Anglican, Catholic and Uniting Churches) will be a contribution to the Decade to Overcome Violence. It will examine some of the ways in which we as a nation and as individuals, churches and communities, seek security and in so doing expose the violence that we often unwittingly perpetrate on others and our world. It will ask the questions: What would God have us do? How does Christ call us to live in these situations?

The kit will include a range of resources for worship, theological reflections, an introduction to the Decade to Overcome Violence and the concept of security, case studies and resource lists. It is intended for use by congregations, small groups and individuals. In some churches, Social Justice Sunday is celebrated on the last Sunday in September but the materials can be used on any Sunday that is appropriate for your church or congregation and the study materials can be used over time throughout the year. The Australian Catholic Bishops’ Conference will, as usual, produce their own annual statement, using the kit as supplementary material. The materials will be available in print and via the internet at the beginning of August.

The success of the kit depends on the NCCA’s member churches. How will you promote this kit within your church? Will you designate a Sunday for its use, or leave it up to individual leaders and congregations? How will you distribute the kit and make sure people know how to use it?

The Social Justice Network has no staff. The Reverend Elenie Poulos has been seconded to the NCCA as project manager for 30 days during the period when the kit is being developed. She can be contacted by email at epoulos@ncca.org.au or by phone (02) 8267 4239.

Iraq: one year on

A year after the Iraq war occurred ACT members continue their work in the strife-torn country, where random attacks and violence mar everyday life. Often the dangers which may not be visible to the eye, such as water-borne diseases, exact a heavier toll on vulnerable communities.

“Our children’s health is considerably improved,” residents of All Hallah and Hamayun villages told ACT staff. Now a pipeline that can take the water from the river to the villages a couple of kilometers away is needed. “If the pipes can be provided, the men in the villages will do the work themselves.”

Edward Esho from the Middle East Council of Churches said that the recent spate of bombings and random attacks had given him “a bad picture in my eyes of my country. We are worried and afraid and somebody needs to help take care of the people who are suffering.”

The Christmas Bowl program, with many other ACT members around the world, continues to make a difference in the lives of people left vulnerable in the aftermath of this war and following years of sanctions, economic instability and government repression.