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New Routes

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A journal of
peace research
and action

Reconciliation

A bridge to the future



Promises and pitfalls in
reconciliation processes

Peace and development
necessary for
reconciliation

Story-sharing and
reconciliation
in South Africa and
Northern Ireland

The radical message
of reconciliation

No co-existence
without existence

Korean churches:
Seeking peace between
North and South

A peacebuilder
(never) retires

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New Routes

A journal of peace research and action

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RECONCILIATION

NICE WORD, MORE AND MORE USED POLITICALLY and in the field of peace research and peacebuilding, although originally a central Christian concept. What is it about?

My computer thesaurus does not refer to theology but suggests:

- ending of conflict or renewing of a friendly relationship between disputing people or groups
- the making of two or more apparently conflicting things consistent or compatible

This issue of *New Routes* is digging deeper into the theme. We have invited researchers and practitioners, writers with global as well as specific experience from conflicts like South Africa, Ireland, Liberia and Israel-Palestine, to share their views on reconciliation.

Charles Villa-Vicencio is reflecting on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa where he was very central as the national research director. Although South Africa went further than most countries in dealing with the past, the work is unfinished, says Vicencio. And there is a de facto continuation of the TRC. Maria Ericson, as Swedish theologian, has compared the peace processes of Northern Ireland and South Africa. She is looking at the "moral landscapes" in the reconciliation processes.

Peter Wallensteen, Uppsala-based professor, and Karen Brounéus, psychologist and peace researcher, are discussing challenges facing reconciliation processes or "bold attempts at breaking with a past of recurrent conflict" as they put it.

In a contribution from the Liberian context, Cllr Jérôme Verdier, is warning about a "blueprint". The Liberian TRC has an example of national dialogue emphasized involvement of civil society and diaspora communities.

Jonathan Kuttab from Palestine is expressing a hope that the ministry of reconciliation also will reach the Middle East which is torn apart by hatred, violence, separation, division and fragmentation.

We invite you to send feedback and share your views and understanding of reconciliation.

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ERRATA

An unfortunate mistake was made in the presentation of one of the authors in *New Routes* No 2/2007. The correct version should be:

SUSANNE JUNGERSTAM-MULDERS, Ph.D., is research director at the Svenska yrkes-högskolan University of Applied Sciences, Vasa, Finland. Previously she was a researcher at the Centre for European Studies at the University of Helsinki. She is also board member and member of the research council of the Åland Island Peace Institute. The editors of *New Routes* deeply apologize for the mistake.

As the majority of all wars today are intrastate and not interstate conflicts, the concept and understanding of reconciliation has to be re-explored and interpreted in new ways. The bottom line is always relationships between human beings, perpetrators and victims, but the aspects of justice, politics and security are indispensable for sustainable peacebuilding

Promises and pitfalls in reconciliation processes

Peter Wallensteen and
Karen Brounéus

In the last few years the issue of reconciliation has faced new types of challenges, particularly as intrastate conflicts today make up the bulk of all armed conflict. Building peace after war must involve measures that mitigate the insecurities that sparked the war and that have been entrenched by the fighting. Fears that incited the use of violence by one side will have been instilled in the other side. If one side wins, this might be followed by the repression of the opposing side. If the war ends in a peace agreement, the sides are left in an uneasy state of "ambivalent peace" (Kostic 2007).

The Uppsala Conflict Data Program reports 122 armed conflicts since 1989, and only seven of these are 'traditional' conflicts between states, many of which lack attempts at reconciliation (e.g. India-Pakistan, Ethiopia-Eritrea (Harbom & Wallensteen 2007)). The new issue of reconciliation among former enemies that are expected to rule a country and live together after a vicious civil war is not simple, and Europe has little historical experience to offer.

Thus, peacebuilding after civil war today faces uncharted waters. Research into these areas has only begun and there is much to explore. In this article we will review some of the results that are now emerging, with respect to the role of reconciliation in justice, politics, and security, and reflect on the cultural underpinnings of reconciliation. Our departure will be that "reconciliation is a societal process involving mutual acknowledgment of past suffering and the changing of destructive attitudes and behaviour into constructive relationships toward sustainable peace" (Brounéus 2003). This definition points to important elements in recon-

ciliation: changes in emotion (mutual acknowledgment of suffering), attitude, and behaviour. It also makes clear that reconciliation is a societal process after an armed conflict, and thus involves changes within and between former enemy groups. Finally, it is a post-war process, not a specific state at a particular moment in time.

Punishment or amnesty

The question of how to deal with the atrocities of the past in a country emerging from internal conflict is critical and enormously complex. Should there be tribunals to punish perpetrators? Should amnesty be granted in order to avoid disturbing a fragile peace? Or should a truth commission be established to ensure that the past will be acknowledged and not repeated, and dignity restored in victims and survivors? What does the justice versus stability equation look like and what is best for the process of reconciliation? These are questions that have been asked only more recently.

Many of the peace processes in the late 1980's or early 1990's assumed that amnesty was the only way out and was something that the warring parties could also quickly agree on. Later, however, there was a counter-reaction, not least sparked by the events in the post-Yugoslav conflicts and by the genocide in Rwanda. A consensus now seems to have emerged that, as Bar-Tal put it at the 2004 Stockholm International Forum, Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation: "Justice is indispensable for reconciliation." But the recent handling of the negotiations with the Lord's Resistance

Army (LRA) in Northern Uganda suggests that this is not complete: the LRA leaders have been indicted to the International Criminal Court in The Hague, while the government holds out a form of amnesty.

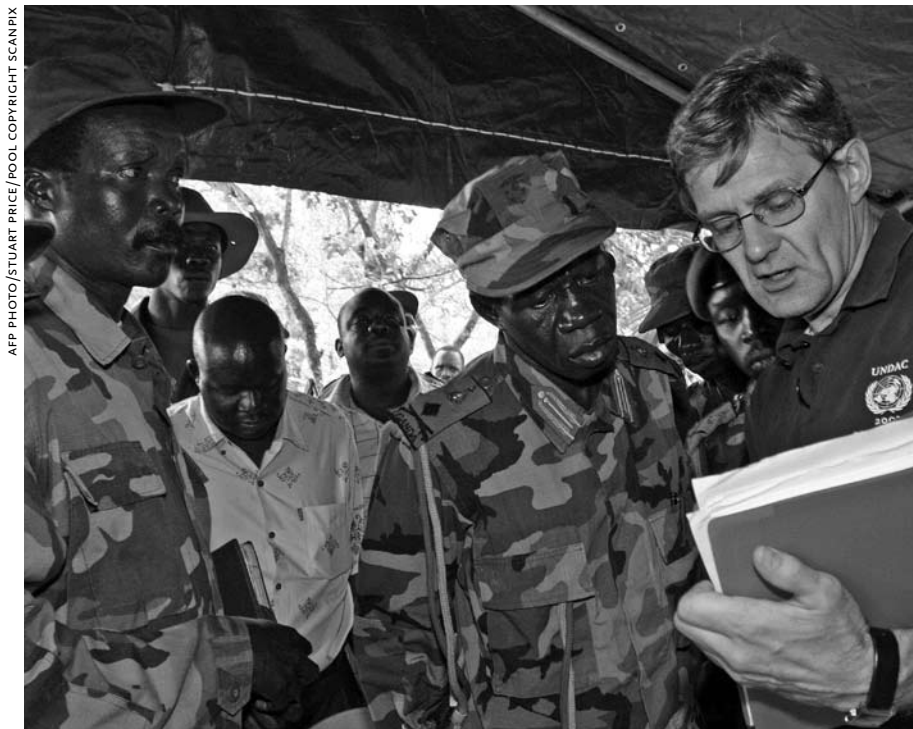
Truth commissions are seen as providing a balanced approach for post-conflict societies. However, in one of the most cogent critiques of the field, Mendeloff argues that the claims made in the literature of truth-telling and truth-seeking have been based on flawed assumptions and on faith rather than em-



Peacebuilding after civil war today faces uncharted waters.

pirical evidence (Mendeloff 2004). This demands more research. One of the few empirical studies that has investigated the link between truth and reconciliation is a survey by Gibson in South Africa (Gibson 2004). He showed that among white, coloured and Asian South Africans, accepting the truth contributed to reconciliation. Among black South Africans, however, truth did not lead to reconciliation. Gibson points out that even though this may be a "disappointing finding ... truth does not contribute to irreconciliation either" (p. 215).

Another relevant study is the one by Meernik, who recently examined the impact of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) on societal peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina (Meernik 2005). The author finds that arrests or verdicts of war criminals were more often than not correlated with increased hostility between ethnic groups. His conclusion is that the ICTY has



The leader of the Lord's Resistance Army, Joseph Kony (left), and his deputy Vincent Otti (centre) discuss with UN humanitarian chief Jan Egeland in an attempt to boost peace talks.

not had a reconciling effect on societal peace in Bosnia.

Often these reconciliation measures have been taken because existing institutions have lacked legitimacy. After internal war, a reconstruction of the legal infrastructure is often required. However, only a repeated experience of a 'just' application of justice is likely to generate the authority necessary for a new legal framework. This is a more long-term project than is often anticipated.

Structural and economic development

There are obvious tensions between reconciliation and politics. The way many wars have ended since 1989 speaks for itself. Agreements often build on notions of democratization, human rights, and electoral processes. Thus, post-conflict societies are often at the beginning of a democratization process. The state structures are weak. The main concern is structural and economic development. Consequently, lip service may be paid to issues of reconciliation, often in response to pressure from the international community. However, reconciliation initiatives may amount to little more than symbolic gestures.

Nevertheless, public acts by political leaders demonstrating remorse in order to promote reconciliation have been an increasingly frequent phenomenon over the last few decades. German Chancellor Willy Brandt was

a pioneer, falling to his knees in the Old Jewish Ghetto in Warsaw, Poland, in 1970, gesturing an apology for Germany's atrocities during World War II. His gesture was solidified by strong economic and political support for the state of Israel. Events of World War II continue to have an impact and lead to demands for compensation from banks and companies.

Other examples include the IRA apologizing for having killed civilians in its 30-year anti-British campaign, and the Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi in 2001 expressing remorse for the Korean suffering under Japanese rule during World War II. The UN Secretary General Kofi Annan apologized to Rwanda for the UN's inability to act and prevent the 1994 genocide. Former US president Bill Clinton did the same. The Swedish government has apologized to the Sámi population. In New Zealand an entire procedure, the Waitangi Tribunal, was created to compensate the Maori populations for events that took place a century earlier. There have been demands for compensation for the slave trade. It is remarkable that the public acknowledgment of, and expression of remorse for, past wrongs has a significant role in today's world politics. Clearly, an acknowledg-

ment of past sufferings is important for survivors, the community and also for the formulation of a shared history.

Stigmatized witnesses

In most truth commissions, survivors testify in public. In South Africa, for example, the hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) were broadcast on the radio and television in an attempt to involve the whole nation in the process. Very rarely in recent truth commissions are the proceedings performed behind closed doors or the survivors' identities kept confidential. Many victims and witnesses in the ICTY reported feelings of fear and abandonment on their return home after testifying (Stover 2004). Similarly, witnesses in the South African TRC described being stigmatized, abandoned and threatened by their community as a result of participating in the proceedings (Backer 2007). Security for the accused when returning to their home communities has clearly been a major concern for the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. However, security risks are seldom included in the theoretical literature on truth telling and reconciliation.

In Rwanda, where the largest officially driven reconciliation process in the world today is taking place (over 20 000 village tribunals (gacaca) are underway, involving the entire population through mandatory participation), the issue of public testimony is carried to an extreme. The village assemblies to hear witnesses and



Expression of remorse for past wrongs has a significant role in today's world politics.

the accused. Neighbours and family members of the accused surround the witnesses. Recent research in Rwanda suggests that security should be included into the truth, justice and reconciliation equation. In this research, insecurity as a result of the truth telling process emerged as one of the most crucial issues at stake.¹ Interviewed witnesses were threatened before the gacaca to deter them from giving testimony, during the hearings to quiet them, and after, as punishment.

This study suggests a novel understanding of the complexity of reconciliation at the grassroots level and raises questions about the relationship between

truth commissions and security. If security is threatened, this may lead to a number of outcomes: physical injury, psychological anxiety and ill-health, an increase of violence in order to silence the truth, acts of revenge from either group, or skewed testimonies leading to

are based on "confessing and forgiving" (Lambourne 2002). One interviewee explained that it would not be applicable to Cambodian tradition where, in accordance with Buddhism, people who have committed crimes will always be held responsible for them – there is no

God who will ultimately forgive. Another interviewee argued along the same lines but drew the opposite con-

clusion, saying that it would be easy for Cambodians to forgive because they believe the perpetrators will be punished in the next life. Awareness of the Christian connotations that 'reconciliation' may have in Christian versus non-Christian cultures is important for decisions on appropriate measures. Sometimes terms such as 'peacebuilding' may be more neutral, or there may be national expressions that should be preferred. Similarly, local and culturally grounded initiatives for reconciliation will have the highest legitimacy and sustainability in the long run. Indeed, many truth commissions have sprung from Christian societies, in South America as well as in Africa. However, this needs not be the case. One of the most recent truth commissions has, despite problems, been set up for Indonesia and Timor-Leste. This is interesting as it relates one predominantly Muslim and one Catholic society. It is also an inter-state initiative, taking up some of the issues left from the era of Indonesian control of East Timor. Interesting are also the thorough investigations India has seen concerning riots between Muslims and Hindus, or Hindus and Sikhs. However, reconciliation efforts have remained highly limited. India seems to have settled for rules of coexistence rather than following the cumbersome path of reconciliation, as defined here. The cultural divides, in other words, may be difficult to transcend. It may be long before we see moves for reconciliation in settings such as Cyprus and Palestine.

“Are there to be different types of reconciliation processes for people in general and leaders?”

a distorted picture of the past, which may lay the grounds for renewed conflict.

In designing reconciliation processes for a nation, the individual participants must be taken into account. It is at this level, between former enemies, where there is a risk of renewed cycles of violence. Most of these processes also involve people at a grassroots level, and thus relate to events in local communities. However, leaders are seldom part of such processes. They may apologize and a few will be brought to court. Mostly, they have security provisions of their own, and are not likely to be affected in the same way.

This creates another dilemma: are there to be different types of reconciliation processes for people in general and leaders? Which is the most important for the future? Is it possible that reconciliation is more important on an intermediate level in society? This would mean focusing on persons that have a leading role in formulating opinion, but do not necessarily have the ultimate power. Obvious groups in that case would be media personalities, religious leadership and others that reach to large segments of the population.

Reconciliation in different religions

The religious, and in particular Christian, tinge in the term reconciliation should be carefully considered. Reconciliation between God and humanity through Jesus is a fundamental theme in Christianity. The Bible's concept of justice emphasizes interpersonal reconciliation, and focuses on compassion, mercy and forgiveness. In contrast, in the Buddhist tradition for example, compassion rather than forgiveness is stressed. The fundamentals of the Buddhist Middle Path are acceptance, tolerance, and above all compassion. In a study from Cambodia, some interviewees suggested that truth commissions are a Christian concept, as they

are based on "confessing and forgiving" (Lambourne 2002). One interviewee explained that it would not be applicable to Cambodian tradition where, in accordance with Buddhism, people who have committed crimes will always be held responsible for them – there is no

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In this article we have demonstrated the need for more empirical research to better understand general trends regarding promises and pitfalls for reconciliation processes. To date, there is little scholarly ground for firm conclusions on reconciliation. We need evaluations of reconciliation processes, and measurements of attitudes, behaviour, and emotions towards the other group

before, during, and after reconciliation initiatives. This can be done by carefully designed systematic comparative research. We have illustrated some reconciliation processes in this article, which all need to be followed closely. They are bold attempts at breaking with a past of recurrent conflict and thus aim at reducing the fears one side has of the other. We urgently need to improve our understanding so that these processes do not risk disturbing relations but really build the peace. 

¹ This research project is done by Brounéus, "The gacaca and psychological health", funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency.

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On its strenuous road to peace after 14 years of civil war Liberia is in deep need of truth, justice and reconciliation. To ensure a decent life for its population, peace needs to go hand in hand with security. Economic activities have to be revitalized, and governance has to be strengthened. The work of the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission, established in 2005, is of decisive importance to the future of the country.

LIBERIA:

Peace and development necessary for reconciliation

Clir Jérôme Verdier

Liberia was founded in 1847 as the home for all “free men of colour” by returning free slaves from North America and the Congo basin in Africa. It existed for over a century as an apparently peaceful nation until 1979, when the façade was broken and emerging challenges of statehood confronted the nation. Without national institutions and social structures to absorb the rising global economic contractions and the shocks of modern statehood, Liberia collapsed and full-scale war ensued by 1990. The war left behind a legacy of death, economic pillage, human rights violations, a battered nation, a polarized society, and rising poverty.

Today Liberia emerges from 14 years of civil war, in which an estimated 270,000 persons were killed, families shattered, communities uprooted and

disarm, demobilize and reintegrate former combatants, hold general and presidential elections and establish the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC).

The tasks of the TRC are set to firstly establish and document the root causes of the Liberian crisis. Secondly, to address the issues of justice and impunity in Liberia and thirdly, to provide a forum where perpetrators and victims can share their experiences of the past to facilitate healing and reconciliation. Finally, the TRC is also to make recommendations on how to avert the recurrence of violent conflict in Liberia.

When the peace agreement was signed in 2003, Liberia was characterized by the damage, destruction and corruption of all social, political, economic, moral and cultural institutions and

structures. The near collapse of commercial and productive activities in the formal and informal sectors lead to a steady decline in economic output and a GDP drop by more than 85 percent between

1980 and 2003. This was accompanied by steady increases in poverty resulting in 75 percent of the population living below the poverty line, in parallel with a drop in government expenditure down to levels equivalent with a per capita spending of US\$ 25 and the accumulation of a huge debt burden.

Collapses of road and communications infrastructures seriously hindered peacebuilding efforts by isolating the entire south-eastern region from the

rest of the nation and left the country without electricity or running water for 15 years. The destruction of health care facilities such as clinics and hospitals meant a physician to patient ratio of 1:60,000. At the same time the extensive destruction of school buildings, leaving 50 percent of the children out of school, and formal unemployment levels at 85 percent, continue to pose a threat to political stability, security and economic revitalization.

One year following the inauguration of the democratically elected government much has been done to address the development issues Liberia is facing. The economic reconstruction and development strategy of the Liberian Government is founded on four mutually reinforcing pillars:

1. Expanding peace and security
2. Revitalizing economic activities
3. Strengthening governance and the rule of law
4. Rebuilding infrastructure and providing basic services

With firm support from the international community and Liberia's development partners, the coming months will witness rising economic performance, expanded social services, and a greater sense of security matched with the hope of all Liberians that the woes of the past will be reversed.

Seeking truth and pursuing justice

Reconstruction, peace and development in Liberia cannot, in earnest, proceed in any meaningful and sustainable way without healing the wounds and foster-



While individual justice may vary with individual expectations, national justice must be visible and tangible.

more than 500,000 persons made homeless, displaced or refugees in the West African sub-region, the USA and Europe. With the facilitation of the international community, a Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was brokered in 2003 in the city of Accra, Ghana, among the warring and political parties and civil society representatives. Among other things the CPA set out to establish a ceasefire and install a Transitional Government, as well as

ing genuine national reconciliation. We believe that eventual reconciliation is the end product of the truth seeking and justice initiating process the TRC is set up to establish. If all Liberians with equal vigour and determination can harness their energies, resources and will power – that kept them alive but also caused them to wage war – for development, an accelerated process of development will accrue to the benefit of all Liberians. Liberia must respond to the deep wounds of the past by revealing the truth of what has happened, thereby facilitating individual, community and national closure to a horrible and indelible past.

Continued respect for human rights is generally an essential foundation for development and peace. Respect for human rights and the exposition of the true nature of the massive violations that occurred during the conflict will ensure that the past is never forgotten. This will also undermine the divisions, marginalizations and exclusionary policies that found themselves at the core of bad governance in Liberia.

We must now seek to close and transcend the past so that our energies can be harnessed for national development. At the same time, however, neither closure nor oneness of purpose is possible when hearts are broken, spirits shattered and mistrust is mutually reinforcing. The mother whose son has gone missing since 1990 needs some answers, and the truth that her son is dead and will never return. The truth regarding the over 30 different massacres evidenced by the mass graves around the country is necessary, so that the voices of the dead can be heard, their identities known and their aggressors can begin to give some answers.

While these processes may not establish truth and bring closure for every individual, a national narrative of what happened, sanctioned by the state and established by a credible and legitimate institution and process, will establish a national truth crucial to development and reconciliation. Already, research and investigative processes are ongoing, and Liberians at home and abroad are contributing to this process. So far in barely three months the TRC has received over 5,000 statements from both victims and perpetrators sharing their experiences with the Commission as part of the truth-revealing process and their contribution to the national memory of the conflict.

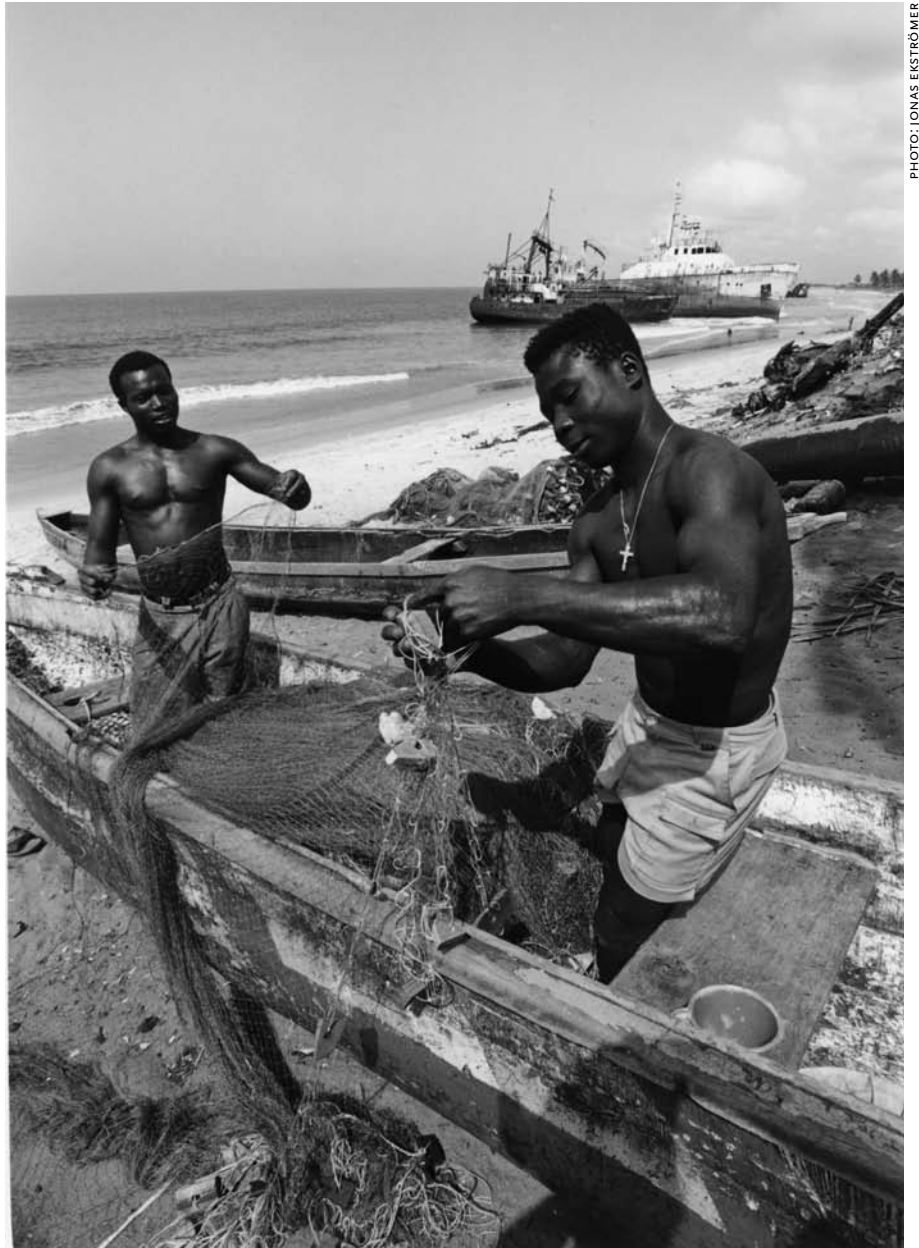


PHOTO: JONAS EKSTRÖMER

Normal life slowly returns to wartorn Liberia. The country is rich with natural assets, among them fish from the Atlantic Ocean, but it takes a peaceful society for people to make their living.

The pursuit of justice is pertinent to the pursuit of peace and development. The pursuit of justice will re-establish the rule of law, promote the principles of accountability, and solidify the fight against impunity in Liberia. A national consciousness of justice, coupled with institutions and fair and effective mechanisms, is a sure measure of the state of a nation's civilization, social mobility and stability.

In post conflict Liberia, transitional justice entails different mechanisms for different people, and essentially so. The TRC has no intention of being academic about the issue of justice. The sheer reality of meting out justice for all, following a brutal and prolonged conflict after which over 100,000 ex-combat-

ants were disarmed and expected to be demobilized and reintegrated into a society in which nearly the entire population was victimized or affected by atrocities, poses a serious challenge.

Any instituted justice mechanism must take into consideration the long-term peace and stability of the nation, balanced against its quest for genuine reconciliation and healing. A process of this nature must necessarily draw on the experiences of South Africa, Northern Ireland, Sierra Leone, Peru and East Timor. Naturally the status of international law and the progress towards international criminal tribunals, jurisdictional issues and the various debates regarding the issue of amnesties will also be of importance.

PHOTO: JONAS EKSTRÖMER



For 15 years Liberia has been without electricity or running water.

In order for justice to contribute to the peace and development of a post-conflict nation in transition, it must be the product of the experiences and aspirations of a society longing for reconciliation and the firm establishment of rule of law principles. Such a nation must search deeply and identify creative cultural approaches to justice. It must assess its current and future capacity to comply with international laws and norms, and also the status of its judicial and security institutions. It must secure its capacity to prosecute, try and execute fair punishments in order to restore the lost dignity of its people.

The Liberian TRC will have to ensure that justice is both done and served. It will have to ensure that at the end of its work the 3.5 million people of Liberia are once more united and that a reasonable and realistic basis for embracing truth and justice in transcending the past has been established. While individual justice may vary with individual expectations, national justice must be visible and tangible; it must embrace all the contours of justice and establish a national consciousness to reward good and punish wrong.

Promoting reconciliation

Reconciliation is a formidable pillar of national development as it provides a smooth transition to lasting peace and tranquillity in the land. While forgive-

ness, retribution and tolerance are very essential to reconciliation at distinct individual and societal levels, both levels are equally important in order to sustain a national reconciliation process. While both levels take root at different times and places, they are nevertheless complementary and mutually reinforcing. To establish genuine reconciliation in Liberia over time it is important that the individual accepts his or her present condition as a consequence of the past national experience at no fault of his or herself. At the same time, the individual must also trust that society and the national government has done all that is humanly and materially possible to address his or her grievances and make atonement for past afflictions.

The TRC believes that the fostering of reconciliation will involve a well thought out process of national dialogue and Diaspora participation including all levels of society. In order to engage civil society in its work, the TRC has demarcated the Liberian society into 64 districts to broaden community-based participation. National dialogue and community participation in all transitional justice issues are essential to the building of consensus, the re-establishment of broken social ties and the strengthening of national solidarity. This will help in building trust and instilling a sense of belonging to a common body polity, and in undermining a culture of exclusivity.

To this end, the Commission has also established its Diaspora program to engage exile Liberians in its work. Furthermore, 15 local offices have been established throughout the country to decentralize the work of the Commission. A conflict mapping exercise is underway to identify contentious societal issues and potential sources of conflict in each community so that a comprehensive resolution plan can be adopted. In the same vein, a national conference on the way forward will take place in July 2008, where representatives from the 64 districts including the various Diaspora communities will be present.

Promoting dialogue on all transitional justice issues in a society decimated by war and long standing mutual distrust is an essential tool for rebuilding society and establishing credibility and

sustained local ownership in the TRC process. Liberia is a multi-ethnic society with varying cultural norms and traditions, which must be incorporated into the TRC process, especially its reconciliation component.

A TRC Traditional Advisory Council has already been established to drive through and assist the commission in dealing with traditional cultures and incorporating traditional practices into peace building and reconciliation, following the "palava hut" and other models. The palava hut is a traditional conflict resolution model practiced for ages in Liberian communities, where the elders assemble under a hut to hear, discuss and resolve all contentious issues or sources of conflict between several parties. Once decided upon by the council of elders, the matter is considered closed. Depending on the gravity of the offence, one may pay a fine of chicken or goat, or in the worst case be banished from the land.

Peace agreements are generally brokered with the facilitation of the international community including promises to see the process through. These promises often dwindle once



A national narrative of what happened will establish a national truth.

peace is in sight and the immediate security threat to the country has been dealt with. We believe the international community should buttress continued support for national processes of healing and reconciliation, and commit strongly to local capacity building and its development of home-grown processes in order to establish national ownership.

International development partners must at all cost avoid a blueprint approach to peacebuilding. Rather, their engagement should have an inbuilt commitment and respect for local experiences, incorporating indigenous nuances and cultures into peace plans, negotiation and implementation. This desires a forward-looking view of peacebuilding as a development process in order to ensure the long-term engagement of development partners. If we fail to invest in the TRC Process now, a recipe for future conflict will have been nurtured and eventually all current development efforts will fail. 

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa made tremendous efforts to heal the wounds of apartheid and to uncover the truth, cruel as it may be, but with the hope that in the end the truth would make people free. A fair and peaceful democracy, however, cannot be achieved without justice and reconciliation as two of its foundation stones. This process is by no means finished after the closure of the Commission.

SOUTH AFRICA:

Dealing with the past, heading for the future

Charles Villa-Vicencio

Transitional justice is in vogue, with the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) continuing to be seen as a model against which both to measure and improve transitional justice mechanisms around the world. Driving this trend is the quest for the consolidation of fragile democracies in countries struggling to ride what Samuel Huntingdon has called “the third wave” out of authoritarian rule in various parts of the world to the beginning of democracy.

Central to the debate surrounding this process are three inter-related goals – justice, truth and reconciliation, all of which are key ingredients to the strengthening of democracy in post-conflict situations. Justice is the most revered and contested of these objectives. The result is that more ink from pen and printer has been expended on questions of impunity, prosecutions and amnesty than on either truth, which probably comes second in the contest, or reconciliation, which is at the bottom of the pile. The latter continues to remain an anomaly, at least to some scholars who seem to prefer fixed and clearly definable categories to those that tease and tantalise the mind and human spirit.

The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, the Special Court in Sierra Leone and the trial of Charles Taylor in The Hague are internationally acknowledged. The arrest of Thomas Lubanga in the Ituri province in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) on an International Criminal Court (ICC) warrant and the ICC arrest warrants for the Lord's Resistance Army leaders Joseph

Kony, Vincent Otti, Okot Odhiambo, Dominic Ogwen, and Raska Lukwiya have received the support of international human rights organisations, although some activists in the DRC, Uganda and elsewhere question the impact of these on the peace process. The United Nations (UN) Security Council resolution to promote truth and reconciliation commissions as well as special courts to prosecute those responsible for war crimes and serious human rights violations in Burundi and the DRC have, in turn, met with widespread support. In brief, the ICC created through the 1998 Treaty of Rome and formally adopted in July 2002 after receiving the required 60 ratifications, has placed prosecutions firmly on the transitional justice agenda.

This has resulted in some international Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) committed to the promotion of transitional justice being content to prioritise prosecutions, stating (diffidently I hope) that they are “not into reconciliation”.

Their assumption is essentially that once a state has put an end to impunity and established the rule of law, peaceful coexistence, the practice of human rights, and political reconciliation will, with the necessary vigilance, more or less take care of themselves.

History at the same time teaches us that amnesty, whether *de jure* or *de facto*, is among the more powerful political instruments in the peace-building

toolbox. This is not amnesty that comes necessarily through acknowledgement, dialogue or reconciliation, but amnesty as a calculating tool employed for political benefit. Amnesty of this kind can promote tolerance and peace. It can also polarise and embitter. It can be interpreted as an ingredient in a restorative justice process. It can also be seen as impunity. To quote Frederik van Zyl Slabbert, a seasoned and respected political analyst, “May those who have the power to give [amnesty], be blessed with the Wisdom of Solomon”.¹

Amnesty or punishment

In the narrative that follows I acknowledge and affirm the position of the ICC that there should be no amnesty for those responsible for war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide, and crimes of aggression. The stance of the ICC constitutes a major development in the fight against tyranny and impunity, and in favour of human rights and peace building. A doctrinaire or uncom-



History teaches us that amnesty is among the more powerful political instruments in the peace-building toolbox.

promising implementation of the Rome Treaty could, on the other hand, have unfortunate implications. Justice Richard Goldstone acknowledges that “if [in South Africa] the ANC had insisted on Nuremberg-style trials for the leaders of the former apartheid government, there

would have been no peaceful transition to democracy, and if the former government had insisted on a blanket amnesty, then, similarly, the negotiations would have broken down. A bloody revolution sooner rather than later would have been inevitable".²

The South African "solution" is decidedly not the answer to all conflicts around the world.

Not all those responsible for serious crimes can feasibly be punished. Unless a case is specifically referred to the court with the approval of the UN Security Council (which requires the support of the five permanent members who have veto powers), the jurisdiction of the ICC extends only to those countries that are party to the Rome Treaty. It can also only proceed against an alleged perpetrator if the state is either unable or unwilling to prosecute or to deal with the case in a manner that provides sufficient accountability for the violations of international criminal law. Commenting on the South African TRC, the UN Secretary-General at the time observed:

The purpose of the clause in the Statute [which allows the Court to intervene where the state is "unwilling or unable" to exercise jurisdiction] is to ensure that mass-murderers and other arch-criminals cannot shelter behind a State run by themselves or their cronies, or take advantage of a general breakdown of law and order. No one should imagine that it would apply to a case like South Africa's where the regime and the conflict which caused the crimes have come to an end, and the victims have inherited power. It is inconceivable that, in such a case, the Court would seek to substitute its judgment for that of a whole nation that is seeking the best way to put a traumatic past behind it and build a better future.³

Whether past offenders are dealt with via prosecutions, through tribunals, national courts, the ICC, or amnesties of one kind or another, more is required to overcome the animosity, mistrust and historic inequalities wrought by decades of oppression and war. The focus of what follows is on the possibilities and limitations of TRCs and related historic clarification bodies as mechanisms designed to enable former adversaries to begin to find ways of dealing with the past at an emotional, social, economic, and political level.

The contribution of such bodies to this process is related to the possibility for and the extent to which conflicting parties can be engaged in conversation characterised by truth seeking and truth telling. Their intent is to break the silence on the hurt, suffering, and fears of victims and survivors of past oppression and to encourage perpetrators to acknowledge their involvement in

past gross violations of human rights. The intent of this high goal is both cathartic and communicative. It is an attempt to build a national culture that gives substance to the words too easily used in the wake of radical evil – "never again" / "nunca más". Underlying this endeavour is a conviction that it is perhaps only when the causes, motives and perspectives of those responsible for gross violations of human rights are truly known and deeply understood that a nation can begin to heal itself. Indeed, if punitive justice (unless reduced to revenge) as well reparations are not measured against this objective, a nation's tomorrow is unlikely to be significantly different from its yesterday.

Political rapprochement in a transition from authoritarian rule to the beginning of democracy is a long and slow process. To be more than a sincere hope or romantic ideal, the content and details of what this entails need to be negotiated by perpetrators, victims, survivors, beneficiaries of the old order, and heirs of the new. I am arguing that this level of reconciliation requires deep and sincere conversation aimed at the emergence of a social contract, on the basis of which specific policies and programmes can be designed and implemented that satisfy the basic needs of as many people as is realistically possible in terms of the agreement. It requires prioritising and sequencing what can immediately be accomplished, and the projection of a carefully managed national agenda regarding important issues that cannot immediately be resolved. Immediate priorities are the cessation of hostilities, the setting up of democratic institutions, and the affirmation of basic human rights – the establishment of what has been called a "minimally decent society". Other needs, not least socio-economic transition, take longer to be delivered and care is needed to ensure that victims are not

disillusioned with the transitional process as they await delivery.

Peace treaty instead of bloodbath

The South African TRC is considered here as a case study, recalling that in the 1980's people around the world predicted a bloodbath in South Africa. Instead there was a negotiated settlement – effectively a peace treaty that captured the attention of many countries in conflict. In the words of the interim constitution, the settlement provided an "historic bridge" designed to take the nation from a deeply divided past, "characterised by strife, conflict, untold suffering and injustice", to a future "founded on the recognition of human rights, democracy and peaceful coexistence and development opportunities for all South Africans, irrespective of colour, race, class, belief or sex". In pursuit of these ideals several commissions were established – including the TRC.

The South African "solution" is decidedly not the answer to all conflicts around the world. It is equally important to recognise that the capacity of South Africans to forge peace in the face of threatened anarchy does not mean South Africans are a "race apart". The genes that constitute humanity and the desire of the majority of human beings to coexist with others suggest that there is political value in considering instances where some human beings get it more or less right. South Africa is one of the few places on earth where there might just be a chance of that happening.

The work of the South African TRC has been variously described as a national conversation, theatre, tragedy, epic storytelling, liturgy, and drama. It was about words spoken – there to be heard, begging for response, waiting for action. It was an attempt to invite citizens to talk; an attempt to generate a new or additional vehicle for democratic participation.

Good conversation, whether in theatre, storytelling or in debate, has a way of focusing the mind. It generates ideas. It unleashes new energies. At times it shocks. It silences. The railway line ends. The road stops. We are confronted with a new frontier. We experience a "What now?" kind of response that has the capacity for the creation of something new.

The TRC conversation happened at three levels:

■ Conversations within the Commission were intense and not always ami-

cable. The tensions inherent to the South African conflict manifested themselves in the attitudes of Commissioners and staff. Issues of race, identity, social class, and political persuasion impacted on the work of the Commission, contributing to a tension that underpinned the inability of the Commission to reach consensus on the nature of reconciliation or on the relationship between truth finding and reconciliation. There were those who equated reconciliation with interpersonal reconciliation and forgiveness. This position was promoted primarily through the passionate and persuasive voice of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Chairperson of the TRC Commission as well as, in certain instances, by the Human Rights Violations Committee.

A second group argued that it was inappropriate for a state-sponsored commission to promote interpersonal forgiveness. This group advocated the promotion of a national framework for coexistence and civility, within which individual healing and forgiveness could eventually take place.

The third group had a still more limited view on the role of the TRC. It wanted to focus exclusively on truth finding, arguing that this would provide a basis for both future coexistence and reconciliation.

■ Outside the Commission the public conversation was often extremely heated – but an important part of the national conversation. Afrikaans language newspapers were relentless in their condemnation of the Commission, believing it was engaging in a witch-hunt against white Afrikaners and the former government. English language news media as well as black-based newspapers gave a more balanced overview, although here too controversy raged, for example, around the public hearings involving Winnie Madikizela Mandela, the killing of Chris Hani, and other high profile people and events. The extent of the national debate in relation to the work of the TRC was huge. Few if any South Africans failed to have an opinion on the TRC. Most importantly, the silence on the past was being broken.

■ The breaking of the silence through the work of the Commission was varied and multi-layered. Perpetrators denied, blamed, and some confessed. Most are likely to take their unspoken words to the grave. Victims remembered; many chose without success to forget. Most bystanders denied and looked the other way; some endeavoured to be a part of the new order. The nation continues its conversation in a struggle of remembering against forgetting. Silence persists and

conversation beckons, perhaps inevitably so if Yael Danieli is correct in attesting to the inability of many individuals and communities to deal adequately with trauma: “They can find no words to narrate the trauma story and create a meaningful dialogue around it.”⁴ This silence eats like a cancer. It renders victims unable to “move on” or grasp the opportunity to repair or restore their lives.

Continuing process

By committing itself to a TRC, South Africa went further than most nations in dealing with its past. Its work, more particularly the work of the nation in this regard is, however, unfinished. The underlying motivations and causes of the apartheid malady and the culpability and responsibility of the many who benefited from apartheid run deep. Not all whites were guilty of gross violations of human rights. Some whites protested against apartheid – but all, in one way or another benefited from white privilege. They, together with those blacks who collaborated with their apartheid masters, were part of an ideology that imposed exclusion and abuse by way of fear and violence. The question is how to get people to acknowledge complicity? Sleeping dogs do not lie quietly. In time they smell a forgotten bone that they seek to uncover. Memories slumber but do not sleep.



A horrendous monument of apartheid, even the Robben Island prison, nowadays museum, speaks of hope for freedom and human dignity.

The point has already been made. The uncovering of the past could never have been concluded in a once-off event. The plethora of books, autobiographies, interviews, and indeed the deep conflict

and storytelling are slowly beginning to take the national conversation beyond discursive forms of discourse in several African countries.

Reconciliation and nation building takes time. It has to do with finding different ways of promoting what Harold Saunders calls “a cumulative, multi-level and

gradient to African peace building that simply does not prioritise retribution in the way it is prioritised in Europe, the United States and elsewhere. Whatever the reason, it is hard to conceive of a Western society within which a person who had played the role of an Ian Smith in the former Rhodesia or a PW Botha in South Africa is able to coexist with former enemies who are today victors in a new order. Ocampo’s “zero sum case load”, at least in the sense of Western forms of justice, may be difficult to attain in Africa. This is, inter alia, because of other priorities facing the African continent. Chief among these is survival and the need for social and material development. The question is how and whether prosecutions are likely to impact on these priorities. ■

“Some whites protested against apartheid – but all, in one way or another benefited from white privilege.”

within government and political circles can be seen as a de facto continuation of the TRC. Indications are, at the same time, that the disclosure and counter disclosure that is taking place will engender a level of bitterness that the TRC intended to ameliorate if not avoid. Truth in different guises and versions insists on coming out and this is likely to continue for foreseeable future.

The strained conversation of the TRC process was an important step in the public debate, but the hard work of lasting reconciliation needs still to be tackled with a renewed sense of truth telling and the building of a caring society – one that looks beyond past divisions in pursuit of unity rather than division, harmony rather than contention, integrity rather than corruption, civil and constructive debate rather than confrontation and abuse – as a basis for the creation of an opportunity for subjective and material transformation and renewal.

National conversation

Trials are important and have a crucial role to play in dealing with the past, but additional means need to be found to achieve the level of reconciliation that Africa needs in order to restore itself. I am suggesting that a broad-based national conversation in formal and informal ways is one way of doing so.

Michael Ignatieff suggests that “all nations depend on forgetting: on forging myths of unity and identity that allow a society to forget its founding crimes, its hidden injuries and divisions, its unhealed wounds”. He further suggests “it must [also] be true, for nations as it is for individuals, that we can stand only so much truth. But if too much truth is divisive, the question becomes: How much is enough?”⁵ The medium of truth telling is also important, as is the tone, the genre and format – art, theatre, drama, music,

open-ended process of continuous interaction over time, engaging significant clusters of citizens in and out of government and the relationships they form to solve public problems ... either within or between communities or countries”.⁶

This is a process that could probably not have happened at the time of the South African TRC twelve years ago. Tensions were too high and the cost of failure too great. Negotiators who sat at the table to make peace chose to postpone issues of economic restitution until later. In politics change comes through the assertion of power rather than simply through an attempt to promote moral concern. This sense of power is beginning to manifest itself in South Africa through protests and resistance by those whose social and economic situation has not been adequately addressed since the advent of democracy.

Luis Moreno-Ocampo, the Chief prosecutor of the ICC, speaking in Cape Town a while back stated that his aim is a “zero sum case load” or the absence of trials by the ICC as a consequence of the effective functioning of national judicial systems and political reconciliation. I want to suggest that there is an in-

People of different faiths and cultures discuss humanity's most common issues: peace and reconciliation, at a seminar in Cape Town within the LPI-project Publications for Peace Education.



PHOTO: TORE SAMUELSSON/LPI

This is an abbreviated version of a paper delivered at a conference organised by the The Centre for Conflict Resolution entitled Peace versus Justice: Truth and Reconciliation Commissions and War Crime Tribunals in Africa (Cape Town, 17-18 May 2006).

¹ Frederik van Zyl Slabbert, “Truth Without Reconciliation, Reconciliation Without Truth”, in Charles Villa-Vicencio and Erik Doxtader (eds.), *Provocations of Amnesty* (Cape Town: David Philip, 2003), 326.

² Richard Goldstone, The Hauser Lecture, New York University, 22 January 1997.

³ Kofi Annan, Witwatersrand University Graduation Ceremony (1 September 1998).

⁴ Yael Danieli, *International Handbook of Multigenerational Legacies of Trauma* (New York: Plenum Press, 1998).

⁵ Michel Ignatieff, *The Warrior's Honor: Ethnic War and the Modern Conscience* (London: Vintage, 1999), p. 170.

⁶ Harold H. Saunders, *Politics is About Relationship: A Blueprint for the Citizens' Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 7.

Bridging the divide and dealing with the past are two founding pillars of the peace and reconciliation processes in South Africa and Northern Ireland. Views on the causes of conflict and the implications of peace may, however, vary between the parties to the conflict. In these cases, reconciliation can be seen as a process in which the dominant elements of the moral landscapes held by people from opposing sides are addressed.

Story-sharing and reconciliation in South Africa and Northern Ireland

Maria Ericson

Reconciliation is seen as a process whereby the diverse “moral landscapes” held in a war-torn society are addressed, with the aim of building, rebuilding or transforming relationships between those in conflict. A common strategy is to provide “safe spaces” where people from all “sides” can broaden their “moral landscapes” and find sources of common ground by listening to, and being challenged by, each other’s life stories and personal experiences of the conflict. On the basis of my case studies in South Africa and Northern Ireland, carried out in the years 1996–2000, I have identified some important conditions for such “story-sharing”, as well as certain dilemmas.¹

Reconciliation in, or after, armed conflict tends to be identified with two particular processes:

- 1) To “bridge the divide” of negative attitudes, stereotypes and images held by people in a context of conflict – in order to build mutual trust and new relationships across their divisions.
- 2) To “deal with the past” by healing the damage caused in the course of the conflict, looking at the needs of victimised persons or groups, as well as those of the perpetrators of violence, and seeking to build, restore or transform the relationship between them.

Northern Ireland was primarily an example of the first type of reconciliation process. Here “reconciliation work” has basically been equated with providing space for encounters across the Catholic-Protestant divide in order to enhance mutual understanding and co-operation. Such initiatives have been a

major task of the Ecumenical Movement in Northern Ireland ever since the outbreak of civil unrest (commonly known as “the Troubles”) in 1969.²

During the paramilitary cease-fires from 1994 onwards and the political talks leading to the peace agreement of April 1998 (the Good Friday Agreement or the Belfast Agreement), people also began to talk more openly about their personal experiences of pain in the course of the Troubles, and there was an increasing recognition of the need to develop organised initiatives to deal with the past.³

South Africa served as an example mainly of the second type of reconciliation process. Here “reconciliation” has largely been about dealing with the past and, according to my impression at that time, very much identified with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). And whether or not people liked the idea of reconciliation often depended upon their personal perception, or personal experience, of the TRC. However, after the TRC, the issue of bridging divides between people in a still quite divided society has also come to the forefront.⁴

The search for a shared moral landscape

When people I met equated reconciliation with the TRC in South Africa, or with cross-community work in Northern

Ireland, I tried to explain that I looked at reconciliation in a broader sense: as building, rebuilding or transforming the relationships between those in conflict. The aim of this process would be to reach a state of “positive” or “sustainable” peace, which is identified with an egalitarian, democratic and sharing



One psychologist stressed the importance of giving both parties the opportunity to see the humanity of each other.

community, where the basic human needs of the members are being met.⁵

Exactly what is needed to reach such a state would vary from one context and one situation to another. It may entail bringing people of opposite groups together to enhance mutual understanding. It may entail exposing, and eventually seek to transform, abusive relationships. It may entail providing space and resources for people to work through their own painful experiences. It may entail forgiveness, reparation, restitution etc. etc.

One major difficulty is that different parties might give different answers to questions such as: “What does the major divide consist of?”, “What kind of relationships are to be built?”, and “What type of peace should one seek?”. For instance in Northern Ireland each and everyone I met since my first visit there in the late 1980’s said that they wanted peace. But they did not want “peace at

any price" – they wanted a "just peace". And for Republicans a "just peace" was a "peace with British withdrawal",⁶ while for their opponents a "just peace" was "peace without conceding to Irish Republican Army (IRA) demands". In South Africa many people stressed the need for restitution as a necessary com-

Its public hearings provided a break with the previous years of suppression and censorship.

Perhaps less well known are a number of other, unofficial, initiatives that I encountered in the course of my research. Some of them were directed towards the general public (i.e. anyone interested in taking part), such as much of the work done by organisations like Corrymeela (the biggest and oldest ecumenical reconciliation

(especially the pain of their victims).¹⁰

However, one must also acknowledge that the perceptions differed among victims, sometimes even among victims of the same attack who witnessed the same hearing. While some expressed forgiveness and empathy, others expressed frustration and anger, doubting that the perpetrators had told the whole truth and being hurt by their primary interest in amnesty rather than repentance.¹¹

In Northern Ireland there was, on the other hand, little stress upon bringing together individual victims and perpetrators, and opinions seemed to differ among victimised people themselves as to whether they would like to meet with the direct perpetrators, or if they would rather meet with representatives from the perpetrator organisations. In the story-sharing initiative that I came across in September 1998, people who had been bereaved through the Troubles were brought together with representatives from the paramilitary organisations responsible for the killings, but not with the direct perpetrators. In response to my question about what he had learned from such a meeting, one man who had lost several family members told me how he had discovered the paramilitaries as "flesh and blood" who "don't have horns", and as people with whom he had quite a bit in common, even though their political aspirations (and attitudes to the use of arms) would differ.¹²

The woman in charge of this initiative told about the emotional stress experienced by all parties involved. According to her, they had all had nightmares (or couldn't sleep at all) and were unsettled for days.¹³ Similar observations were made regarding victims who testified before the South African TRC.¹⁴ Story-sharing – especially about traumatic

One psychologist stressed the importance of giving both parties the opportunity to see the humanity of each other.

ponent of reconciliation, while others spoke of reconciliation as "to forgive and move on".

Such divergent interpretations of "peace", "justice" and "reconciliation" in a particular context would partly be rooted in different experiences and perspectives, depending upon one's position in society and role in the conflict. With this in mind I looked at reconciliation as a process in which the following dominant elements of the moral landscapes held by people from opposing sides are addressed, namely their: 1) experiences of the conflict; 2) views of the conflict, its history and its causes; 3) identifications and loyalties; 4) views of oneself and of "the other"; and 5) norms for handling conflict and interpretations of values such as "peace" and "reconciliation".

Story-sharing initiatives

A common strategy for the reconciliation initiatives that I came across was to give people from opposing sides the opportunity to share their life stories and personal experiences of the conflict with each other. This was an important way to enhance mutual understanding by broadening the "moral landscapes" of the participants. Such encounters could be a source of empathy and relationship-building across divisions by giving the participants the opportunity to discover "the others" as fellow human beings with similar needs, fears and experiences.

I encountered various forms of story-sharing initiatives. The one most well-known to the general public is probably the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which was intended to be part of a wider "bridge building process"⁷ in South African society by providing space for people to share their stories.

group in Northern Ireland) and the Institute for the Healing of Memories, where people were invited to share their stories about how apartheid had affected their lives.⁸

In Northern Ireland, "reconciliation work" has largely been identified with providing such "safe spaces" for encounters between Catholics and Protestants from different walks of life. Here story-sharing was also explicitly identified by the Leader of Corrymeela as a much more powerful tool than mere intellectual debate to challenge established views of the conflict and to address sensitive issues such as policing.⁹

In other initiatives, such as stress and trauma healing workshops, victims of violence (sometimes from different "sides") shared their stories with, and mutually supported, each other. Finally there were also initiatives to bring together victims and perpetrators of violence. Here I noted a difference between Northern Ireland and South Africa. In South Africa the focus was largely on encounters between individual victims and the direct perpetrators of violence. Here the TRC process, where both victims and perpetrators were required to approach the Commission as individuals, probably played a part. Many victims also expressed a desire for such meetings.

One psychologist whom I interviewed stressed the importance of giving both parties the opportunity to see the humanity of each other. For the victims it was important to see that the perpetrators were not monsters to be feared, to hear them explain their deeds, and to see that they could cry and feel pain

Stories of abuse and discrimination committed by people within one's own community tend to be silenced.

experiences – is thus not something to enter into lightly, without the proper support structures.

A shared view on the conflict

Despite the focus on story-sharing rather than mere intellectual debate, one can also not escape making at least



PHOTO: TORE SAMUELSSON/LPI

Singing and dancing is one of the best ways of connecting people of different origins, both among performers and audience.

some judgments about the conflict itself. How is one to evaluate the different views of a conflict and how much room can there be for dissent?

Here “forgiveness” and “apology” might be loaded words, as they imply an assessment of the conflict which might not (yet) be fully shared by the parties. A need to uphold a positive self-image, or a genuine belief in the justice of their cause, might make it difficult for people to come to the point of apologising. The political context, with its power struggles, would also play a part.

In Northern Ireland the political struggles in connection with implementing the Good Friday Agreement might have discouraged critical self-examination among the main protagonists.

In South Africa there appeared to be an agreement among almost everybody that apartheid had been bad in practice, and that institutionalised racism was not the future for South Africa. Yet the TRC’s judgment that apartheid had not merely been a failure (as F.W. De Klerk had stated in his submission), but a “crime against humanity”¹⁵ was not well-taken by many whites (who saw the TRC as a “witch-hunt” against them).¹⁶

Finally I wish to raise the question about how the space and the power are shared among women and men in a society seeking reconciliation. What personal stories are heard and acknowledged? What inhibits people from sharing their stories? Are there different challenges for men and women? With regard to the last question, post-apartheid South Africa, where women have increasingly begun to raise their voices, is a particularly interesting case in point and also the focus of my recent research project.¹⁷

With regard to making space for various voices, the TRC was also criticised for not fully capturing women’s experiences of the past conflicts. While (black) women were in the vast majority among those who testified before the TRC in the Human Rights Violations Hearings, most of them spoke about violations done to male relatives (above all husbands or sons).¹⁸ To encourage women

to speak more openly also about what they themselves had experienced (including sexual violence) the TRC organised three Special Hearings for women held behind closed doors.¹⁹ Despite these efforts, many women’s experiences still remain unrecorded.



One man who had lost several family members had discovered the paramilitaries as people with whom he had quite a bit in common.

Yet, women do appear to be quite prominent, and according to some indications often in the majority, in some of the story-sharing initiatives and victims/survivors support groups formed in the wake of the TRC process. One suggested reason for this was that it might be more culturally acceptable for women to show emotional vulnerability, while men who had experienced trauma were (because of the idea that “men don’t cry”) more likely to withdraw and keep their pain to themselves or deal with it by drinking.²⁰

This suggestion, which still needs to be further explored, brings to the fore how interaction (and power dynamics) in public and private spaces may be shaped by certain gender roles and norms. It was pointed out that according to traditional gender socialisation (not only) in South African society men are to be leaders, authority figures, independent, strong and aggressive, sexually assertive, ambitious and competitive.²¹ Thus, even though they are expected to dominate the public space, they may not easily share certain parts of their life stories (i.e. stories that brings out their vulnerability).

Gender or community loyalty

Another crucial issue is that of identifications and loyalties. Stories of abuse and discrimination committed by people within one's own community tend to be silenced as long as unity is required (or even enforced) against an outside enemy. Women are often expected to keep the home fires burning, and if they challenge gender inequalities within their own group or (even worse) accuse "their own" men (and "protectors") of violence they risk being branded as "traitors", especially if they join forces with women from "the other side" and become involved in the public sphere traditionally reserved for men. What struggle they themselves want to give priority would of course also depend on how they view the conflict and with whom they regard themselves to have the most in common: the men from their own group or the women from "the other side"?²²

In the anti-apartheid movement for instance, "women's concerns" tended to be subordinated to the higher aim of overthrowing apartheid. Not until the mid/late 1980s and early 1990s did black and white female theologians (together with sympathetic men) more vocally begin to challenge this attitude.²³

In post-TRC South Africa the challenge to create "safe spaces" for story-sharing is an ongoing one. When taking on this challenge one needs to ask questions such as: What persons and what stories are heard and acknowledged in the public spaces? What is the character of the spaces that already exist (such as schools, universities, workplaces, churches and schools of theology) in terms of safety, power dynamics and rules for interaction? How can they be more actively utilised as spaces where women and men from various walks of life can meet in order to broaden

and challenges their diverse moral landscapes? What additional spaces, and support structures, are needed? In what ways can existing religious beliefs and institutions play a liberating and empowering role in building, rebuilding and transforming relationships in post-TRC South Africa? I hope that my observations and reflections will promote a continuing dialogue among all parties concerned. 

A longer version of this text on the same topic has been published in Nederduitse Gereformeerde Teologiese Tydskrif, Deel 47, Nommers 3 & 4 2006

¹ This research was made for my doctoral dissertation: Ericson, Maria 2001. *Reconciliation and the search for a shared moral landscape: An exploration based upon a study of Northern Ireland and South Africa*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang. I focused on ecumenical reconciliation initiatives, political reconciliation initiatives (i.e., the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa and the *Good Friday Agreement* in Northern Ireland) as well as the perspectives of victims/survivors of violence.

² See further Ericson 2001, Ch. 6, and Love, Mervyn T. 1995. *Peace building through reconciliation in Northern Ireland*. Aldershot: Avebury.

³ Hamber, Brandon (ed.) 1998. *Past imperfect: Dealing with the past in Northern Ireland and societies in transition*. Derry/Londonderry: INCORE (University of Ulster & The United Nations University).

⁴ Du Toit, Fanie (ed.) 2003. *Learning to live together: Practices of social reconciliation*. Cape Town: Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (www.ijr.org.za/).

⁵ Ericson 2001, pp. 21-22, 27, 82-86, 98-99, 433. Drawing on for instance Galtung, Johan 1997. *Peace by peaceful means*. London: SAGE, and Lederach, John Paul 1995. *Building peace: Sustainable reconciliation in divided societies*. Tokyo: The United Nations University.

⁶ This stance was obviously modified when Sinn Féin accepted the *Good Friday Agreement* in 1998.

⁷ *Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Final Report*, "The Mandate", Vol. I, Ch. 4, § 5.

⁸ About the work of Corrymeela, see further: www.corrymeela.org and about the work of the Institute for the Healing of Memories, see www.healingofmemories.co.za.

⁹ Ericson 2001, pp. 284-286.

¹⁰ Ericson 2001, pp. 351-353.

¹¹ On encounters between victims and perpetrators in South Africa, see further Ericson (2001:351-365). The meetings recounted in that chapter are all related from the perspective of the victim or from the perspective of an outside observer or mediator. As previously mentioned it was too difficult to gain access to the perpetrators' own perspectives of such encounters at the time of my study.

¹² This man, who was active in a victim's/survivor's support group with both Catholic and Protestant members, had had a brother killed by a bomb planted by Loyalists, and a sister shot and killed accidentally by the IRA (i.e. the paramilitary group supposed to be on his side) who were aiming at a security force patrol. Several members of his extended family had also been killed.

¹³ On encounters between victims and perpetrators in Northern Ireland, see further Ericson 2001, pp. 266-270.

¹⁴ Ericson 2001, pp. 342-343.

¹⁵ *TRC Final Report*, "The Mandate", Vol. I, Ch. 4, § 70.

¹⁶ Ericson 2001, pp. 213-215, 371-372, 390-394.

¹⁷ One short book from this project is soon due to be published in South Africa: Ericson, Maria 2007. *Making and sharing the space among women and men: some challenges for the South African church environment*. Stellenbosch: SUN Press (forthcoming).

¹⁸ A majority (at least 61%) of the gross human rights violations reported to the TRC had been done to men, 24% had been done to women and in 15% of the cases the victim's gender was not stated. *TRC Final Report*, "Methodology and Process", Vol. I, Ch. 6, Appendix 2 "Who came to the Commission?" § 22-24. For more details see Ross, Fiona 2003. *Bearing witness: Women and the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission*. London: Pluto Press, pp. 17-20.

¹⁹ In Cape Town (8 August 1996), Durban (24 October 1996), and Johannesburg (29 July 1997).

²⁰ Interview with one black male former facilitator of the Stress and Trauma Healing Program of the Diakonia Council of Churches in Durban, 23 October 2001. Ericson 2001, p. 372, 442. According to Iphepa Ndaba: *The official newsletter for the Khulumani Western Cape Support Group for Survivors of Violence and Torture* (Vol. 25, November 2003 to September 2004), 60% of the membership of Khulumani Western Cape counted in their survey so far were women.

²¹ Maluleke, Tinyiko Sam & Nadar, Sarojini 2002. "Breaking the covenant of violence against women". *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 114, pp. 5-17.

²² Ericson 2007, pp. 19-20. See also examples from Northern Ireland in Roulston, Carmel & Davies, Celia (eds.) 2000. *Gender, Democracy and Inclusion in Northern Ireland*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

²³ One important publication was Ackermann, Denise, Draper, Jonathan A. & Mashinini, Emma (eds.) 1991. *Women hold up half the sky: Women in the church in Southern Africa*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications (with contributions from white as well as black women and also from some men). More recent examples are also given in Ericson 2007.

The way to peace and reconciliation always goes through a change of heart and mind. Political proposals and solutions are not enough, it takes something more radical to forgive the past. The Bible points to a new creation, a new reality. The author urges his fellow-Christians, Palestinians and others, not to be peacekeepers but peacemakers.

The radical message of reconciliation

Jonathan Kuttab

Perhaps nothing is more needed in this part of the world than a ministry of reconciliation. The Middle East is torn apart by hatred, violence, separation, divisions and fragmentation, much of which is deliberate and institutionalized as a program. As Palestinians we need to hear the message: the different parts of the body of Christ need to be reconciled, need to be one in Him, need to be part of a ministry of bringing people together in Christ for a better purpose.

Somehow we Christians are to bring a new message into this situation: a message of reconciliation. I must emphasize, however, that for Christians this is a distinctly Christian and spiritual message. Our involvement in issues of peace and justice is not merely an attempt to quiet down a situation. This is not about peace-keeping or about everybody being "lovey-dovey" together. We see too many people who talk about peace and the peace process and who create programs for bringing Jews and Arabs together without ever touching the core of the problem. I understand that in Germany there are more than 400 groups that are dedicated to bringing Jews and Arabs together. So they bring school children and teenagers together to sing songs that are partly in Hebrew and partly in Arabic and it's all good and nice and wonderful, but they do not touch the core of the problem which separates and creates enmity and hatred between Jews and Arabs in Palestine.

The Christian message of reconciliation, however, is very specific and has three very important elements. The first element is that it requires a change within us. It is a message of

reconciliation of people through Christ where God reconciles us to Him first. It requires a change of heart. We cannot expect enemies to become friends without a change of heart. There needs to be a fundamental change within every individual being. This seems very religious and very spiritual, and it's not at all what you hear in the secular press or in the secular world, where they have conferences and conventions and shuttle diplomacy and UN resolutions and grand attempts by politicians to bring peace. These attempts fail again and again. And we, as Christians, should not be surprised, because unless there is a change of heart, there will be neither peace nor reconciliation.

This is not a message you usually hear. Very often we Palestinian Christians are accused of being involved in politics. We're not. We're involved in God's work and God's ministry of reconciliation which impacts politics, which impacts this situation, which is very deeply involved at a basic level in what is happening here. We are deeply involved out of our Christian love and because of the ministry of reconciliation that has been delegated, assigned to us. Such involvement starts with a change of heart.

A second element in that ministry of reconciliation is forgiveness. Part of the ministry of reconciliation is God's willingness to forgive and forget our past

transgressions. In the political arena, forgiveness is a very difficult message to bring. It is very hard for Palestinians to forgive or to forget all the deprivations, all the violence, all the tragedies that have befallen them, starting with the ethnic cleansing of the Nakbeh in 1948: all the losses of property, of land, of loved ones, of freedom, of potential, of dreams. Only through God's grace will we ever be able to forgive what has

been done to us as Palestinians. And yet, to get to healing, we must experience forgiveness. I think that Jews also need to learn forgiveness. What was done to Jews throughout millennia and particularly through the Holocaust is horrendous beyond belief. And yet, if healing and reconciliation are ever to come to them and to this part of the world,

they need somehow to learn the message of forgiveness, the healing power of forgiveness without which their lives and their entire worldview will forever be poisoned by the failure to reach reconciliation.

No peace without change

Forgiveness is necessary for the past. A change of heart is necessary in the present. But we also need the future. When Paul speaks about reconciliation in his letter to the Corinthians (II Cor 5:17) he also speaks about a new creation. The old things have passed away; all things must now become new. In

SO IF ANYONE IS IN CHRIST,
THERE IS A NEW CREATION;
EVERYTHING OLD HAS PASSED
AWAY; SEE, EVERYTHING HAS
BECOME NEW. ALL THIS IS
FROM GOD, WHO RECONCILED
US TO HIMSELF THROUGH
CHRIST, AND HAS GIVEN US THE
MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION.
(II CORINTHIANS 5:17-18)

Christ we know that it is an absolute necessity, and in politics we know that this is also true. We cannot talk about reconciliation while massacres continue. We cannot speak about peace when there is a structural system in place that is based on injustice. To try to do so is simply not an option. And all those who preach

wanting change. We are not looking to be "peacekeepers" in order to maintain quiet. We are "peacemakers"! We must create and build a new thing, and sometimes that involves rocking the boat, sometimes that involves upsetting people, sometimes that involves challenging much of the conventional wisdom.

Sometimes - and for this we need to ask God's forgiveness - we have failed because we got caught up in the peace process. We wanted to give the Oslo process a chance. We wanted to allow

the politicians to work it out, and they made a huge mess of it. Both Palestinian and Israeli politicians, not to mention US politicians, have made a huge mess out of this place under the guise of this so-called peace process, and most of us went along. Many of us allowed that process to continue because we wanted peace. But our faith tells us that a ministry of reconciliation requires change, requires us not only to ask forgiveness for the past but to seek a fundamental change of heart and bring about a new reality in the future.

Apartheid and hafrada

That brings us all together in the ministry of reconciliation. Then we will see the fruits that come out of it. I am afraid we continue to live in a situation of being torn apart. I am afraid that we will be facing in this land, particularly in the Occupied Territories, a determined effort to set in motion a process that is much

more invidious than apartheid. Apartheid, as you know, was the ideology of separation in South Africa. We now have a new policy called *hafrada* in Hebrew, which also means "separation". It is built on keeping people apart, not only keeping Palestinians apart from Israelis, but fragmenting the Palestinian community into little enclaves, each separate and divided from the other. There's a separate road system, one for Jews, one for Arabs. There is a horrendous wall being put within and between the different communities. There are Jewish settlements that are only for Jews.

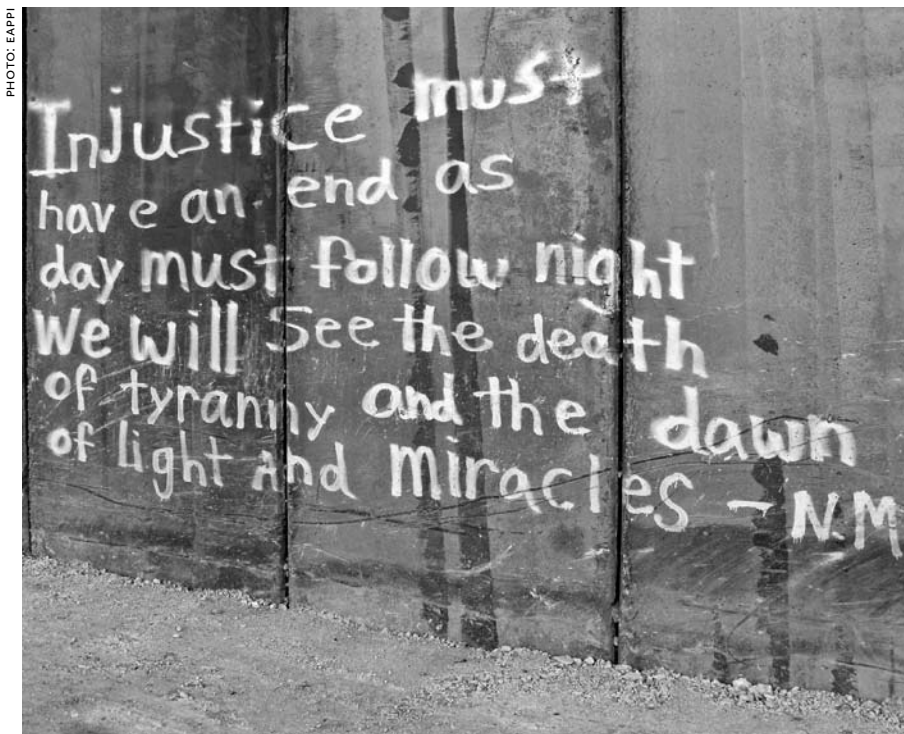
There are new restrictions requiring permission to move from Israel into the Occupied Territories and from one portion of the Occupied Territories into the other areas. Soon even people in East Jerusalem will not be allowed to go to Ramallah or to Bethlehem without a permit. Such restrictions already prohibit those in Ramallah or Bethlehem from entering Jerusalem without a permit. This fragmentation and separation is going to be promoted by some as a good thing: the Arabs here and the Jews there. They can't get along together, so we have to keep them apart. In fact, we will be told that this is a helpful thing. It's a step towards a Palestinian state, towards creating a two-state solution. That is the lie that is being sold to the world.

We need a Christian voice to come in and say there's something fundamentally wrong with a process that's built on *hafrada*, on separation, on walls, on keeping people apart. We are called to a ministry of reconciliation, of bringing people together, not of dividing them. This is a very difficult message, but it's the message that Christ has entrusted to us. We are now being called to be ambassadors, to be in charge of this new ministry of reconciliation. 

We cannot expect enemies to become friends without a change of heart.

peace without justice, peace without change, peace without an end to the occupation, peace without challenging the ingrained integral discrimination and racism on which this whole system is built, are totally missing the boat.

Any of us who give credence or acceptance to any peace proposal or peace activity just because we want everything to be nice and simple and quiet and wonderful, any of us who urge others to "just say no, just don't do anything, just stop struggling" fail to understand this central message of reconciliation. Reconciliation involves change. It involves putting away the old things and creating a new reality. This is where our message needs to be strongest, because all those attempts to deal with the Palestinian/Israeli situation without thinking about a new reality, without a future, without a vision, without justice are doomed to fail. We need to stop being apologetic about



The barrier between Israel and the West Bank divides two peoples but can also be used to convey a message of hope in the midst of despair.

The Jews have a great responsibility to speak out about the injustices between Israelis and Palestinians, but very few realise this, and even fewer dare talk openly about it. Susan Nathan is one of the exceptions. Many Jews have to change their lives in order to create an equal society for all people, she says.

No co-existence without existence

Anne Casparsson

– You could ask me why I don't just take my passport and move, but I don't believe a society will change if everybody moves. It's my duty to speak out and do what I can in my lifetime to make changes in my country.

In the book, *Another Israel* – My journey across the Jewish-Arabic border, Susan Nathan describes her own journey, how she left her life in London as an AIDS counsellor in 1999 and made 'Aliya', which means that she claimed her right as a Jew to move to Israel. She came to Israel with the belief she grew up with: that Jews had filled an unpopulated land and made the desert bloom. She has slowly realised that her privileges as a Jew in Israel have come at the cost of a people who were driven away half a century earlier.

– I realised that I had been brought up with a lie, she says. But as with all Jews in the Diaspora, I've been raised with the Zionist dream and the Jewish suffering. My grandparents were refugees from East Europe who moved to South Africa and then to England. We saw ourselves as victims, and literature about the Holocaust filled my teenage years. It's a story of a life very much like the stories of most Palestinians, but most Jews won't admit it, says Susan Nathan.

She describes the situation she lived in as a child, being the only Jew at school and without any opportunities to practice her own religion:

– That's why a Jewish homeland was so wonderful for me, to go from being a minority to being a majority. Making Aliya was both a relief and gave me a sense of power.

Today Susan Nathan travels around the world and speaks about the terrible

oppression and discrimination the Palestinians are suffering, also in Israel. She adds that there is enormous pressure on people who openly criticise Israel:

– You always know you're being watched and that your conversations are intercepted, she says. But this isn't unusual in societies built upon terrorist acts, as Israel is. Ben Gurion made it very clear in his early speeches that a Jewish state is created through the ethnic cleansing of Palestine. It's not a lie or fabrication of history. It's information that anyone can find and read for themselves. The truth is, however, that few want to see it.

She thinks that you cannot say one person's suffering is greater than another's, regardless of the horrors that occurred during the Holocaust, Palestinians' Nakba, the war in Rwanda, in Kosovo, or anywhere else.

– Our own suffering always seems so much worse than that of other people, but there's no reason to compare the horrors of the Holocaust with anyone else's: a catastrophe is a catastrophe. But what life in Israel has taught me is that the majority of Jews are not ready to relate to one another in a larger, global context.

She explains how one of her daughter's ex-boyfriends died in a suicide attack, but instead of pointing out what Palestinians do, you need to ask yourself: "What is my share in this?"

In one way, Susan thinks that the price she pays is high, but in the next moment she says that, despite everything, the rewards are greater:

– Not many people ever get an offer like I've had from one of the world's best universities in the USA to be a guest professor, and the reason is that I dare speak out about what's happening in Israel. It's the same with publishers: I didn't have to go looking for them – they contacted me.

Jewish and Islamic fundamentalism

Susan turns to the concept of fundamentalism, something that is currently much discussed in relation to Islam, but less so in relation to other religions:

– It is not fashionable or socially acceptable to write about Jewish fundamentalism, even if there is an extreme fundamentalism within Judaism. Politicians who say what I say have no job to go to the next day. I think this is the reason why what I say gets more and more attention, because I'm not afraid to tell the truth.

She means that Jews have never been so insecure and created so many anti-Jewish feelings as they have since the state of Israel was created and the occupation of another people began.



The majority of Jews are not ready to relate to one another in a larger, global context.

– For thousands of years the Jews did not have a state, but if you look at Jewish history, they led successful lives and productively contributed to the countries they lived in, in every part of society. It's true that Jews have always lived in Palestine, but as a minority, and they lived as equals with the Arabs. I have a



Susan Nathan travels around the world and speaks about the oppression and discrimination of Palestinians.

lot of empathy with my own people, but I believe that the majority of them do not understand the true reality of their lives in Israel. If they realise what's going on, then they must also question

We have a greater responsibility than any other ethnic group to work for human rights.

how the state was formed and our own role in it. I needed to change my whole life when I began to realise that.

Susan lives in an Israeli Arab town called Tamra in northern Israel. In Tamra 30,000 people live in an area of 1,000 hectares. In a Jewish settlement nearby there are 600 Jews in an area three times as large and continuously expanding – all this while the Palestinian villages look more or less like ghettos.

– It's wrong when Israelis on the West Bank speak about co-existence. It's the most overused word in Hebrew. Before the Palestinians can co-exist, they need to exist, receive their rights

of freedom of speech and equality. Here you have two ethnic groups with totally different types of memory. If you ask my forefathers about East Europe and the ghetto they lived in with broken windows and fewer rights because they were Jews, there's no nostalgia. However, Palestinians look back at their villages with nostalgia, and they're right: they lived a peaceful life linked to their land. Now they live in a country where even the landscape is changed to suit the ethnocratic regime. Even the landscape in Israel is a lie and a fabrication.

In the long term Susan is hopeful, but says that she is extremely pessimistic about the current situation and that of her own lifetime:

– But I'm always hopeful when young Israelis contact me and want to visit me in Tamra. I never say no, because it's the biggest contribution I can make.

She thinks that the world community ought to have a more balanced perspec-

tive on the Middle East conflict. According to her, the European Union (EU) stands on the Palestinians' side behind closed doors but doesn't have the courage to speak out about it publicly:

– It's about moral and political courage, which, unfortunately, they lack, but I expect more from the EU, even if it will be the end of some people's glittering political careers.

She moves on to the issue of the essence of Judaism and the Torah, and how it is related to respect for your fellow-beings, equality and treating people as you want them to treat you:

– Many ultra-orthodox rabbis who have met me, also in the United States, say that I represent the most ultra-orthodox concept of Judaism. What I do is pure Judaism. Because of our suffering throughout history we have a greater responsibility than any other ethnic group to work for human rights. 

Translated by Robert West

While Korean Christianity has been making headlines because of the hostage crisis in Afghanistan, another dimension of the life and work of the Korean churches, which has gone largely unnoticed, is being recognized lately.

KOREAN CHURCHES:

Seeking peace between North and South

Juan Michel

In recent years South Korean churches have come to be known for their spectacular growth rate, which is the fastest of any nation in Asia. Lesser-known is the role Korea's mainline churches have played in working for peace and reunification of their divided country.

In two conferences in August 2007 the churches in Korea celebrated 100 years since the great revival of 1907 and, in a second meeting, the churches' continuing role in the reunification of Korea.

– We have come a long way since the epoch when discussion of reunification was considered an offence, and time has proved that the churches' principled stand on this issue was prophetic, said WCC General Secretary Samuel Kobia in his address in Seoul at the International Consultation on the Role of Churches in Peace and Unification.

– Presently, we face a variety of security concerns that have serious implications for international relations and are a constant threat to peace. Among others, these include the war in Iraq, the Israel-Palestine conflict and of course the military confrontation in the Korean peninsula. Given these situations, no single government or group of governments can be expected to contain or resolve the range of security issues that confront the international community. Addressing them requires a collective approach by multiple actors including churches and civil society, he added.

Sponsored by an ad-hoc group of 24 churches, the consultation was part of a wider commemoration of the 100th anniversary of Korea's great evangelical revival of 1907.

A history of peacemaking

After World War II and liberation from Japanese rule, Korea was partitioned into two military occupation zones, with the Soviet Union governing the North and the United States the South. This

separation not only split the country politically and ideologically, but separated millions of families and divided the churches.

The Korean War, 1950 to 1953, deepened the division between what would become communist North Korea (the Democratic People's Republic of Korea) and capitalist South Korea (the Republic of Korea). The war ended with the signing of an armistice agreement, which meant that fighting stopped but the two countries remained technically at war. However, in 1991 the two Koreas did sign a non-aggression pact and joined the United Nations.

From the early days of the separation the churches of South Korea have pioneered in peace-making efforts and addressed the issue of reunification at a time when the subject was seldom openly discussed in their country. The churches were reacting to what the Korean church leader Jae-Woong Ahn, former General Secretary of the Christian Conference of Asia, called "a tragedy and a painful reality for people living on both sides".

A landmark in the history of the Korean churches' struggle for reunification was the 1984 "Peace and Justice in North-East Asia" consultation held in Tozanso, Japan. Convened by the World Council of Churches (WCC) the event set the stage for face to face talks between Christians from North and South Korea two years later in Glion, Switzerland. These consultations started what was called the Tozanso process, later regarded by many as the precursor of Korean rapprochement.

Still seeking peace today

Two decades later, the situation has significantly changed in both Koreas. South Korea is a democracy - an achievement to which the country's churches contributed - and a number of factors

have brought the South and the North closer. Notable among these was former president Kim Dae Jung's "sunshine policy" of engagement with the North in the 1990's which led to a historic inter-Korean summit in 2000.

But the events of September 11, 2001, marked a setback to positive developments on the Korean peninsula. Included by US president George W. Bush in his "axis of evil" speech in 2002, North Korea withdrew from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in 2003.

Only in February 2007, in the context of the Six Party Talks - launched in 2003 and comprising both Koreas, Russia, Japan, China and the US - has North Korea committed itself to some steps towards denuclearization in return for energy and economic aid.

Among the political challenges facing Korea are the geopolitical interests of powerful neighbours like Japan, China and Russia, as well as the US, according to Soo-il Chai, professor of missiology and ecumenics at the Han-shin University and member of the WCC's Commission of Churches on International Affairs. "The longer Korea remains divided, the better for the strategic and economic goals of the superpowers," he says.

Both Kim and Chai believe that achieving reunification will take several decades. They both think it will be the result of a "step by step" process of building mutual trust and a culture of peace, as well as of strengthening economic cooperation, which should improve the quality of life in North Korea.

International ecumenical advocacy should include helping North Korea move beyond its isolation and being better integrated into the international community, says Chai. He would also like to see greater support for North Korean Christians in order to help them improve their standing in society. 

Lebanon, Gaza, Somalia, New York and Brazzaville – Runo Bergström has given more than twenty years to peacebuilding in several hotspots of the world. He has now reached the age of retirement, but a person with his commitment to peacebuilding issues is happy to use his broad experience in future consultancy tasks for the Life & Peace Institute.

A peacebuilder (never) retires

Kristina Lundqvist

Anyone who has been in Brazzaville and walked through the streets together with Runo Bergström can describe his popularity in the city, exhibited by the multitude of cordial greetings that surround him, from young and old, rich and poor. His warmth and kindness are unmistakable.

For six years, Runo Bergström has been the Resident Representative of the Life & Peace Institute (LPI) in Brazzaville. In the spring of this year he retired and moved back to Sweden. Following his retirement the LPI office is now headed by Programme Officer Séraphin N'Gouma.

– As head of the Brazzaville office I have had very good local colleagues who together have performed great achievements, says Runo Bergström.

Claudette Werleigh, former Director of LPI's Conflict Transformation Programme, describes the start of LPI's work in the country:

LPI became involved in the Republic of the Congo in 2000 by invitation of the Swedish Covenant Church. LPI was chosen because of its action-orientated methods of empowering local peacebuilding initiatives. A fact-finding mission, in which Runo Bergström was one of the participants, was sent to explore the needs and possibilities for LPI's involvement in the country. A cease-fire agreement had been signed in 1999 to put an end to the war, but signs of violence were still visible almost everywhere. People were scared to go out and to talk, a lot of stores and houses had been destroyed, some roads were barely manageable, and thousands of displaced people or internal refugees were living under tents. The country was in a highly volatile situation.

– The distrust between the warring parties was great at the start of the peacebuilding work, and much time had to be invested in reconciliation and confidence-building. The situation has

improved, but much still remains to be done, says Runo Bergström.

Before the war the level of education was very high in the country, but because of the fighting and demolished schools it has been at a standstill for many years, and, thus, the level has decreased.

– It takes much work to restart a functioning educational system. Many private schools have been opened, but the relatively high fees are a problem to many students.

The health care is another sector that still lacks resources after the civil wars. AIDS claims many victims, and malaria is a serious problem. The unemployment is also very high, with a lot of adherent hardships for many families.

Peacebuilding with local actors

During Runo Bergström's years as Resident Representative in Brazzaville, LPI has accomplished a number of goals. One of the first major projects was to assemble journalists from all kinds of media to explore what they could do to better contribute to peace. The assembly resulted in the creation of the Media Ombudsman in the Republic of the Congo, where journalists co-operate for better ethics in the media.

– In LPI we are proud to have taken part in this initiative that also has international attention, says Runo Bergström. Experience has shown that with the help of the media you can start a war but also build peace. An Observatory for Women's and Children's Rights has also been established.

The police commissioner of the Republic of the Congo has asked LPI to participate in the training of policemen, and LPI has taken it upon itself to educate them in the defence of human rights, which is a very important task

for the police. The training sessions have taken place all over the country as week-long courses with some one hundred participants every time.

A very special initiative has been undertaken by the Chief Prosecutor in the country. With support from LPI and a local NGO, an alarm system has been developed, where all citizens can alert the prosecutor and his/her staff about human rights violations via direct telephone lines. An investigation then starts immediately, and the guilty will be held accountable for their deeds. This alarm system is described in a special article in this issue of *New Routes*, see p. 24.

The daily tasks of the LPI Brazzaville office consist of strengthening local peace actors, either by directly providing them with information, or analysis or facilitating their meetings, or indirectly by helping them to get some training for their specific needs.



The defence of human rights is a very important task for the police.

Ongoing research is carried out on the root causes of the conflict and the role of the churches in peacebuilding in the Republic of the Congo.

– With the support of LPI all churches in the country have started their own peace groups that collaborate actively with other peace groups in society. Their collaboration and unity are great assets in peacebuilding, adds Runo Bergström.

An important part of LPI's work in the Republic of the Congo is the contacts with representatives for the different churches, and planning for co-operation between them and other organisations on peace issues.

PHOTO: DAVID DAHMÉN



Local Representative Séraphin N'Gouma and outgoing Resident Representative Runo Bergström in front of LPI's office in Brazzaville.

– We have also propagated an extended collaboration between the different UN bodies and NGOs in the country. In this context my experiences from the UN have come in handy.

Lessons Learned from the UN

When he started to work in the Republic of the Congo, Runo Bergström had already many years experience of international peace and development work within the United Nations (UN). His first commission was in 1982 as a UN observer in the Golan Heights between Syria and Israel.

– The UN observer's weapon is the pen, with which he or she reports any violations against an armistice, and the UN then decides on which measures to take.

Later Runo Bergström worked as an observer in southern Lebanon during the Israeli occupation and thereafter as a UN Liaison Officer in Beirut. As a military UN observer he often came in contact with the UN's civilian work, and during the first Palestinian Intifada in the late 1980's worked as a Refugee Affairs Officer in Gaza.

– My second civilian task within the UN was as a Political Affairs Officer in the United Nations Operations I and II in Somalia, Runo Bergström recalls.

From 1992 to 1995 I participated in the UN's work to create District and Regional Councils in the country. We also worked with preparations for the disarmament of the different militia factions and for an agreement between warring clans.

After the years in Somalia, Runo Bergström started working at the UN Headquarters in New York as a Coordination Officer for the new Lessons Learned Unit. The UN decided to scrutinize and document its peacekeeping operations to see what needed to be improved.

When Runo Bergström terminated his commission after five years in New York, he was asked by LPI to establish an office in the Republic of the Congo.

– I had got to know LPI during my work with the UN in Somalia, and after some reconnoitring both in the Congo and at LPI I did not hesitate to say yes.

To work with a major world organisation like the UN and with a small NGO like LPI is of course very different.

– The UN can, when needed, put great resources at your disposal to facilitate the operations and can exert its political ascendancy over the member states to influence their co-operation. The work within LPI, on the other hand, is more "familiar", and it does not take

long to get to know all your colleagues. The decision-making process is often short, which is a great advantage and allows you to "strike while the iron is hot", explains Runo Bergström.

Warmth and integrity

Runo Bergström is very popular and appreciated among the Congolese. Jérôme Gouzou, a colleague at LPI Uppsala, has often visited him at the office in Brazzaville.

– What is so special with Runo is his capacity to listen to everyone and to soften aggressions among conflicting parties. He is never regarded as a threat but as an asset. Runo has a unique ability to enter any context and meet any person, be it a street child or a prime minister, with the same warmth and kindness. His respect and integrity is felt everywhere. He is an incredibly fine colleague, both professional and human in the best sense of the word.

A couple of years ago Runo Bergström was invited by some young men to the Poto Poto district in Brazzaville. They wanted to show him something nice and interesting. They took him to a studio and showed him a life-size bust made of brass-coloured clay.

– Just imagine my surprise when I realized that the features were mine, although somewhat beautified! They

The Republic of the Congo – facts in brief

The Republic of the Congo, also known as Congo-Brazzaville, is a former French colony of western-central Africa. Upon independence in 1960, the former French region of Middle Congo became the Republic of the Congo. A quarter century of experimentation with Marxism was abandoned in 1990 and a democratically elected government installed in 1992. A brief civil war in 1997 restored former Marxist President Sassou Nguesso, but ushered in a period of ethnic unrest. Southern-based rebel groups agreed to a final peace accord in March 2003.

Government: Republic
President: Denis Sassou Nguesso
Prime Minister: Isidore Mvouba
Capital: Brazzaville
Population: 4.1 million
Religion: Vast Christian majority (mostly Catholic), Muslim minority, and adherents of traditional African religions

wanted to give me the bust in recognition of the help they had received from LPI and me. They helped me transport the bust to the LPI office, where visitors have regarded it with a certain wonder...

At Runo Bergström's departure from Brazzaville last spring he was of course honoured and thanked for his services.

– I was appointed King by the journalists, represented by the Media Ombudsman! I received the garment and the insignia that a Congolese king would have in that province. I still have not got acquainted with the rights and responsibilities connected with this appointment, but I keep the outfit in my home until they are needed, says Runo with a proud yet humble smile.

The Republic of the Congo is a country with great natural assets in the form of petrol and forests. If they are made use of with wisdom and intelligence, this richness will benefit the population. This is an important issue, as many times history has shown the risk of presumptive assets turning into a source of conflict.

– I have good hopes for the future of the Congo! Runo Bergström asserts. People are longing for peace and democracy. Many competent local groups and individuals work hard to reach the goals. Many NGOs have been formed for education and follow-up of human rights and democracy. They are much needed and are allowed to work rather freely with quite some progress. With a higher degree of democracy the peace will be strengthened and sustained.

In spite of his retirement, for a real enthusiast like Runo Bergström it would, of course, be unthinkable to leave altogether the international sphere, which has been his interest from childhood.

– I have liked to work with LPI so much that it is difficult to give it a sudden end. When asked if I would be willing to make use of my experiences as LPI's resource person in the future, my answer was 'you bet!'. Among other things I will follow up the projects that were initiated during my stay in Congo Brazzaville. That will give me an opportunity to meet my Congolese friends again and follow the development in the country. 📷

In no 1/2002 of New Routes, on the theme 2 x Congo searching peace, further information about the Republic of the Congo and the Democratic Republic of the Congo is found. Please visit LPI's website, www.life-peace.org to read back issues of New Routes, or contact LPI for hard copies.

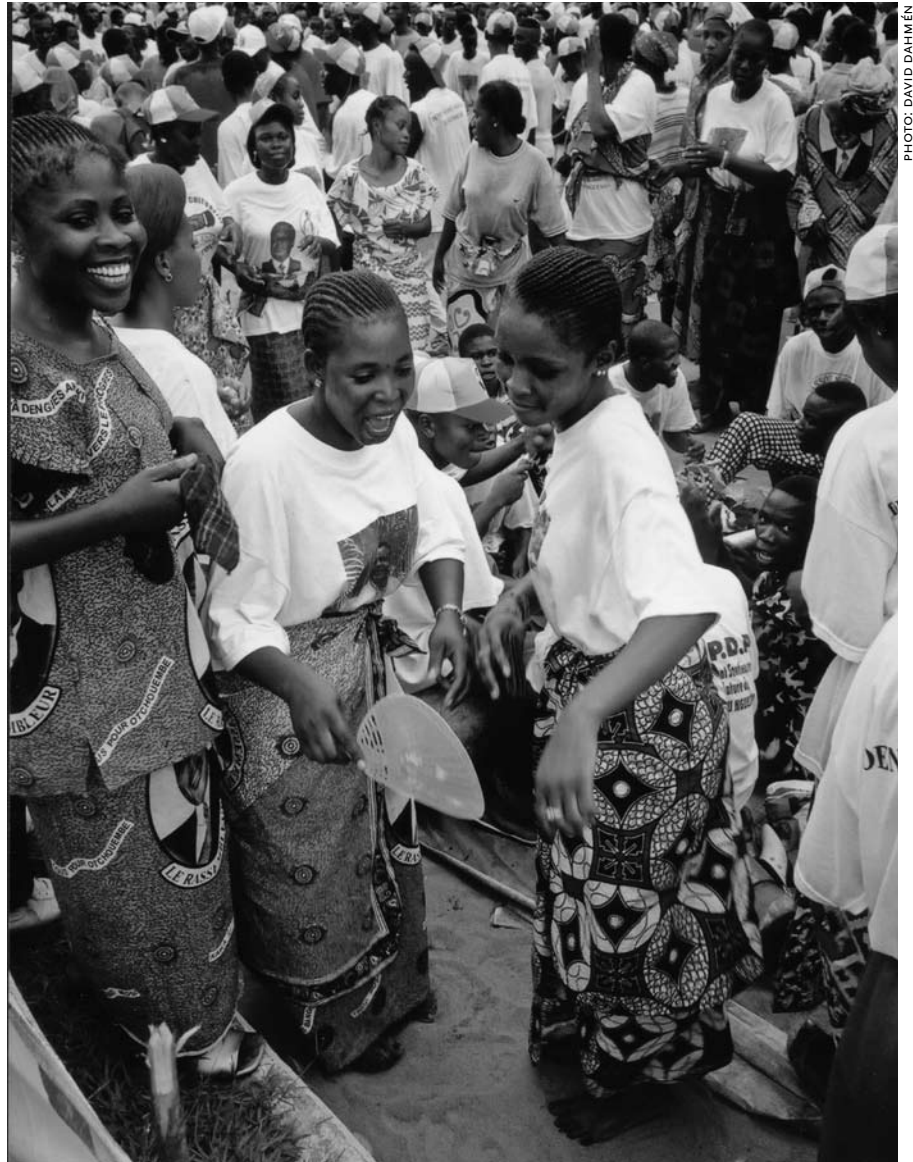


PHOTO: DAVID DAHMÉN

In the spirit of community and joy people celebrate a colourful feast in Église Évangélique du Congo.

BRAZZAVILLE:

Unique alarm system against crimes and violations

Anna Massarsch

An alarm system with the purpose of fighting serious human rights violations has been working in Brazzaville since May 2003. In spite of a serious lack of economic resources, it has great potential to make a big difference both for the protection of the inhabitants against criminality and for the safety of detainees.

The idea of an alarm system as a tool for reporting of human rights violations and crimes originally came from a Congolese Human Rights Organization and has been established in cooperation between this organisation and the judicial author-

ity in Brazzaville, with financial support from Life & Peace Institute (LPI).

The concept of the system is in short that if a serious crime is about to happen, a prosecutor is called. This makes it possible for him or her to intervene

immediately, without first having to let a report go through the police authority. In many cases, this is extremely important, since some culprits in Brazzaville are members of the police corps, who protect each other. The alarm system will make it possible for all Brazzaville inhabitants to call the prosecutor to report about situations they regard as threats against their rights and privileges. This is a move towards better coping with the serious criminality in the city today.

The system is a pilot project and is said to be unique in the whole world. Chief Prosecutor Alphonse Dinard Moubang Moukonze, who is responsible for it, says that it consists of three parts. The first and most important part of the system is an office, which has been installed in the Supreme Court Office in Brazzaville. Day and night there is an official who is either a prosecutor or who is in direct contact with

or other cruel, inhuman or humiliating treatment or punishment occurs. Unfortunately, such outrages are very common in the Republic of Congo. The committee can intervene if someone, for instance a detainee, has contacted the alarm system and reported bad conditions, but it can also make spontaneous visits.

The members of the committee carry a special card, which gives them immediate admission without any announcement in advance to all institutions and places where people are held in detention. If bad conditions that can be regarded

as unlawful are found, the prosecutor takes immediate measures to take legal proceedings against the people in charge and make sure that the bad conditions come to an immediate halt. In this way, they want to point out that such conditions and ill treatment under no circumstances are tolerated.

The third part of the alarm system consists of a group of experts on human rights violations, who together try to work out a ruling policy, which, hopefully, will restrain this kind of serious crimes. With the help of studies of the most common violations, the expert group will present proposals as to which crimes should lead to severe punishment in order to decrease this kind of criminality.

It is hoped that, with the use of the alarm system, a considerable decrease of human rights violations will be achieved. It will also develop a culture that promotes and protects these rights. Further, this system will hopefully put an end to the widespread corruption that affects the whole Congolese society. Finally, the hope is that the system, in combination with information efforts and education, will improve cooperation between different actors in society.

Several practical problems

Alphonse Diner Moubang Moukonzi explains that during the rather short period the system has been working, it has performed better than expected. But there are, of course, many difficulties. The most important is the lack of

resources. The whole system is built up with resources from civil society, and they are not sufficient. The Congolese Government does not contribute with anything. This means that the system needs proper localities to establish a permanent office.

The temporary office also requires a computer that could be used for collecting information and statistics for the



This system will hopefully put an end to the widespread corruption that affects the whole Congolese society



It is hoped that, with the use of the alarm system, a considerable decrease of human rights violations will be achieved.

a prosecutor by telephone. All reports about serious crimes are registered in the office. In urgent cases the prosecutor gives direct instructions to a police officer, who is specially attached to the system, to go to the scene of the crime and try to prevent it and apprehend possible suspects.

Less urgent reports are first investigated by the prosecutor at the office in order to take necessary actions. Reports to the office can be made by telephone or through letters, which can be put in special mailboxes outside the entrance of all the Mayors' offices in Brazzaville. A report can also be handed in directly to the Office of the Supreme Court in Brazzaville or to a Human Rights Organization that forwards it to the prosecutor.

Visiting prisons

The second part of the alarm system is a supervisory body, called the Committee for Consultation and Action Against Criminality. It consists of prosecutors, lawyers, human rights activists, mayors, and police chiefs. The principal task of the committee is to visit police stations, prisons and other institutions where persons are detained, in order to investigate the conditions and to see that no torture

criminality that is fought. Moukonzi regards the lack of a fixed telephone line as a particularly serious problem. As it is, only mobile phones can be used. This means both that the phone numbers to the alarm system consist of many figures and are difficult to remember, and that it is expensive to call the office. Due to lack of money, the office can only receive calls and not make calls. Many people in Brazzaville are very poor, so most of the inhabitants cannot yet get in contact with the alarm system.

Another serious problem is that the police are not equipped with the transport facilities needed to get to the scene of a crime quickly, which is one of the prerequisites for the system to function well. Finally, the lack of resources makes it impossible to spread information as would be desirable, so that all inhabitants, who are supposed to be part of the system, get to know about it.

Obviously, the alarm system does not function in practice as well as it could. However, if it got enough resources, Alphonse Dinard Moubang Moukonzi is convinced that it would be very effective. He is also optimistic that the system will function one day, and he is anxious for the surrounding world to be informed about it. 

*Translated by Runo Bergström/
Kristina Lundqvist*

This article was first published in Swedish in MR-Info nr 1, 2006, published by the Swedish NGO Foundation for Human Rights.

LPI News

Release of Ethiopian political prisoners

After persistent internal and international pressure, 38 of the Ethiopian political prisoners, belonging to the largest opposition party, Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD), including journalists and civil society activists, were set free on 20 July 2007. The main mediators who negotiated clemency and this final release of the prisoners are a group of Ethiopian elders led by Professor Ephraim Isaac, International Chairman of the Peace and Development Committee, PDC, a long time partner of the Life & Peace Institute (LPI) in Ethiopia.

This move has triggered tremendous hope, jubilation and goodwill both within Ethiopia and among many concerned governments, international non-governmental organisations and regional organizations. It has also become a source of satisfaction for LPI having participated in the efforts of the Ethiopian elders through financial and technical support.

Since the centuries old feudal monarchy was replaced in 1974 by a leftist military regime, the Ethiopian political arena has experienced unparalleled violence and multiple civil and externally imposed wars. After 17 years of revolutionary antagonism exacerbated by the then global cold war rivalries, the military regime was overthrown and power passed in 1991 to the armed opposition led by the Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Front (EPRDF).

From the start, the EPRDF government promised democracy and respect for human rights. Although some changes have been witnessed, the proliferation and continuation of armed opposition, the 1998-2000 Ethio-Eritrean war and the continued structural violence and impunity made the goal of sustainable peace hard to obtain. After EPRDF's four years of transitional rule, the first national elections were held in 1995, followed by another round in 2000. Credible opposition groups boycotted these elections, declaring conditions were far from being conducive for free and fair competition.

Though the elections in May 2005 brought unprecedented improvements and gains for the opposition, the aftermath became catastrophic. The opposition accused the ruling

party of serious irregularities and vote rigging and called the public to protest action and mass demonstrations in June and November the same year. The government security forces reacted violently, and the ensuing confrontation resulted in the loss of human life and extensive damage to property. The event further polarised Ethiopian politics and thousands of opposition supporters were imprisoned along with party leaders and civil society activists and journalists. Over 100 of the key leaders of CUD and activists were incarcerated for not less than 18 months.

It was in the midst of such polarisation and deepened antagonism in Ethiopia that Professor Ephraim visited LPI in Uppsala in June 2006 and requested the Institute's involvement in support of the mediation efforts of the Ethiopian elders. LPI, as a pioneering Institute in peace research and action regarding the role of traditional and local capacities in conflict resolution, commended the work of the elders, and upon careful consideration decided to give limited assistance to Professor Ephraim and the PDC.

Applauded release

The release of the prisoners has received both national and international support. Aside from the huge jubilation in Ethiopia and among the Ethiopian Diaspora, we find multiple international bodies that have expressed satisfaction with the measure. Among them are the US Government and congressmen and the EU Commission.

EU Commissioner Louis Michel saw the release as "a major political act of reconciliation" and stated, "This outcome would not have been possible without the relentless efforts of the Group of Elders who served as mediators and the will and courage of both sides to overcome their differences for the good of the country". Congressman Mike Honda, representing the Congressional Ethiopian American Caucus, said: "In the spirit of new beginnings, it is my hope that the Ethiopian Government and members of the political opposition take every step toward true reconciliation."

The CUD's parliamentary group leader is quoted to have stated that the

"release of the leaders would have significant contribution towards proceeding the political struggle through peaceful means and under the supremacy of law".

The released CUD leaders in their first statement said: "It is to be recalled that national elders have been making concerted efforts to have us released from prison and to extricate the Ethiopian peaceful political process from the aggressive and intransigent state in which it finds itself. Their effort was focused not only on having us released from detention but also on restoring the derailed democratic process to its proper course.

Based on this understanding, we have agreed to resolve the conflict through a reconciliation process as initiated by the elders. We have further agreed to forgive all those who have done wrong, to seek ways by which those who have been harmed could be healed, but above all to look to the future and concentrate on the positive conditions that would be created after the reconciliation.

National elders have striven to resolve the problem through peace and reconciliation. We wish to thank our Ethiopian and non-Ethiopian advocates of human rights and democracy for the support and the peace of mind they gave us when we were in detention. We wish to express our deep respect to our compatriots who lost their lives during this time of difficulty. They shall be remembered by us, former detainees, and by Ethiopians as a whole as martyrs."

The role of LPI

As mentioned above, the visit of Professor Ephraim in June 2006 was a turning point for LPI's renewed resolve to strengthen its relations with PDC and assist the mediation efforts planned by the Ethiopian elders. Although LPI was undergoing its own internal changes, the Institute committed to do its part in the process. The involvement was twofold: first approval of PDC's project for research on traditional mechanisms of conflict resolution with the aim of eventually to establish peace elders network in Ethiopian regions. The research programme was launched in June 2007. The second major task was to assist in the process of the mediation to secure the release of

the prisoners and to create conditions for peaceful dialogue and continuation of the stalled democratic process.

A project was prepared during the second half of 2006 to help Professor Ephraim's mediation efforts through advisory, financial and moral support. Thus, the project anticipated two phases: the release of the prisoners followed by efforts to deepen reconciliation and the democratic process. At a time when the idea of reconciliation was unpopular, LPI found it important in the prevailing political climate, to accompany Professor Isaac's solitary but worthwhile initiative. At last the first part has become a success and its effects have already reverberated on a national and global level.

Ethiopia is closing its own 20th century (according to the Gregorian calendar) during the second week of September and is preparing to celebrate its millennium. Many decades of its history during the twentieth century have been squandered in preparations for wars, on an internal and external level, and in reparations. All who support the present measure consider it as a starting point for Ethiopia to undertake a serious national reconciliation and democratisation in a way of preparation for her entry into the 21st century. The opportunity should not be missed by any miscalculations which can wreck the current positive move. LPI is happy with the developments

and is ready to assist the Ethiopian partners in their struggle to build a peaceful and democratic society.

Tarekegn Adebo

Nairobi meetings

In connection with the annual meeting with the LPI international board of directors at the Desmond Tutu Conference Centre in Nairobi in June, several seminars were arranged. In a round table meeting some 20 representatives from ecumenical organizations in Africa discussed contemporary challenges in Africa under the theme: Transform conflicts and build peace. Among the speakers were Professor Ephraim Isaac, Ethiopia/USA, Ms Louise Bakala, Congo Brazzaville, and Mr Abukar Socdal Abtidoon, member of the Executive Committee of the National Reconciliation Committee in Somalia.

Another seminar on Christian-Muslim dynamics gathered faculty and teachers from various universities, as well as ecumenical organizations. The speaker was Dr Anne Kubai from LPI, who presented results from case studies in Sudan, Ethiopia, Nigeria and Tanzania.

The concluding seminar was arranged in collaboration with All Africa Conference of Churches, the World Council of Churches and the Spanish Society for the Advancement of International Human Rights Law.

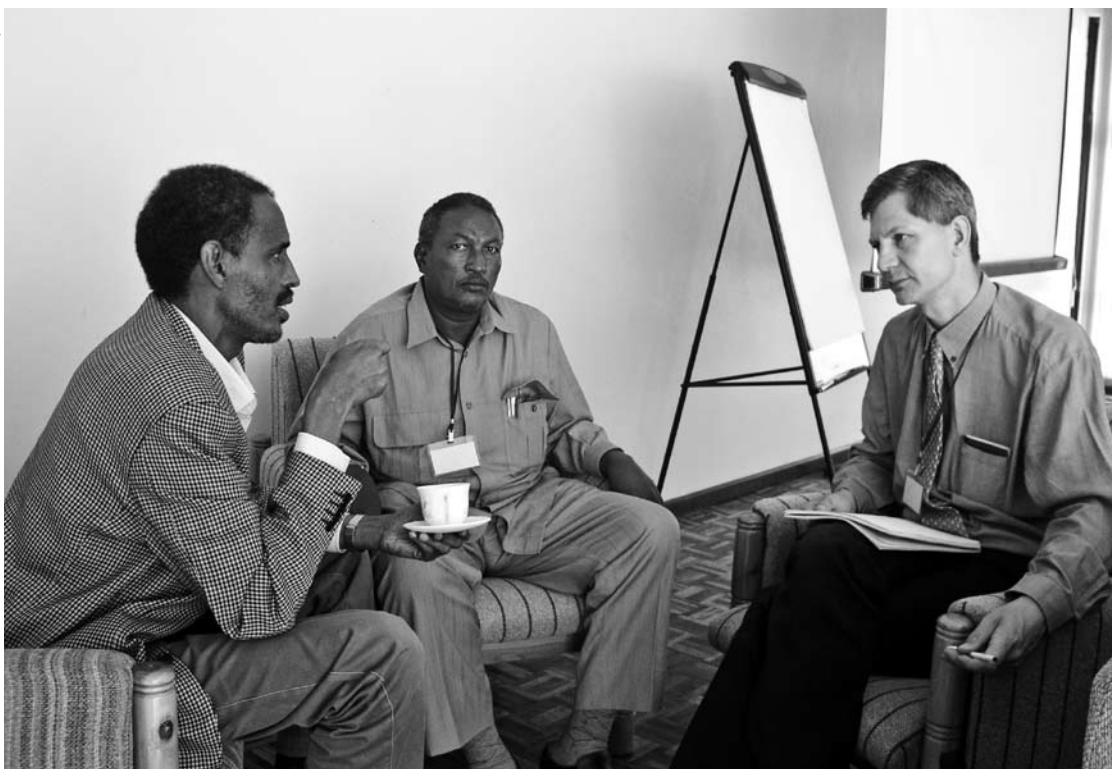
Speakers were Mr. David Fernandez, Spain, introducing the Luarca Declaration on the Human Rights to Peace, and Ambassador Bethuel Kiplagat and Mr Nicolas Otieno from Nairobi giving African perspectives on peace, human rights and development.

In connection with the meeting, LPI and the All Africa Conference of Churches signed a Memorandum of Understanding covering collaboration in the three areas research, training and communication. An already existing joint project is the monthly online newsletter Horn of Africa Bulletin.

Göteborg Book Fair

One of the more vibrant elements of the Göteborg Book Fair, September 27-30, is the international corner, a gathering of numerous development organizations, solidarity movements and other NGOs. LPI is displaying books on reconciliation as well as its periodicals New Routes and the Horn of Africa Bulletin. Four mini-seminars are offered on topics such as Darfur, Human Rights training in Congo Brazzaville, Reconciliation, Religion, conflict and peace. Among the speakers are the Special Envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General for Darfur, Mr Jan Eliasson, and Professor Charles Villa-Vicencio from the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation in Cape Town, South Africa.

PHOTO: TORE SAMUELSSON / LPI



Abdi Aden Ali, Somali programme officer, discussing the latest development in Mogadishu with Abukar Socdal Abtidoon, National Reconciliation Committee, and LPI's executive director Peter Brune.



LPI-intern Charlotte Booth.

Finance officers from the offices in Bukavu, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Brazzaville, Republic of Congo, were in July visiting LPI's head office in Uppsala for training. From left: Virgine Delporte, interpreter, Mikael Boman, consultant, Cecilia Danckwart-Lillieström, consultant, Cyrille Oloin and Zaurati Nasibu.



PHOTO: TORE SAMUELSSON/LPI

Staff news

The units for Conflict Transformation and Research have been reinforced by Jenny Svensson, Catrin Rosquist and Kristina Lundborg. Kristina, working part time with an East Timor project, is also assisting the communications unit with the production of the Horn of Africa Bulletin. Ulla Vinterhav, executive secretary, is back at LPI after one year's leave of absence. We welcome our new intern for the coming six months, Charlotte Booth, from Germany.

There are also some changes in the staffing of the Africa Programmes. The resident representative Kirsi Saaristo is leaving to join Finnish Save the Children, and the position is currently vacant. An office recently opened in Baidoa, Somalia, is headed by Abdi Aden Ali. Nono Mamwita has left the DRC programme. New staff in Bukavu are: programme officer Alexis Bouvy and finance officer Zaurati Nasibu and in Brazzaville finance officer Cyrille Oloin.

Somalia seminars following the Darfur series

Following a successful seminar series on Darfur, LPI, the Nordic Africa Institute and ABF will organize a series of public Somalia seminars and a concluding panel discussion in Stockholm during October and November. Among the themes will be the role of women in the peace process, religion and the Somali clan system

Horn of Africa

The main theme for the annual Swedish Horn of Africa Conference in Lund in August 2007 was on post-conflict peace building and the role of civil society in the political processes in the region. It was attended by a wide range of practitioners, academics, diplomats, civil society activists, representatives of intergovernmental agencies and members of the Diaspora from the Horn of Africa, some prominent members of rebel movements and political opposition.

Shane Quinn and Tarekegn Adebo, representing LPI at the conference, conclude that, "Although at times the spirit of concerted and informed dialogue was hard to come by, it nonetheless managed to bring together these groups and individuals in a unique discussion forum without parallel in the Horn."

Somalia

LPI's programme officer in Somalia officer, Abdi Aden Ali, reports that in spite of the unstable political situation, LPI and the local NGO Women's Development Network were able to arrange a major conference for 100 Somali women in July. The meeting, which was held in the relatively safe environment of Baidoa, was an attempt to assist Somali women from eight regions in southern Somalia to strategize ways that could enable them to co-ordinate their efforts in peace building

and reconciliation in the country.

The Minister for Women Development and Family Affairs opened the conference in the presence of the regional governor. Among the recommendations adopted were proposals for additional conferences, training workshops and coordination, including the selection of a focal person.

Peace building in DRC ...

LPI has recently started a new two-year phase of the peace building programme in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The work in North and South Kivu is co-ordinated from an office in Bukavu. The focus is capacity building, and LPI works with a limited number of Congolese partners. In comparison with earlier phases, there is more emphasis on integration of research results and on a result based approach. Among the donors are Sida, Sweden, DFID, UK, and the Belgian government.

... and Brazzaville

In the neighbouring Republic of the Congo, a new and slightly different peace building programme is evolving in 2007 following six years of engagement from LPI (see also interview with Runo Bergström on page 22). A new structure for the work is in place, led by the Congolese civil society organizations that have worked in partnership with LPI since the start of the programme.

Reviews

Essential aid for peacebuilding NGOs

Aiding Peace? The Role of NGOs in Armed Conflict.
Goodhand, Jonathan. Lynne Reiner Publishers, 2006

This book is, in my opinion, indispensable reading for professional peacebuilders. Sophisticated, comprehensive, clear and insightful, *Aiding Peace* is the exceptional kind of work that quickly becomes a standard reference. Goodhand has extensively reviewed the literature on how both international and national NGOs interact worldwide with conflict and peacemaking dynamics, and has probed and plumbed a half dozen case studies that shed considerable light on what NGOs are doing, and realistically can do today, in the pursuit of peace.

There is much to recommend in this work: attention to the nature and variety of modern conflicts, including the importance of particular histories and contexts, an exploration of niche and multi-mandate NGOs and their evolution over the past two decades, the development of useful typologies, tables and frameworks, a well-reasoned theoretical stance, and a realistic look at the most prominent practical and political challenges that would-be peacebuilding NGOs need to face.

Goodhand, senior lecturer in the Development Studies Department at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, conceives peacebuilding here as including “any activity undertaken with the purpose of preventing, alleviating, or resolving violent conflict”, and echoes a recent text from the government of Canada in describing the overall goal as that of both enhancing “the indigenous capacity of a society to manage conflict without violence” and “building human security”.

Theoretically the author adopts a political economy approach with a central focus on national states, as opposed to so-called rational choice approaches. He eschews being “NGO-centric”, insisting that spaces for peacebuilding are largely determined by more powerful actors. He highlights the humbling fact that what NGOs can accomplish may be significant (enhancing social stability, protecting local leaders, fostering community resilience, and occasionally leveraging impacts at the macro level) but is also often limited, and unfortunately shallow in many cases.

He explores the difficulties of adequately assessing the effectiveness or impact of particular peacebuilding interventions, insists that virtually every intervention does some harm, and critically evaluates the negative effects of donor policies (including the promotion of organizational competition over cooperation) - issues much on the mind or close to the heart of many an NGO peaceworker.

Building peace, Goodhand asserts, is “fundamentally a political task” rather than a technical one, and NGO blindness to power dynamics and the normative underpinnings of action “increases the risks that peacebuilding will become an instrument of hegemony rather than of transformation”. This is particularly true, he affirms, in an environment in which building peace is so closely identified with “counter-terrorism, homeland security and nation-building”.

As the author reminds us, we unfortunately know considerably more about the causes of war than about the causes

of peace. He highlights the need for more social research on issues such as why some people choose not to fight, the mobilization dynamics related to peacebuilding, the role of “peace entrepreneurs”, and how societies can transition effectively from war economies to peace economies.

This work pays almost no attention to faith-based as opposed to secular NGOs, and it gives short shrift to important issues like the relationship between peace and social justice (half a page), deemed to be beyond the scope of the volume. But perhaps, as they say in Latin America, one should not demand pears from the elm tree. This, let me repeat, is one excellent elm.

Thomas Barnat

Negotiating peace with help of the Bible

Palestine: Peace not Apartheid. Carter, J. Simon & Schuster, 2006

Jimmy Carter is the man who, during his time as the President of the United States, became “the midwife” of Israel’s first (and most important) peace treaty: the one with Egypt. He has also inexhaustibly sought to implement the part of the agreement that deals with Israel’s relationship with the Palestinians and their future state. In his new book, *Palestine – Peace, not Apartheid*, he outlines the policies for reaching the ultimate goal: Two peoples who live in peace, side by side, in two states.

Without a doubt, it is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that lies closest to Carter’s heart. It can also be said that the book gives a clear and well laid-out chronology of the ups and downs of the conflict, although it hardly contains any eye-openers for those who have continuously followed the developments.

In 1970, when Carter was Governor of Georgia, he was invited to meet with the then Prime Minister of Israel, Golda Meir, after a tour of the country. She wanted to know what he thought of Israel. Carter hesitated, but then reckoned that it was his duty to notify Meir that, for many years, he had taught the Holy Scripture and had noted that the people of Israel suffered God’s wrath whenever its leaders turned from a committed worship of their God. Wasn’t Golda Meir worried about her government’s secular stance?

For Carter, Israel ought to fulfil the Bible’s demand that the people of Israel be “a light to the nations”. When Israel neither wants to, nor is able to, realise this concept, then Carter becomes agitated and is prompted to use his book to missionize amongst his fellow believers in the US Bible belt, which has a tendency to uncritically swallow everything that the state of Israel offers for sale with its effective propaganda machine.

Of course, there is nothing wrong with Carter using his prestige as an ex-president, Nobel prize-winner and deeply committed Christian in order to oppose his fellow believers’ idealisation of Israeli politics. But he does more than that; he patters carefully around the facts that don’t quite tally with the picture he wants to paint and the feelings he wants to stir.

The motto that Carter uses for his book about the bloody territorial conflict between Israel and Palestine is revealing. He quotes Genesis 4:9-11 and writes, "The Bible tells us that the first time blood is spilt between his children, God asks Cain, the murderer, 'Where is your brother Abel?' He answered, 'I don't know, am I my brother's keeper?' Then God said, 'What have you done?! Your brother's blood cries to me from the ground. Therefore are you cursed ...'"

Even if Carter refers to God as Father of the Arabs (who see Abraham as their ancestral father) and also of the Jews and Christians, he is in no doubt as to who is Cain and who is Abel in today's sibling rivalry. Carter names Abel's misdeeds – from raids against Israel's civilian population, first over the borders from Jordan and Lebanon, where the Palestine Liberation Organization had erected a state-within-a-state, to car bombs against civilian targets today – but these terrorist acts are touched upon with rather soft gloves.

Altogether more strongly, however, Carter emphasises Cain's (Israel's) retaliatory raids, which most often lack all proportions and indiscriminately kill innocent men, women and children. When Carter mentions the high emigration of Christian Palestinians from the West Bank, he puts the blame for this tragic fact on the Israeli occupation. Has he really not heard of the threat, according to their own accounts, of their Muslim neighbours driving many Christian Palestinians to flee? It is called, "After Saturday [the Jewish Sabbath] comes Sunday", and even if the warning is only being issued by Muslim extremists, it is taken seriously among many Christian Palestinians, who see discretion as the better part of valour.

And yet, despite everything, Carter's book will end up on my shelf as a lucid reference book. It gives answers to what happened when, not only in terms of Israel's and Palestine's recent historical past, but also regarding some important events in the Arab world. One should, however, be conscious of when it is the 'Bible-school teacher' Jimmy Carter who is speaking, and when it is the former president with a network of contacts over the entire Middle East who is sharing his experiences.

*Cordelia Edvardson
Translated by Robert West*

This review was first published in the Swedish daily paper Svenska Dagbladet in April this year.

The other half of the story

Peacemakers in Action – Profiles of Religion in Conflict Resolution, ed. Little, David. Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2007

Taking a casual glance at the present state of our globe, war and terror in the name of God seems to be a mainstay in world politics. Almost daily, there are news reports with images of belligerents and everyday folks alike out on the barricades, inflamed and incited by their religion. It makes it so easy to conclude that religion can be a source of conflict. But really, that is just half the story. For barely ever do we hear the narratives of the individuals also inflamed and incited by their faiths who are committed to waging peace – those who represent the other half of the story.

Peacemakers in Action tells the rarely told story of how faith and religion can be a source of peace in concrete ways, and it does so in the most convincing fashion. The book provides the reader with twelve inspiring accounts of religious peacemakers – intimately describing their personalities, their techniques and faith-based solutions. Abuna Elias Chacour is one of the featured – just the title to his chapter should incite curiosity: "I am Palestinian, Arab, Christian and Israeli". Though the faiths represented in the book are all from the Abrahamic traditions, these wise men and women inspired by the Abrahamic teachings are natives of places as varied as Ethiopia and Kosovo, and it is quite interesting to see how different cultural contexts shape the understanding of the relationship between religion and conflict.

Being a student of peace and conflict research, I really appreciated the last analytical chapter by Dr. David Little of the Harvard Divinity School, one of the most eminent scholars on this subject. In it, he systematically tackles two common misimpressions, "Religion and Violent Conflict is Inseparable" and "Good Religion Always Brings Peace", and the analysis leaves the reader convinced that the statements are oversimplifications that both hold grains of truth. Thus, for anybody interested in getting the full, and more complex, story on the nexus of religion and conflict, *Peacemakers in Action* is sure to become an illuminative reading experience.

Hannah Tsadik

Peace Commission with potential and weakness

"The Peacebuilding Commission", United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. Disarmament Forum, No. 2, United Nations, Geneva, 2007

Almost two years have passed since the establishment of the United Nations (UN) Peacebuilding Commission (PBC). In light of its existence so far, the latest issue of *Disarmament Forum* published by the UN Institute for Disarmament Research, examines the work needed in order to ensure PBC's success. The article writers ask questions such as: How can the role of the civil society be maximized? What are the prospects of the Commission in the short and in the long run?

To start with, Richard Ponzio guides the reader through the origins and initial practice of the PBC. In a critical remark he argues that, because of its weak mandate and limited formal authority, it has modest powers and a weak focus on conflict prevention. Renske Heemskerk continues by looking at the extensive and fruitful role that civil society can play in relation to the work of PBC. Noting that the relationship between the UN and civil society in general is still lacking set and well-established rules, Heemskerk stresses that sustainable peacebuilding means that there can be no exclusion of certain actors in post-conflict societies. Civil society can therefore contribute with, for example, the know-how in order to mobilise individuals to engage in local ownership. They can strengthen the link between the PBC and the local populations, and provide goods and services which the post-conflict governments fail to provide.

In contrast, in his analysis Tomas J. Biersteker rightly points out the prospects of the PBC. Besides its problems

in meeting high expectations, he also warns of the potential marginalisation of civil society. As the UN is steered by its member states, the PBC could actually end up prioritising their interests, rather than the needs of civil society.

A process highlighted in the article by David Atwood and Fred Tanner is one of mapping an "international Geneva". This "international Geneva" consists of organisations based in Geneva, both intergovernmental and civil society, which can give valuable contributions to the efforts of the UN and the PBC to build long-lasting peace. The mapping will also constitute a base for the establishment of a coordinated peacebuilding platform in Geneva. Such a platform could offer beneficial synergies.

To conclude, the issue is very much an introduction to the PBC, whose work has just initially started in Burundi and Sierra Leone. It is therefore too soon to predict the future of the PBC, a Commission that without doubt has its weaknesses. Despite this partly bleak picture, the PBC does have the potential, given sufficient financial means and support, to make a sustainable contribution to the creation of better lives for populations in conflict-ridden societies.

Catrin Rosquist

The right to war or the rules of war

The price of peace - just war in the twenty-first century, eds. Reed, Charles and Ryall, David. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2007

Already since the events of 11 September 2001, and even more so after the beginning of the armed conflict in Iraq, the topic of the so-called "just war" has gained unexpected visibility. The current discussion about what conflicts can be called a just war is not only a result of the ongoing conflict in Iraq, but many articles in *The price of peace* refer to the question of whether this particular conflict can be called a just war or not. The ancient theory of the so-called bellum justum, which has been addressed by Augustine and Thomas of Aquinas, is the most common philosophical context

in which the different authors in the book try to answer this question.

Unfortunately, the book does not contain an article that describes how the theory of the just war developed and changed during its long history. Nevertheless, it distinguishes the two main questions of just war theory: *jus ad bellum*, which means the right to wage a war, and *jus in bellum*, a term that describes the rules of war, or limits of acceptable conduct. Taking into account recent discussions in the context of Michael Walzer's book, *Just and unjust war*, there are also several articles on *jus post bellum*, which in modern terms addresses the question of how to end a war.

With its great variety of authors, *The price of peace* provides valuable but partly contradictive perspectives on the different aspects of the very complex issue of just war. The variety of the authors' backgrounds is most enlightening for the reader. Military experts, lawyers, theologians, philosophers - almost every relevant participant in this discussion has the opportunity to express his or her view.

As previously mentioned, some articles take up the question of whether the conflict in Iraq should be regarded as a war or not, justified or not. The struggle of the churches to deal with the war in Iraq is described, as well as the structure of modern conflicts, the ethical implications of necessary human intervention, and the philosophical and theological perspectives on recent military global developments.

The book can be regarded as a summary of the many different issues in the discussion of the applicability of the just war theory to modern times. There are two major final conclusions which can be drawn from the book: One is that the theory of just war can hardly be used to judge the structure of modern conflicts or to determine whether a war can be regarded as justified or not. The second conclusion is that there is no suitable alternative to that theory in sight. On the other hand given the issues that characterize modern conflicts such as terrorism and the growing need for humanitarian intervention, the urgent need for such a theory becomes quite clear.

Andreas Bergmann

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Swedish Committee for Afghanistan



*Through a hole in the roof. O my God,
I am trying to see you;
Trying to tell you that all your people are suffering,
Trying to ask you to bring peace,
To please stop this awful killing and destruction,
This murderous frenzy to nationalism!*

PRAYER OF A BOSNIAN VILLAGER

*From: A Collection of Prayers from Europe
International Day of Prayer for Peace, 2007*

In 2004 the United Nations and the World Council of Churches (WCC) jointly initiated the 21 September as the International Day of Prayer for Peace. The WCC office for the Decade to Overcome Violence this year has Europe in its focus, on the theme "Make me an instrument of your peace".

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