

MEDIA RELEASE

26 May 2011

New Global Figures Highlight Need to Act for Peace

The latest figures from the 2011 *Global Peace Index* launched today in Canberra show that overall the world has become less peaceful over the past year. Around 740,000 people die from armed conflict each year.

“These figures highlight the need to seriously invest in armed violence reduction that works,” says Alistair Gee, Executive Director of Act for Peace, the international aid agency of the National Council of Churches in Australia.

The *Global Peace Index*, an initiative of the Institute for Economics and Peace, is the best assessment of how peace and conflict affect countries worldwide. It measures the relative peacefulness of 153 countries based on 23 indicators, including levels of violent deaths, arms imports and exports and the likelihood of violent demonstrations. Australia is ranked 18th on the index.

“Act for Peace supports effective armed violence reduction and peace programs in many countries, including the countries ranked at the bottom of the 2011 *Global Peace Index*: Somalia, Iraq, Sudan and Afghanistan. Through this work, we see first-hand the way peacemaking and disarmament improve millions of lives in the world’s worst conflicts,” said Mr Gee.

This is the first year of the *Global Peace Index* in which Iraq’s score has improved significantly and the first year in which it is not ranked as the world’s least peaceful country, the rank now held by Somalia. This improvement is a result of efforts to improve safety and security, such as through the program of the Mines Advisory Group, supported by Act for Peace, to clear deadly landmines, cluster bombs and free up land for agriculture and development. This program has seen more than 1.5 million unexploded bombs and weapons cleared from millions of square metres of land — over three million square metres in the past year alone.

Haji Barzan, a farmer from the village of Bawa Mahmud, northeast of Baghdad in Iraq, said half his land had been covered in cluster bombs in 2003. Five years later, an 11 year old boy was killed when one of the weapons exploded.

Today, as a result of the Act for Peace-supported program, Mr Barzan can plough his land and plant crops.

“The money that the land will generate will improve my life and the lives of the two families working in my land, and all that is because of this life-saving work,” said Mr Barzan.

Mr Gee said, “Increasing support for this work is vital. It’s time to properly invest for peace in countries like Iraq, Somalia, Sudan and Afghanistan, all of which have been devastated by decades of conflict. Doing so will have benefits for us all.”

To arrange an interview, please contact Alistair Gee, 0417 672 650 or agee@ncca.org.au.

[To download high resolution images that align with this media release, please click here.](#)

About Act for Peace: Act for Peace is the international aid agency of the National Council of Churches in Australia and a member of the global ACT Alliance. We empower war-torn communities to reduce poverty, protect refugees, and prevent conflict. Our project partners are currently assisting more than one million people in the world’s worst conflict affected areas, including Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia, Sudan, Zimbabwe and Burma.

www.actforpeace.org.au