

A Christian World Service Newsletter Winter 2005

In Focus

Christian World Service is a Commission of the National Council of Churches in Australia



refugees

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Front cover: – Refugee girls from Darfur
©UNHCR/H.Caux

From the Assistant to the General Secretary



Photo: Mohsin, CWS

It would be hard to imagine a time when the poor of the world enjoyed such incredible support as they did on the first Saturday in July. It was then that Geldof, Bono and Madonna redirected the needs of the poor from the streets, to the corridors of power, or at least to a meeting in Scotland — the G8 summit.

By the time you are reading this, that international concert program will be history and hopefully a significant moment in history. It is expected that the world leaders will respond to the call of the concert to “Make Poverty History”.

That type of influence is necessary, but it seems only possible about every

20 years at most. In addition to the notable, and spectacular, and splendid, there must be a systematic, ongoing, consistent building of partnerships around the world.

In Focus is a witness to the latter. And you are part of it. Your regular involvement, maintained over an extended period of time is also “the stuff of miracles”.

This issue of *In Focus* comes with the thanks of our partners and the CWS staff.

The Reverend Grahame Ellis

Thank you Grahame

In January the Reverend Grahame Ellis was appointed to work two days a week as Assistant to the General Secretary of the NCCA, to assist in the oversight of Christian World Service.

His emphasis of the role was the care and support of CWS staff, and communication. He also worked on a timeline and workplan for AusAID accreditation of CWS.

At a meeting of the CWS Commission at the end of June, the

Chair, the Reverend Gregor Henderson expressed the gratitude of everyone to Grahame for his valuable contribution to CWS.

The Commission formally recorded its thanks to Grahame Ellis for his service and leadership over his six months as Assistant to the General Secretary for CWS. The Commission particularly expressed appreciation to Grahame for his very significant contribution to staff co-ordination and morale.

New Director for Christian World Service

Alistair Gee has been appointed as the new Director of CWS. He has a strong history of co-ordinating humanitarian and human rights work. Alistair is a member of the Anglican Church of Australia and worships, with his wife, Ros, in the parish of All Saints' Hunters Hill (Sydney).

He has been the President of Refugee Advice and Casework Service for the past five years and he has chaired a number of working groups of church and non-government organisations during the last 10 years. He has experience lobbying at United Nations and Federal Government levels on international

refugee law, foreign policy and defence policy.

He has been working as a solicitor, specialising in industrial relations, corporate services and advising charities.

Alistair is looking forward to the challenge ahead and is confident that the energy of staff and supporters will keep CWS growing. He is excited at the way CWS works in collaboration with partners and at the willingness of everyone to be involved.

"The next 10 years will be a crucial time in the fight against poverty. Many commitments have been made. If we can meet our commitments we have a real chance of making poverty history."



Photo: Mohsin, CWS

Zimbabwe: Segregation against the working poor

Recent news of the effects of the so called "Operation Restore Order" (Operation Murambatsvina), currently being conducted by the government of Zimbabwe, has caused consternation among Australian Church leaders and members.

Gwen Willis, CWS's Africa Program Officer, reported that many people have had their stalls confiscated or destroyed, goods confiscated and themselves put in a position where they have no income, have been imprisoned and when released (whenever that will be) will have to return to their home areas. When they eventually get there they will have no homes, nothing to put in any home and nothing to keep them warm during these cold winter months.

At a recent meeting of the Executive of the National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA), leaders heard reports from Zimbabwe of the misery being brought about by this operation, in which whole urban settlements have been bulldozed

"According to our sources, a lot of trauma could have been avoided had the government gone about this differently," said the Reverend John Henderson,

General Secretary of the NCCA. "Children and parents have watched the demolition of homes, housing co-operatives have lost whole investments, and many people have been left exposed to the winter weather. While we appreciate the need for governments to regulate the affairs of their country, this suffering seems to be unnecessary."

The World Council of Churches has reported that hundreds of thousands of Zimbabweans have become homeless by "an operation of segregation against the working poor".

"To carry out such acts of cruelty shows clearly that the government is losing the moral and ethical ground for leadership, healing and reconciliation" (www-coe.org/wcc/what/international/zimbabwe).

The Zimbabwe Council of Churches has called upon the Government to: uphold the rule of law at all times and never to allow any illegal activities to take root for political benefits; facilitate the quick relocation of the displaced



Photo: ZVW News

people to habitable places; and provide for the basic needs of the displaced in a permanent manner.

And it has called upon all churches to: pray for God's intervention so that the situation is dealt with, with compassion and justice; assist materially, spiritually, morally and through counselling for the affected; help in information gathering and needs assessment to enable correct and decisive action to be taken by relevant stakeholders and government; and work closely throughout the country to provide assistance to families who have lost homes and incomes.

After the tsunami : building justice and peace

Social Justice Sunday – 25 September 2005

Christian World Service and the Social Justice Network of the NCCA have worked together to produce a 2005 Social Justice resource. A generous grant from the NCCA's Glenburnie Program and support from the Uniting Church and CWS have enabled the resource to be published.

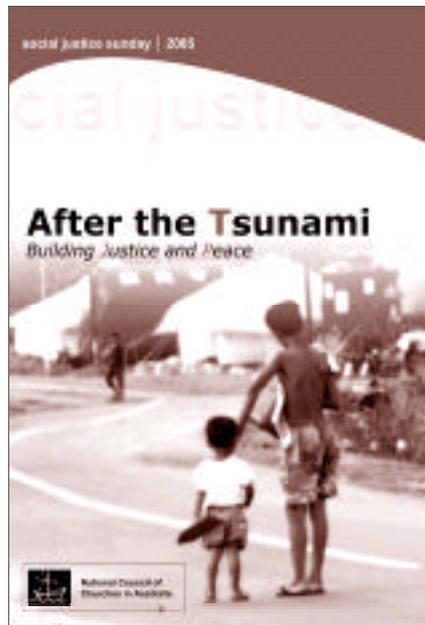
"The Boxing Day Tsunami was sudden and catastrophic. As the raw and graphic footage of the carnage choked nightly news bulletins and office emails, the magnitude and horror of the destruction became evident. What followed was a wave of public sympathy and support.

Behind the reports of rising death-tolls, relief efforts, stories of miraculous survival and heroic efforts to save people, there were other stories. Natural disasters do not occur in a vacuum. Their effects are magnified by the pre-existing problems in any given country and the disaster response is always affected and even determined by them. Many of the problems that existed in tsunami-affected regions before the disaster have been exacerbated by it and will linger long after our giving has slowed.

The tsunami's effects will be long-lasting in many places and it will be important that Australia and other affluent nations be consistent and generous neighbours, both as individuals and as nations.

This year, on Social Justice Sunday, we call on church members and all Australians to look afresh at issues such as aid and debt, displaced people, trafficking in women and children, and peace-building. The situations of people so devastated by the tsunami are a reminder to us that healthy communities require not only buildings, infrastructure and services but peace and justice for everyone.

For the sake of people in tsunami-affected places – and in all poor nations – it is time to remember our Christian calling to live in humility, not seeking our own



security or affluence, but living like Christ the servant who emptied himself of all divine glory and became a human being to share our lives with us (Philippians 2:1-13).

We call on the Australian Government to examine how we live out our global

citizenship. We can make a difference to the world's most vulnerable people with generous aid, given selflessly; laws which control those Australians who traffic human beings or exploit them in Australia or overseas; cancellation of unpayable debt so that nations can focus on creating societies where people have food, shelter, health, education and their human rights; an end to the arms race, a commitment to peace-building, and strong, friendly ties with nations in our region.

We are invited to rejoice in the God who comes to us in love in Jesus Christ, offering us new beginnings and all that we need to live. As we respond to our neighbours who seek to rebuild their lives and communities after the tsunami, so we respond to this gracious God in love and praise."

This statement has been endorsed as a public statement and for inclusion in the Social Justice Sunday resource 2005 by the following churches of the National Council of Churches in Australia:

Anglican Church of Australia
 Armenian Apostolic Church
 Assyrian Church of the East
 Churches of Christ
 Congregational Federation of Australia
 Coptic Orthodox Church
 Greek Orthodox Church
 Lutheran Church of Australia
 Religious Society of Friends
 Roman Catholic Church
 Romanian Orthodox Church
 Salvation Army
 Syrian Orthodox Church
 Uniting Church in Australia

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- remembering our faith: a biblical and theological reflection
- uprooted by disaster: when your home is gone
- trading in people: the abuse and exploitation of people trafficking
- sri lanka: disaster in a state of conflict
- creditors, debtors and the poor: exploring debt and debt relief in Indonesia
- australia's helping hand: looking carefully at Australia's aid package to Indonesia
- resources for worship
- further resources and suggestions for action

Copies are available from CWS – email christianworldservice@ncca.org.au, phone 02 9299 2215/1800 025 101 or download from www.ncca.org.au/socialjusticesunday



Photo: Eira Clapton



The Christmas Bowl 2005 - fill the future with hope

“Help the bowl overflow” and “fill the future with hope” are the themes for this year’s Christmas Bowl program.

You can order your resources – parish kits with worship and group ideas, including stories from partners, clip art, A2 and A4 posters and bookmarks; school kits with stories and activities for primary and secondary students, clip art, posters and bookmarks; and corflute signs (left) –

email christmasbowl@ncca.org.au, phone 02 9299 2215 or 1800 025 101, download an order form at www.ncca.org.au/christmasbowl

All resources will be available from the website in August.

Gifts to the Christmas Bowl enable CWS to commit to ongoing projects, to respond immediately to emergencies and to consider new projects, with our partners in Africa, Asia, Australia, the Middle East and the Pacific.

After the tsunami: building justice and peace

Gifts sent to CWS for tsunami relief and rehabilitation were A\$ 574 393 at 30 June 2005. Thank you to all who generously supported this appeal.

Action by Churches Together has been sent \$ 380 000. Six months after the tsunami, ACT will have reached tens of thousands of people in India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Thailand and Somalia through their relief work.

In February, CWS’s partner, OfERR Sri Lanka, received \$ 130 000 (\$ 100 000 AusAID grant and \$ 30 000 from the Christmas Bowl). Sooriya Kumary has recently written acknowledging gratitude

of the people she is working with in Sri Lanka, along the east coast, re-building lives and homes. The project in 2005-6 will provide training, advocacy, education, rehabilitation and capacity building, especially for Sri Lankan refugees returning from India, and has been fully funded by CWS and other partners.

OfERR India initiated a project in three different locations along the coast of Tamil Nadu. The budget was A\$ 1 138 304 – and at present these projects are not fully funded. OfERR India has asked for further contributions to enable relief and rehabilitation to continue.

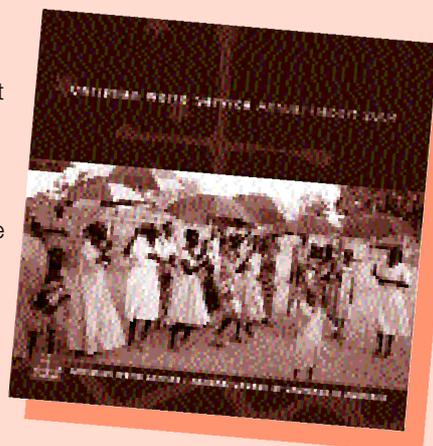


Map: OfERR

CWS publications

Many people have commented about the first issue of *In Focus* and our recent *Annual Report* and the helpful information available in them.

In Focus costs 41 cents a copy and the *Annual Report* cost 66 cents a copy. We are very grateful to our graphic designer, John Hardaker, and to our printers, Lindwall and Ward, and to our wonderful team of mailing volunteers for their generous contributions to the work in which CWS is engaged around the world.



All our publications are available at www.ncca.org.au/cws – if you would prefer to download, or receive them by email, rather than snail mail, please let us know at christianworldservice@ncca.org.au – we’ll be very happy to arrange this.

There are so many stories connected with the Christmas Bowl and CWS – we want to share them all with everyone who supports us, working for a world of peace with justice.

If they survive, they're refugees

Refugees must not only survive the murderous regimes they flee and perilous voyages on leaky boats, but they must also endure detention and the dreaded temporary protection visas.

Having fled some of the world's most brutal regimes, they might be forgiven for thinking that Australia would give them a break.

Not so! Under Australian law, you are not a refugee just because you fled in genuine fear of persecution. You are a refugee when the Department of Immigration decides you are. Until then, you are an "unauthorised non-citizen" or an "illegal" and subject to mandatory, indefinite and non-reviewable detention.

Even though 90% of asylum seekers arriving by boat without visa (as permitted by international law) are later found to be refugees, under Australian law, they are not presumed to be genuine refugees, but rather illegal immigrants or bogus asylum seekers.

There you have it, the basics of detention in Australia. No court order to say you should be detained. No reason given why you are detained. No release date like criminals sentenced in court and no right to appeal.

Instead, every man, woman and child is automatically locked up in a detention centre for an indefinite period until they are given a refugee visa and released or deported; guilty until you prove you are innocent!

But it doesn't end there. Even when you prove you fit Australia's increasingly strict definition of a refugee and are released from detention, you are still denied permanent residence even though the Department has decided it is too dangerous for you to go home.

Instead, you get a three-year Temporary Protection Visa (TPV) and when your three years are up, you have to again prove you are a refugee. Meanwhile, you live in limbo, unable to get on with life and constantly fearing



Photo: UNHCR

being sent home.

Yes, it is expensive, and illogical, but wait there is more. Detention and TPVs were introduced to punish those arriving without visas and deterring others.

Since detention was introduced in 1992, it has not succeeded in deterring people. Arrivals actually increased. Why? Because your average Afghan has no idea that mandatory detention awaits, and people smugglers are not about to jeopardize business by telling them. Incidentally, there is no Lonely Planet Guide to seeking asylum.

After the Tampa arrived in 2001, the Government set up a naval blockade and got countries like Indonesia to intercept asylum seekers. It worked and the boats stopped.

Why do we still need mandatory detention and TPVs to deter people when we have a naval blockade? Here is a hint: the polls said "detention: are you for it or against it?" and 60% of Australians said "yes". What they didn't ask is "do you want a humane system with limits on how long you're locked up, whether you can

appeal, or whether it is necessary to lock up every man, woman and child?"

What is all the fuss about with Liberal backbenchers revolting and threatening to cross the floor to introduce such reforms? It is the story of the people public opinion locked away and a Government and Opposition living in fear of having to reign in the monster they created.

Bridging the Gap

While debate rages over detention, however, a larger problem is brewing in our community. Few Australians realise that instead of arriving by boat most asylum seekers now arrive by air, with tourist, student or work visas, and then claim asylum.

Although they are allowed to live in the community while their applications are being processed, the problem is it may take years before their cases are decided, and in the meantime many are denied the right to work, or receive any form of assistance.

This leaves them destitute, stripped of the dignity of being able to work and provide for themselves and their families, and forced to depend on charities to survive. Worse still, because they cannot work, they are not granted access to Medicare, and have no money to even see a doctor.

Picture moving from temporary shelters to train stations and friends' couches not just for a month or two, but in some case for as long as nine or 10 years. Charities, which are stretched to breaking point, scrape to provide A\$25 a week. Refugee workers, burnt out by the harrowing casework, and some even going to counseling themselves to deal with the stress, continue to try to help you.

It is no life. Refugees are not asking for charity, just the dignity of being allowed to work to support themselves.

Find out more www.ncca.org.au/cws/rdp

James Thomson
Refugee Advocacy Officer for CWS-NCCA

Refugee and Migrant Sunday Resources

Refugee and Migrant Sunday, 28 August 2005, is a celebration of the contribution refugees and migrants have made to Australia. This year there is a strong focus on refugees and asylum seekers.

The Parish/Adult, and School Education Kits contain education sheets and liturgical and parish resources to help raise awareness, celebrate the day and take further action.

There is a Schools' Media Competition with three categories (poster, poem and multi-media). Entries close on 13 September 2005.

Both kits highlight Sudanese refugees to better understand war and peace, refugee camp life and resettlement in Australia. Try linking up and celebrating with Sudanese church and community groups! The parish kit also explains the work rights campaign for asylum seekers living in the community, reliant largely on charity, facing destitution but seeking dignity.

Please feel free to use all or any part of the kit in your publications.

Take a special opportunity this year! After your Refugee and Migrant Sunday worship service, or at a special time that day, arrange and publicise a local Day of Courage film screening and discussion, with a knowledgeable speaker. The four discreet 15 minute segments are excellent background to the policies and dilemmas that have only been partially addressed in recent government changes, championed by brave Government backbenchers, led by Petro Georgiou.

Details of the kits, Schools' Media Competition, The Day of Courage and state/territory ecumenical council contacts can be found at www.ncca.org.au/cws/rdp/rms

Women must play a crucial role in building peace in Africa



Photo: Nick Kerr

Carla Tongun pictured in Adelaide on June 1 – the fifth anniversary of the day the Tongun family arrived in Australia.

The Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement in Southern Sudan have signed a peace agreement – but there is still a lot to be done before peace can become a reality.

And the role of women in establishing and maintaining peace is crucial. Carla Tongun was a Sudanese women's leader in Africa. She is now a leader in the South Australian Sudanese Community and the SA Sudanese Catholic Community.

She has just returned from two peace conferences – one in Kampala, Uganda, and one in Nairobi, Kenya. Her visit was partly sponsored by CWS and by the SA Council of Churches. Both conferences stressed the role of women in bringing peace.

The Kampala peace conference had two themes – "Stand up and speak out for peace in Africa," and "Stand up and speak out for a clean Africa".

One of the major challenges in Southern Sudan is how internally displaced people can be resettled in their traditional lands. "Most of the displaced people are women and children," Carla said. "The most difficult thing is working

for peace between the people from different parts of Southern Sudan.

"People who go back to their villages find that their traditional lands have been taken over by displaced people from other areas. There is the danger that there will be ethnic violence. People want their traditional lands given back to them. How will the traditional owners get their tribal lands back again without more strife?"

Carla believes women can create harmony and help avoid fresh fighting. "They can encourage people to work together for the common goal," she said. "Women head some of the non-government organisations, especially those bringing humanitarian aid."

When a new interim government is set up in three years' time, 25 per cent of its members will be women, Carla reported.

"The empowerment of women at this stage is very important," she said. "It's good that women are becoming more involved in decision making. They know the problems. They understand them."

"I pray that the international community will continue to press for peace in the whole of Sudan."

Nick Kerr, CWS

The Christmas Bowl

Daily life in Lisadila

Senor Marcelino and his family live in Lisadila, 110 kilometers west of Dili, in Timor Leste.

Senor Marcelino is a widower with seven children, Maria de Olivera, Avelina, Anjenila, David, Lucas, Marta Maya, and Dominggos.

The three boys are still at the elementary school. They have to walk every day three kilometers.

The girls work at home and in the field. A source for clean drinking water is not far from the house. The family lives in a rather small house made of local materials.

The family lives from the yield of the farm with a surface of two hectares. One hectare is used as a rice paddy and the other hectare is planted with fruit

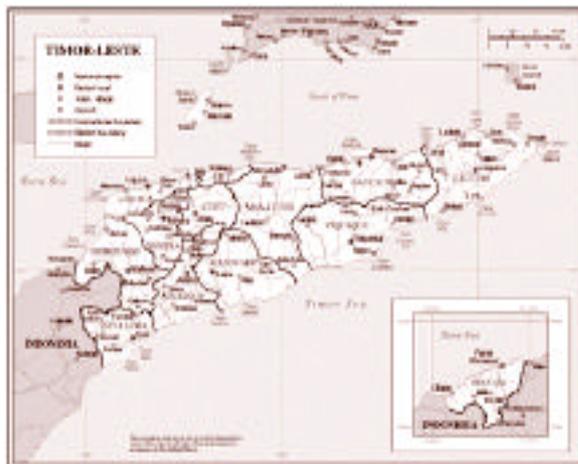
trees, like mango, jackfruit and coconut. They also have four pigs, five chickens and two goats.

The products of the farm are sold in the local market and the earnings are 50 cents to one dollar on a market day.

Yasona, CWS's partner in Timor Leste, is the development agency of the Protestant Church in East Timor.

Marcelino is satisfied with the support Yasona gives. He says, "It has helped me to increase the production."

\$ 40 000 from your gifts to the Christmas Bowl, and \$ 90 726 from *forçeten*, have been sent to Yasona for projects like this one. Thank you.



Fiji: beyond the palms

When most Australians think of Fiji the first images that come to mind are beautiful beaches and luxurious resorts. But what I discovered on a study visit to Fiji in May was that Fiji is also so much more.

Fijians are warm people with a proud history, but with deep wounds from the

coups that have bred a culture of silence and distrust over the past few decades. The difficulties that plague people are complex and can be traced to a number of issues including distribution of wealth, gender and ethnic inequality and poor management systems.

Our Fijian partner, the Ecumenical Centre for Research, Education and Advocacy (ECEA) is working to empower local people to break down these structures by running workshops in towns and villages all over Fiji.

I met many of the wonderful staff and sat in on various workshops. I was moved by how much the Fijians wanted to change the repetitive culture of violence and anger. At one workshop in Labasa, I saw a former rebel embrace an Indo-Fijian terrorised during the 2000 coup.

It was an uplifting moment and I was proud to be able to say that I am a Christmas Bowl supporter, staff member and friend of ECEA. With people like ECEA working in Fiji, I am confident that one day there will be a lasting peace in the Pacific.

Kaylea Fearn, CWS Victoria



\$25 000 from the Christmas Bowl has been sent to ECEA. Again thank you.

Bula Vinaka!

(Fijian greeting term of hello!)

I am writing to follow up on the short visit coinciding with our workshop conducted by the staff of ECREA in Wailoku.

We were fortunate to attend such a thought-provoking workshop. Since I was a pre-school teacher for more than 20 years, I think I have missed a lot about the topics we covered: Social Analysis, Community Empowerment and others that really opened up our minds and helped us to be confident to face facts and address our communities on what can be done to eliminate poverty.

ECREA is doing a great job conducting workshops to educate and empower people who are neglected by the government.

I am beginning to advocate to the Women's Group in my village on the benefits of the workshop.

Looking at statistics on poverty, Fiji is really getting worse. The government is trying to find solutions but the problem is increasing. I think if the government sets its priorities right then poverty can be eliminated.

Thank you for the Christmas Bowl support for ECREA.

Vinaka Vakalevu! Meaning – thank you so much!

Viri Asioli-Racule



Photo: Kaylee Feam

God did my work for me

I started this letter on Friday the 10th and I couldn't finish it. On Saturday morning the Bank called me with the great news of the grant sent to the Joint Christian Committee School - A\$ 19 967.

I cannot tell you how grateful we are for your generosity and your thoughtfulness.

I had debated writing to ask for your help, but I think that God did my work for me. I keep praying for guidance and I do get it, believe me.

Your gift encourages me to go on with the school and to accept more of the poorer children and especially those in the camps who will not have the slightest chance elsewhere.

My deepfelt thanks to you and to all the colleagues who are working hard to collect the funds. May we all serve in His name.

With my sincerest thanks and good wishes

*Sylvia Haddad Executive Secretary, JCC
for Social Service, Lebanon/*

*Department of Service to Palestinian
Refugees,*

Middle East Council of Churches

The JCC School was first established in 1950 to serve Palestinian refugees – it now welcomes all those who seek an education. The school aims to prepare new generations for co-existence. Christian, Moslem, Palestinian and



Photo: Colleen Hodge

Lebanese children sit side by side and learn to understand and accept each other's affiliations, whether religious or national. The school's mission is to provide children from limited income families with quality education, values, ethics and above all, tolerance, leading to co-existence and responsible citizenship.

What we do and why we do it

CWS knows that there are people like Senor Marcelino, Viri Asioli-Racule and Sylvia Haddad in places where we work with ecumenical partners like Yasona, ECREA and the JCC – people who know what is needed there, better than Australians, what needs to be done and how to do it in their context.

We want Christmas Bowl gifts to go as far as possible – our partners can purchase goods more cheaply and closer to where needed and our gifts support local economies – local

workers are paid local wages.

We want whole communities to benefit from our partnership – so we work with local churches and local ecumenical organisations who share our value system and faith.

We believe in long term aid and development work - education, health, conflict resolution, empowerment, enabling courage, hope and peace – we are there for the long haul.

We believe in ecumenism, doing as much as we can together rather than separately.

A young Palestinian's outlook

To celebrate our new **Partners4Peace** program, CWS invited Zack Sabella to visit. Zack was welcomed, first in Darwin, and then in Brisbane, Canberra, Melbourne, Adelaide, Hobart/Launceston, Sydney and Perth. He gave most generously of himself to Partners4Peace, including a month's employment, during his visit. Here is his story.

"When I despair, I remember that all through history, the ways of truth and love have always won."

Mahatma Gandhi

What more powerful armour does the human soul possess over truth and love? The history of humankind, according to Mahatma Gandhi is not sculptured by wars or by hatred, but is revived by the vigour of love and tolerance.

The story that I carry with me is not one of obtained wisdom from age nor is it a plea for solidarity with the Palestinian people. It is one of deep feelings and emotions that emerged as a result of a lived experience in a land that is said to be Holy, yet is shattered by hate, bloodshed and conflict.

I come from a land lost in conflict and I am part of a people who are helplessly seeking their basic human rights of freedom and independence. It is a land which is supposed to produce the fruits of peace and love, yet is growing the thorns of war and hate. It is a land enriched by ancient history and diversified cultures, a land of many languages and many religions, a land beautified by a captivating nature, decorated by olive trees and lofty mountains, pure springs and green hills, stony cliffs and sandy deserts. It is the land described by many as spellbinding and breathtaking.

Sadly, as I speak, that same land is one of destruction and hate, pain and sorrow, fighting and bloodshed, cages and walls. That same land is a land of restlessness and confusion, insecurity

and predominance, greed and unmercifulness. It is a land of contradiction, the cradle of holiness, the battlefield of conflict, and the talk of religions. It is the land of Israel, and the land of Palestine. It is the Holy Land.

Not a long time ago, my father and I were having a discussion about the political situation that is bothering so many in the world today. Both of us came to the conclusion that Palestine/Israel would be the most beautiful country to live in, if there were only true peace. It is amazing the extent to which that conclusion is true.

When I look at the world today, I am not pleased with what I see. Even though I am thankful for having a loving family, good health, great friends and the opportunity to be educated, there are many things that disappoint me in my life. The incidents that I encounter living in a land of conflict wake me up to the reality that my life, as part of an occupied people, is not one of normality, but a differentiated one that requires of me to act in a more mature and grown-up manner in order to be mentally prepared to deal with an environment which is not controlled by my own people, but by another people.

Such a reality, in its turn, deprives me of my innocence as a child, growing up in a land of conflict. I am raised in a society which is overwhelmed by political

chit-chat, which in its turn affects my personality as a child and subconsciously allows me to absorb political terms and phrases picked up from the street that reflect the lifestyle of the Palestinian at that time. That is why when asked routine questions about my personal life, you find me answering with phrases the likes of "the economic situation is very bad" or "the settlements have to be dismantled" or "Jerusalem is the capital of Palestine".

Being born and raised in Jerusalem throughout my entire life, not only was I a witness to an ongoing struggle, but I was part of the struggle itself. From being a child to becoming an adolescent to maturing into a young adult, my mind has always been consumed with questions and inquiries concerning the reason and logic behind a prolonged conflict which left my people bare of freedom and deprived of their independence. My eyes went always to parts of the world where youngsters like me led a normal life, where they were free to do whatever they pleased, go wherever they wanted, without being controlled. I used to feel envious towards those who did not have to deal with the reality that I was living and at times I would long for an opportunity to escape my reality in order to get an



Lloyd Kent (Northern Territory Council of Churches), welcoming Zack

Photo: Colleen Hodge

on conflict and peace

equal right to live free, even if it were temporary.

As part of an occupied people I shared the anger and fury of my Palestinian peers towards the Israeli occupation. The Israeli military prowess demonstrated by checkpoints, fences, tanks, F16s, curfews, patrols and recently, the illegal apartheid wall, were all unacceptable to Palestinians. The idea of being monitored and watched 24 hours a day, seven days a week, was rejected by a people longing to be free and independent. This ruthless reality, which affects our daily lives, has planted in many young Palestinians seeds of rebellion, seeds of refusal to succumb, seeds of rage, which were later transformed to acts of resistance, whether through violence, or intellectual expression, or peaceful demonstrations. There are many other factors which affect the way the Palestinian youngster deals with anger such as socio-economic status, personal experience with the occupation, educational background and parental bringing up.

Palestinians in general never had the opportunity to mix with Israelis on a social level. The only direct interaction between the two was with one being dressed formally as a soldier and the other taking orders in queues. In my personal opinion, the lack of any social activity between the two does not help in reaching a solution. Although the nature of the relationship between the occupied and the occupier does not allow for any normal social interaction between the two, it is essential for both to be able to perceive each other as human beings who share the same joys and worries that life hides.

For me, I was fortunate enough to be able to have the opportunity to intermingle with the Israeli society, not as an occupied Palestinian, but as a university student. Being part of the Israeli society, I realised that many did

not welcome my presence and perceived me as a probable threat to their security or lifestyle. The reason for that, in my opinion, is the stereotype image that most Israelis have of Palestinians, one that portrays the Palestinian as someone who is

consumed with thoughts of hatred and plans of destruction towards the state of Israel. Although this is understandable to some extent, the generalisation of such negative perceptions might intricate any trial by someone like me to put aside my origins, beliefs and political views for an instant, in an attempt to deal with an Israeli peer on an individual basis far from political debate or arguments concerning who is right or who is wrong.

Throughout my studies, I noticed that when rightwing Israelis used to converse with me, they would address me as if I was a representative of every Palestinian who committed a bad deed towards Israel, something which used to bother me and frustrate my continuous efforts to try and prove that Palestinians can share the same interests as Israelis in life.

What was positive about my experience living in the Israeli society was my ability to show a side of the Palestinians that not many Israelis ever got to see. I must admit one of the greatest achievements was being able to transform a Jewish friend, who was brought up in a right wing family with extreme political thoughts, to becoming someone more open minded about the strife of Palestinians, and with less extreme political thoughts. I did that not by constantly talking about how people should sympathise with the Palestinians



A wallaby welcome.

Photo: Calleen Hodge

and our cause, but by being a university classmate, sharing the same academic worries as my Jewish friend. We were together in study sessions where we helped each other and slowly grew to love one another as brothers, without regard to our religion, our origins, or our political beliefs. For the first time in my life I was able to hug an Israeli and bond with him, not as an occupier but as a human being. It gave me great pleasure yet at the same time I was overwhelmed with great sorrow. Soon I knew I had to go back to my neighbourhood, where such stories seemed as fairytale stories with no taste of reality whatsoever. Soon what was real for me at one point in my life would go back to being a dream very far away from reach.

One of the most touching phrases I ever heard from my Israeli friend before each of us went our own way was, "Zack, I am so afraid that you will change one day. I don't want you to change; I love you the way you are." I was never able to give my Israeli friend an answer. However, today I tell him:

"The love that grew along the years between us as we marched through the long nights of hard work to secure our future will never change. The way I look at you as a brother who taught me a lot will never go away. The memories that we shaped together as we experienced

rough times and joyful moments will never vanish. Those are the things that we built, neither by hate nor by pointing the fingers of blame, but by listening to each other, helping one another, caring for one another, growing together and enjoying each other's presence. This, my Israeli friend, will never go away.

"On the other hand, my friend, until our world will learn from our experiences and learn how to forgive and love, the mounting anger inside me will not rest. The injustice that I am facing every day on my way to work, something that many Israelis are not aware of, will not disappear. My strife to gain my freedom and independence for my country, something which you both have, and enjoy, will not halt. The sorrow that consumes my heart and the pain that I

feel with every Palestinian cry as a result of the cruelty of occupation will not part from me.

"My Israeli friend I am torn by my love to you as a brother on the one hand, and by my anger towards the occupation of my people on the other. My love to you will always remain and so will my anger towards occupation as long as it shall remain.

"Our world does not need stories of hate and racism; it does not need biased media coverage and brainwashing. Our world does not need separation walls and checkpoints; it does not need weapons and bloodshed. Our world does not need conflicts and wars; it does not need pain and suffering. What our world needs are stories of love and hope, hope for a future of true peace

where no-one should control another, where people are rich with diversified cultures and religions, but united by one purpose, that of which is making life something that maximises laughter and happiness and minimises tears and sadness. What our world needs are consciousness and awareness, understanding and education. What our world needs are ears to listen, hearts to feel, bridges to communicate, courage to forgive, strength to compromise and the will to make a difference. What our world needs is what we have hidden in each of us, yet still needs to emerge. Until then I will remain angry at injustice, my friend."

May peace be upon all of us always.
God bless and thank you.

Zack Sabella

Partners4Peace, a new way of giving

How pleasing that the very first form received for Partners4Peace arrived at CWS on Monday 6 June 2005 and this gave the opportunity to welcome a great ecumenical supporter, the Reverend Norah Norris from South Australia, as Partner4Peace Number One!

"I did not have to think long or hard before filling in the Partners4Peace membership form. It seemed an obvious, natural thing to do", said Norah.



"As a long time member of *forceten*, very committed to the work of overseas aid and development and believing that the Christian Churches must work together in this endeavour, I am pleased to become a member of Partners4Peace, but surprised and honoured to have been drawn as Number One! Although I do wonder if it

might have been better for Number One to be a young person just setting out on the ecumenical adventure rather than an oldie who has walked this path for nearly 60 years."

There was no "drawing", Norah's form was the first received! Since then, a steady flow of forms attests

to the strong support for giving each month to peace-building projects specially selected from our partners' work.

Thank you for voting with your commitment of gifts. Our partners will be greatly encouraged and we hope to keep you very well informed with monthly Peace Mail, styled as aerogram stories from partners. The stories are from real people, about real issues where our gifts will make a difference to their future. CWS is also keen to pass on to them your comments and reactions to their



Photo: Paul Butler

stories, so that our help is not just with funding, as important as that is, but with giving a real sense of how we care and how we pray for a future full of peace and harmony.

If you have seen the brochure and are thinking of becoming a Partner4Peace, please be

assured of how welcome you will be and what a difference your commitment will make. Strong personal relationships go such a long way in helping to heal this broken world. Partners are really excited that people in far off Australia show they care!

If you need a brochure, please visit the website: www.ncca.org.au/cws/partners4peace or free call 1800 025 101 e-mail: partners4peace@ncca.org.au or enquire with your state/territory ecumenical council (see page 14).

Apology to Caesar D'Mello

To Whom It May Concern:

The National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA) apologises to Mr Caesar D'Mello for any incorrect inferences people may have drawn from the ending of his tenure as the Director of Christian World Service. The Executive of the NCCA had no intention to impugn his good name, and did not base its decision on any immoral or improper conduct on the part of Mr D'Mello, or issues relating to his role, and it did not mean to imply that this was the case. Nevertheless, we recognise that our decision has caused him pain and anguish, and this we deeply regret. We strongly affirm his reputation, good character, and the quality of his service.

Caesar has given many years of committed service to the Ecumenical movement in Australia and globally. He has fulfilled various positions in the structures of the movement with distinction, and we believe that he is capable of further contributions in the future in either Australia or elsewhere. Should he apply for further positions, we sincerely hope he finds one commensurate with his experience, skills, and abilities.

The Council acknowledges in retrospect that the process leading up to the NCCA Executive's decision not to renew Mr D'Mello's appointment fell short of best practice. This includes the lateness of the decision, the lack of clarity of the review process, and the lack of referral back to the Commission for Christian World Service. We regret that he did not have the opportunity formally to respond to any concerns that may have been raised.

The NCCA takes its role as an employer seriously, and is always seeking to improve its internal management and staff structures and procedures. It has willingly taken on board the learning gained from this event, and has already begun to incorporate this learning into the planning and procedures of the organisation.

The Council has offered Mr D'Mello financial compensation in recognition of the pain and anguish caused to him.

Revd John Henderson
General Secretary

Revd Prof James Haire
President

A formal minute of gratitude to Caesar D'Mello was unanimously agreed by the CWS Commission in November 2004: The Commission for Christian World Service honours and thanks God for Caesar D'Mello's leadership and enthusiastic commitment to the NCCA-CWS, and the Australian ecumenical movement, for more than 20 years.

Caesar has been appointed Director of Programs for the Columban Mission Centre - a Catholic missionary congregation serving in Asia, the Pacific and South America, engaged with issues of mission, justice and peace in country, as well as international contexts. In Australia, the challenge is to link the local church with global mission.

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NCCA – Member Australasian Religious Press Association

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Email _____

Denomination _____

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RESOURCES

I would like

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Social Justice Sunday Resources | <input type="checkbox"/> Partners4Peace brochure |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Christmas Bowl 2005 Resources | <input type="checkbox"/> Refugee and Migrant Sunday Education Kit |
| <input type="checkbox"/> In Focus by email (pdf) | <input type="checkbox"/> In Focus by mail |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Living Trusts Brochure | <input type="checkbox"/> Give As You Earn Leaflet |

Here is my gift for

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Christmas Bowl | <input type="checkbox"/> Christian World Service |
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Payment method:

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The NCCA has a privacy policy which complies with the requirements of the Privacy Act 1988, to be read in conjunction with the National Privacy Principles (NPPs) set out in Schedule 3 to the Act. To read our privacy policy please go to www.ncca.org.au, or contact our office.



NCCA CWS is a member of the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) and is a signatory to the ACFID Code of Conduct.



Abolish Modern Slavery!

In 1833 the British Parliament passed the Slavery Abolition Act, declaring that "slavery shall be and is hereby utterly and forever abolished and declared unlawful throughout the British colonies, plantations, and possessions abroad".

So why, in 2005, are women and children still bought and sold and their labour exploited?

The choices are clearly limited for women in situations of extreme poverty and desperation. They are vulnerable to exploitation and it is our duty to draw attention to this issue and support these women.

Traffickers recruit victims through fake advertisements for hairdressers or waitresses, or through mail order bride catalogues.

Women and children trafficked to Australia from Asia are expected to repay debts of up to \$50,000 to cover travel, visa and "migration agent" expenses. When in Australia they are often subjected to extreme sexual violence and are virtually imprisoned within the brothel until the debt is repaid – often taking between 2-8 months or 500-1,000 prostitution acts. Many then discover that they do not have a valid visa and could be detained by immigration officials. This is modern day slavery.

August 23 is the International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition.

Now is the time to start planning how your church or school might acknowledge this day, bearing in mind that many women and children still experience modern forms of slavery.

See www.forceten.org.au or email forceten@ncca.org.au, phone 02 9299 2215/1800 025 101



GOOD NEWS FOR SIMPLY SHARING WEEK PARTICIPANTS

Caritas Australia and CWS will again engage in Simply Sharing Week in May-June 2006 – providing activities and an education kit about a project in an area where Caritas and CWS both work.

Email www.caritas.org.au or christianworldservice@ncca.org.au

CONTACT US! www.ncca.org.au

National Office

379 Kent Street, Sydney Locked Bag 199, Sydney 1230
Tel: (02) 9299 2215 Freecall 1800 025 101
Email: christianworldservice@ncca.org.au
ABN 64 493 941 795

State Ecumenical Offices

If you need to order material, or require a speaker on ecumenical issues or the work of Christian World Service please contact your state ecumenical office:

New South Wales Ecumenical Council – Sydney

Locked Bag 199, Sydney 1230
Tel: (02) 9299 2215 Email: nswec@ncca.org.au

Canberra

GPO Box 1526, Canberra 2601
Tel: (02) 6273 8805 Email: rocorrigan@csu.edu.au

Northern Territory Council of Churches

PO Box 143, Sanderson 0813
Tel: (08) 8945 3371 Email: lloydkent@optusnet.com.au

Queensland Churches Together

PO Box 2045, Milton BC 4064
Tel: (07) 3369 6792 Email: qctcws@tpg.com.au

South Australian Council of Churches

GPO Box 2106, Adelaide 5001
Tel: (08) 8221 6633 Email: sacc@picknowl.com.au

Tasmanian Council of Churches

163 Macquarie Street, Hobart 7000
Tel: (03) 6234 2543 Email: tcc@trump.net.au

Victorian Council of Churches

Level 4, Causeway House, 306 Little Collins Street, Melbourne 3000
Tel: (03) 9650 4511 Email: vcc@vcc.org.au

NCCA – Christian World Service, Victoria

Level 4, Causeway House, 306 Little Collins Street, Melbourne 3000
Tel: (03) 9650 6811 Email: cwsvic@ncca.org.au

Council of Churches of Western Australia

PO Box 831, Scarborough 6922
Tel: (08) 9385 5477 Email: cragwestaust@ozemail.com.au

National Council of Churches in Australia

Commissions

The National Council of Churches in Australia has four Commissions which take responsibility for the various programs:

- Commission for Christian World Service
 - International Programs
 - Refugees and Displaced People
 - Strathfield Home
 - forceten
 - Education and Communications
- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ecumenical Commission
- Commission on Faith and Unity
- Gender Commission

Networks

There are also two networks to help the wider church explore issues together of particular interest:

- Youth Network
- Social Justice Network