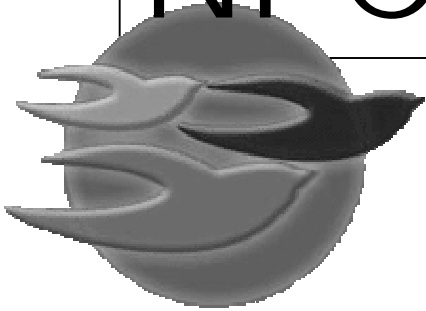


NPC News

Newsletter of Nonviolent Peaceforce Canada
September 2003 ☼ Vol. 4, Issue 1



Peaceforce – realised!

NP Sri Lanka project launched!

from the frontlines

Mixed Feelings

by Lisa Ndejuru

Lisa Ndejuru, a student and peace activist in Montreal, was in Iraq with the Iraq Peace Team during the first months of 2003, returning in late August to do exploratory work for the Iraq Solidarity Project (iptcanada@yahoo.ca). In the following article, written in Baghdad in February 2003, she explains her decision to remain in Iraq during the invasion. Ndejuru joined the Coordinating Committee of NPC in September 2003.

There are some beautiful children here. There is one, Hassan, who has his portable business just in front of the hotel. He shines shoes. He's very good at it. I can't stand to see it and I don't quite understand why. He's working and supporting his family. And very proud of it too.

There's another boy I love in the neighbourhood. This one has dimples and stole my heart without even trying. I often think to myself that, if worse comes to worst, he'll know how to get around.

I can't hand out money to begging children. If you go to Booksellers' Row there are many little girls, dragging littler brothers and sisters with them, holding out cartons containing two sweets or this one boy that wants to sell tissue paper.

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what's new?

NP's first trained, unarmed peace team, with members from each continent, is about to be deployed! Ottawa activist Angela Pinchero was chosen to be part of the inaugural team, which underwent three weeks of intensive training in Thailand and is due to begin its work in September. The team will provide protective accompaniment, international presence and human rights monitoring to assist People's Action for Free and Fair Elections (PAFFREL), an independent Sri Lankan organisation, which is working to establish a foundation for sustainable peace in Sri Lanka. Sri Lankans are struggling to emerge from 20 years of war, and the Peaceforce will be there to support this effort. For updates from Angela, keep an eye on the "Local Peace Team Participants" section of our website.

New Coordinating Committee Members

NPC welcomed three new Coordinating Committee members over the summer. Colin Stuart, long time activist for peace and social justice, international development professional and university professor, assumed the role of Treasurer with NPC just after his return from Israel and Palestine, where he spent ten days as a member of a Christian Peacemaker Teams delegation. Sumita Dixit, a DFAIT employee with a background in peace studies from Bradford University and experience volunteering for a year with Nonviolence International in Thailand, agreed to join the Coordinating Committee after actively participating in the Outreach and Education Committee for almost a year. Lisa Ndejuru, who spent the first weeks of the invasion of Iraq in Baghdad with the Iraq Peace Team, joined the coordination of NPC in September, after returning from work in Baghdad with the Iraq Solidarity Project.

Peace Bonds

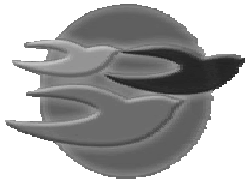


Nonviolent Peaceforce is issuing 100,000 Peace Bonds to support the Peaceforce and its premiere project in Sri Lanka. Give a Peace Bond to your children and grandchildren, to your friends, to yourself! Your reward? No commercial value, but upon maturity the bearer will see a large international team trained for nonviolent conflict intervention around the world. Send a check for \$20 to NPC or make a credit card purchase via our website.

Emergency Response Network

NPC is helping to develop an Emergency Response Network (ERN) for the Peaceforce. Essential to the success of NP's peace teams, the ERN is currently composed of about 400 members from over 40 countries. The ERN will be used in rare situations, when a global campaign will help to secure the safety of partner organizations and individuals being accompanied by the NP or NP field staff. **To find out more or to JOIN**, see our website or contact ern@nonviolentpeaceforce.org.

Nonviolent Peaceforce Canada is a country group of Nonviolent Peaceforce. Nonviolent Peaceforce is a "peace army" composed of trained civilians from around the world. In partnership with local groups, the Peaceforce provides an international presence and uses non-violent strategies to protect human rights, deter violence, and help create space for local peace and justice workers to carry out their work. Nonviolent Peaceforce Canada also supports the work of other organisations providing non-violent accompaniment, monitoring and international presence.



Struggle in Aceh

I really can't believe that something like this can happen in the world without a bigger outcry about it. It really hurts me, again, like it has hurt me in the past, to witness how awful we can allow the world to be.

-Feb. 2003, Rachel Corrie, ISM activist killed on 16 March 2003 while trying to stop a house demolition in Rafah (www.palsolidarity.org)

focus



by Rachel Sutton, Ottawa

After participating in NPC's "Introduction to Peace Teams" workshop, Rachel Sutton decided to join a Peace Brigades International team in Aceh. She will be heading to Indonesia in September with the aim of bringing Canadian attention to the conflict while providing protective accompaniment to Indonesian human rights defenders. To receive Rachel's reports, email her rachelsutton@fastmail.ca.

Aceh is the northernmost province on the island of Sumatra in Indonesia. It had a long, distinct history as a major regional power until 1873 when the Dutch conquered it for the Dutch East Indies Empire. After winning independence from the Dutch, Acehnese resentments emerged when the Java-dominated Indonesian government refused to make Aceh a separate province.

In 1976, the Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (GAM) - the Free Aceh Movement - was formed, with the goal of independence for Aceh. In 1989, the government declared martial law in the province.

Throughout the 1990s, Indonesian security forces committed widespread human rights abuses while attempting to round up GAM members. Many civilians were killed, tortured, raped and disappeared. By the time the Suharto government fell in 1998, GAM and the goal of independence had gained support in Aceh.

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Reaching out

In the spring and summer, NPC hosted two public events aimed at enriching public discussion in Ottawa on issues related to peace teams and the conflicts in which they are working. A panel discussion held in May addressed the attacks against three internationals working with the International Solidarity Movement in Palestine, including Rachel Corrie. Speakers from Peace Brigades International-Canada, ISM-Montreal, and local activists considered the impact on ISM's work, on the situation in Palestine and Israel, and on peace teams elsewhere, as well as how to respond.

In August, individuals who had participated in Christian Peacemaker Teams, ISM-Montreal and Iraq Peace Team delegations gave reports on their recent experiences in occupied lands in Palestine, Iraq and Canada. Preceded by new video footage from the

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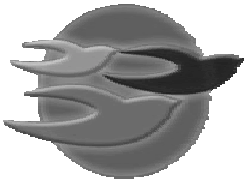
recent events ... recent events ...



CC member Mary Girard (left) at the Consultation (Photo: Carl Stieren)

Peace Team Consultations 4 to 6 July 2003, Ottawa

In cooperation with Peace Brigades International-Canada, NPC organised a consultation which brought together groups involved in nonviolent accompaniment work from across eastern and central Canada. The weekend in Ottawa provided a chance for Christian Peacemaker Teams - Canada, Aboriginal Rights Coalition Atlantic -Observer Project, PBI-Canada, Iraq Solidarity Project, Projet Accompagnement Québec-Guatemala and NPC to benefit from closer communication, cooperation and sharing of ideas, resources and experiences. For the most part meeting each other for the first time, the representatives of the different organisations created a listserv to facilitate increased cooperation and agreed to hold a second consultation.



Lisa Ndejuru

FROM THE FRONTLINES: Mixed Feelings *cont'd*

I can't do it. I can't accept doing it sometimes and not others, so I don't do it at all. I know it's a living and I don't understand myself. But I can't do it. The children are very beautiful. Very, very beautiful. All the shades of brown. Beautiful eyes.

Yesterday we met the archbishop of southern Iraq. He lives and works in Basra, the city in the south where so much of the bombing has been taking place, where much of the depleted uranium can be found, where health and sanitation conditions today are very difficult. The archbishop told us that expecting families used to ask to know the sex of the child in the past. They were partial to little boys. The number of birth defects is so high now [linked to the use of depleted uranium coated weapons by the US and UK] that all people want to know today is if the child has hands or feet. From a feminist perspective this breaks my heart. As a woman in childbearing years, my tummy cramps in desolation.

We went to visit the children at the St Raphael orphanage. There are several orphanages here. This one takes care of disabled children. None of the children there can walk or talk properly. I was afraid to enter their home. I was afraid to see, and smell, and hear horrible things. I was afraid to see neglect and misery. And instead I went over for lunchtime and got nothing but smiles and strokes of welcome. The children are very well taken care of, every single day. It was so easy to plop down on the mat for lunch time and wipe some noses and feed some rice and chicken into smiling hungry mouths. But I kept thinking that for it to be easy for me to drop by for lunch, somebody had to keep the place up and running every day. To give and give and give. Gracefully.

I don't know if I will ever be a parent. I'm so afraid, so greedy. I don't know that I could stand to love and fear as the parents here in Baghdad do, or the ones back home; my own, and all the others. The possibilities are endless: accidents, learning difficulties, health problems, loss, harassment, substance abuse, depression, unemployment, homelessness.

War means bombs dropping from the sky, militia in the streets, shooting and throwing grenades. It means killing, raping, maiming. It means food and water getting scarcer and scarcer as time goes by, and garbage and sewage and disease getting out of control. War means people killing and dying and breaking under pressure, settling old scores because nobody is watching right then and they can get away with it. War means humanitarian agencies, and relief programs and people fleeing, trying to get out, it means refugee camps and sub-human status, it means people giving up.

Here in Iraq, forty percent or so of the population is under 16 years of age. I've decided to stay on here on the peace team. Because I don't want to be afraid anymore. I need to hope and keep going. I'm learning that here. I'm still holding out for no war. I even say let's lift the sanctions and stop the choke hold on these people. When I left Montreal I said Canada should not participate in this war. Today I go much further. I think in times like these it's not about taking sides for one or the other, but to look out for one another, stand up for one another, and not be afraid.



Rachel Sutton

"The greatest purveyor of violence in the world today [is] my own government. ... [F]or the sake of the hundreds of thousands trembling under our violence, I cannot be silent." -- Martin Luther King, 1967

RECENT EVENTS:

Reaching out *cont'd*
Occupied Territories and Grassy Narrows (northern Ontario), the speakers reflected on the similarities between the histories of Canada and Israel, and compared it to what is now happening to Iraq. They ended with a challenge to participants to consider their own responsibilities in all three situations.

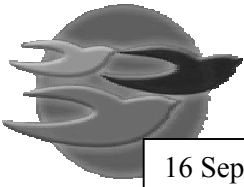
FOCUS: Struggle in Aceh *cont'd*

In December 2002, a peace deal was negotiated and violence decreased dramatically. However, Acehnese civil society groups warned that the peace process was inherently flawed. It recognized only the armed forces and GAM as actors in the conflict, failed to offer justice to the Acehnese people, and maintained conditions most profitable to the powerful.

In May 2003, the Indonesian government declared that GAM was not meeting the conditions of the peace process, and launched a military operation in Aceh designed to wipe out all GAM members. Military law has been in effect since then, foreign journalists are banned, local and international NGOs are severely restricted in the work they can do, local NGO members are often accused of being GAM supporters, and the number of internally displaced people has skyrocketed. The Acehnese fear a return to the terror they experienced under Suharto.

Peace Brigades International (PBI) is an international NGO working with local NGOs in Aceh to make space for peace. The Indonesia project started in 1999 in East Timor, and now has one team in Jakarta and two teams in Aceh. The peace teams provide protective accompaniment to local NGOs striving for peace and justice in the region, such as groups investigating and documenting human rights abuses. The presence of international volunteers, backed up by political and grassroots support networks, is intended to deter violence by increasing the political cost to would-be perpetrators.

At this time, PBI's presence in Aceh is precarious, as is the presence of all international NGOs. Most accompaniment work has stopped as both peace team volunteers and local activists are forbidden to leave the major towns they are based in. PBI has been calling on its worldwide support network to pressure the Indonesian government to not extend the period of martial law but rather return to the peace process, and to let PBI remain in the province.



16 September
5:30 to 6:30 pm
Reception: Launch of NP Sri Lanka project with team member Angela Pinchero
Ottawa City Hall

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npc calendar

This is only a partial calendar; to keep updated, join our listserv by sending a blank email to npc_announce-subscribe@yahoo.com or watch the Events section of our website.

1 October, 6:00 to 10:00 pm
Multi-media Event:
"Dispelling the Shadow: Understanding Just War and its Alternatives"
Bronson Centre, 211 Bronson Ave., Ottawa

23 October, 7:00 pm
Discussion Circle:
Peace Teams in Indigenous Struggles
location TBC

1 November, 7:00 pm
Songs for justice and peace: concert featuring history of music in the peace movement
Ste. Famille Church, Ottawa

11 November
Work a Day for Peace!
Calling on waged people to donate the wage of one day to Nonviolent Peaceforce; calling on unwaged people to volunteer one day's work to Nonviolent Peaceforce Canada. Stay tuned for more details!

Nonviolent Peaceforce also offers nonviolence training. Keep an eye on our website for sessions open to the public.

PARTICIPATE!

We need you! There are many ways you can support Nonviolent Peaceforce Canada:

In the Ottawa/Ontario area, join a Working Group or volunteer. Please consider joining one of our working groups – Outreach and Communications Committee, Training and Recruiting Committee, and Fundraising Committee. They are open to everyone who supports our mandate. We are also always looking for help with translation and organizing public events. If you are interested in occasionally helping out, please email us and ask us to put you on our volunteer list.

Anywhere in Canada, join the Emergency Response Network (see above), join Nonviolent Peaceforce Canada, form a local group, donate, organise an information evening on the work of Nonviolent Peaceforce or another peace team, invite your organisation to endorse Nonviolent Peaceforce Canada or to become a member of Nonviolent Peaceforce.

For more information about how you can get involved, or for more details about the work of Nonviolent Peaceforce Canada, please visit www.npcanada.org or contact us!

Nonviolent Peaceforce Canada is largely sustained by volunteers who give their time, energy and commitment to realize a shared vision of a more peaceful and just world. Their determination and hard-work gives hope that another world is indeed possible!

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