



A WEEKLY COMMENTARY

ON TARGET



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The price of Freedom is eternal vigilance –

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THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK:

"The Gulf War is a dramatic manifestation of the materialistic view that some type of ideal world – the New World Order – can be created by modern technology and naked force. This is a major fallacy which flies in the face of spiritual realities. We can predict with complete certainty that the world is entering a new and more revolutionary period.

Australia is a major outpost of British culture, even though somewhat diluted by the multicultural virus, and, if it can preserve itself by its own efforts, could play a major role in the regeneration of the Anglo-Saxon peoples everywhere. But the deeper international currents have developed such a momentum that unless Australia can effectively defend itself against the internationalist tide, it is now living on borrowed time..."

– Eric D. Butler, 1991

"Or else, how can one enter a strong man's house and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man and then he will spoil his house." – Matthew 12.27

Bishop Riah, Anglican Bishop of Jerusalem, on the Current Crisis in the Middle East

Dear Friends,

For the past forty years we have been largely alone on this desert fighting a predator that not only has robbed us of all but a small piece of our historic homeland, but threatens the traditions and holy sites of Christianity.

We are tired, weary, sick, and wounded. We need your help. We have seen and we have been the recipients of the generosity of our American and British friends. We cherish the support of everyone throughout the world who stands with us in solidarity. Daily, I hear from many of them who express outrage at the arrogant and aggressive positions of President Bush, Secretary Rice, Senator Clinton, and Prime Minister Blair. I am saddened to realize just how much the deserved prestige of the United States and Britain has declined as a result of politicians who seem to devalue human life and suffering.

Zionist-'Christians': And, I am disturbed that the Zionist Christian community is damaging America's image as never before.

Little more than a week ago, we were focused on the plight of the Palestinian people. In Gaza, four

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and five generations have been victims of Israeli racism, hate crimes, terror, violence, and murder. Garbage and sewage have created a likely outbreak of cholera as Israeli strategies create the collapse of infrastructures. There is no milk. Drinking water, food, and medicine are in serious short supply. Innocents are being killed and dying from lack of available emergency care. Children are paying the ultimate price. Even for those whose lives are spared, many of them are traumatized and will not grow to live useful lives.

Commerce between the West Bank and Gaza has been halted and humanitarian aid barely trickles into some of the neediest in the world.

Strategy of ethnic cleansing: Movement of residents of the West Bank is difficult or impossible as "security measures" are heightened to break the backs of the Palestinian people and cut them off from their place of work, schools, hospitals, and families. It is family and community that has sustained these people during these hopeless times. For some, it is all that they had, but that too has been taken away with the continued building of the wall and check points. The strategy of ethnic cleansing on the part of the State of Israel continues.

This week, war broke out on the Lebanon-Israeli border (near Banyas where Jesus gave St. Peter the keys to heaven and earth). The Israeli government's disproportionate reaction to provocation was consistent with their opportunistic responses in which they destroy their perceived enemy.

Not a society with a conscience: In her recent article "The Insane Brutality of the State of Israel", American Kathleen Christison, a former CIA analyst, says: "The state lashes out in a crazed effort, lacking any sense of proportion, to reassure itself of its strength." She continues, "A society that can brush off as unimportant an army officer's brutal murder of a thirteen-year-old girl on the claim that she threatened soldiers at a military post (one of nearly seven hundred Palestinian children murdered by Israelis since the Intifada began) is not a society with a conscience."

The deadly potential: The "situation" as it has come to be called, has deteriorated into a war without boundaries or limitations. It is a war with deadly potential beyond the imaginations of most civilized people.

As I write to you, I am preparing to leave with other bishops for Nablus with medical and other emergency supplies for five hundred families, and a pledge for one thousand families more.

On Saturday we will attempt to enter Gaza with medical aid for doctors and nurses in our hospital there who struggle to serve the injured, the sick, and the dying. My plan is that I will be able to go to Lebanon next week – where we are presently without a resident priest – to bury the dead, and comfort the victims of war. Perhaps as others have, you will ask, "What can I do?" Certainly we encourage and appreciate your prayers.

That is important, but it is not enough. If you find that you can no longer look away, take up your cross. It takes courage as we were promised.

Write every elected official you know. Write to your news media. Speak to your congregation, friends, and colleagues about injustice and the threat of global war. If Syria, Iran, the United States, Great Britain, China and others enter into this war – the consequence is incalculable.

Participate in rallies and forums. Find ways that you and your churches can participate in humanitarian relief efforts for the region. Contact us and let us know if you stand with us. I urge you not to be like a disciple watching from afar.

2 Corinthians 6.11: "We have spoken frankly to you Corinthians, our heart is wide open to you. There is no restriction in our affections, but only in yours. In return – I speak as to children – open wide your hearts also."

In, with, and through Christ, – The Rt. Rev. Riah H. Abu El-Assal, Anglican Bishop in Jerusalem.

AND NOW ANOTHER MASSACRE:

Dear Friends,

1 August 2006

When I wrote to you last Friday, I could not have imagined that a second Qana Massacre in a decade would be carried out by the State of Israel on Sunday when they dropped two bombs on a house, crushing at least fifty-six people, including thirty-four children and twelve women. They suffocated under dirt and debris, virtually buried alive in the makeshift bomb shelter where they had had little water and food and no toilet.

"In 1996, one of the deadliest single events of the whole Arab-Israeli conflict took place there-the shelling of a United Nations base where hundreds of people were sheltering. More than one hundred were killed and another one hundred injured, cut down by Israeli antipersonnel shells that explode in the air sending a lethal shower of shrapnel to the ground," reported Martin Asser of *BBC News*, Beirut.

Aid 'cancelled' by Israeli government: With expressions of "deep sorrow" from Prime Minister Olmert, this tragedy of epic proportions is not enough to stop Israel's attacks on the people of Lebanon. Today, the Israeli Security Cabinet approved a widening of the ground offensive in the South.

Yesterday, Israel violated their agreement to stop the air offensive over Lebanon for forty-eight hours which would have allowed humanitarian aid to reach victims and residents stranded in the South could have traveled more safely to the North. Olmert announced today that the end to the war is not in sight. While tens of thousands are without food and medical supplies, the U.N. reports that their convoys have been turned away and cancelled by the Israeli government.

The short journey from Tyre to Qana is delayed for hours because the roads have been destroyed. Aid trickles in.

"Amid the despair and the grim task of removing the victims, there is deep anger at what many here regard is the callous indifference of the West," reports Ilene Prusher of the *Christian Science Monitor* in Lebanon.

Hollow words of 'condolences': The offering of condolences from President Bush, Secretary Rice, and Prime Minister Blair to the Lebanese people for Israel's murder of innocent children seems hollow, with no condemnation of Israel's repeated and flagrant disregard for human life and the values of civilized people everywhere.

I have read the letter sent to The President of the United States signed by my brother in Christ The Most Rev. Frank T. Griswald, Presiding Bishop of The Episcopal Church of America, and fourteen other Christian leaders in which they say, "This violent conflict has created a grave humanitarian crisis, and no hoped-for benefit should outweigh the cause of saving innocent lives." The letter continues with a plea, "Your presidential leadership and the full weight of the United States, acting in concert with the international community, must be applied now to achieve an immediate cease-fire and to launch an intensive diplomatic initiative for the cessation of hostilities." I regret that the President has ignored this call.

Last week in Lebanon, Israel bombed and destroyed a U.N. observation post on the border in Southern Lebanon killing four peacekeeping observers. U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan expressed indignation that Israel appeared to have struck the well known, established, and clearly identified site deliberately. The bomb made a direct hit on the building and the attack continued even throughout the rescues and recovery mission. The Security Council's statement excludes condemnation of Israel at the insistence of The United States.

Homeless numbers will reach one million: The war rages on into the third week. If fighting does not cease, the homeless count in Lebanon will soon reach one million people. Families and communities

continue to be ripped apart. And, the offensive against the Palestinians in Gaza has been relentless. This week when Jan Egeland, the U.N.'s Under Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs visited Jerusalem, he focused much of his attention on "the tragedy happening in the Gaza Strip".

He does not understand what benefit Israel will gain from punishing 1.4 million people by cutting them off from their sources of electricity and jobs, from running water in their houses and from fresh food. "What is the message that the residents of Gaza receive from the sight of mountains of tomatoes tossed out on the side of the road at the border crossings into Israel? That they should be more productive and support peace?"

Saturday, after waiting two and one half hours at the checkpoint, our delegation visited Gaza on a mission of mercy, taking medical and relief supplies to hospitals and shelters. Israel Defense Forces tanks had pushed back before dawn, just one day after ending an unusually deadly incursion that killed thirty Palestinians over three days. According to an Associated Press count, in the past one month period, Israeli troops have killed 159 Palestinians since they started their relentless attacks on the Gaza Strip in response to the capture of soldier Cpl. Gilad Shalit. I have seen the Caterpillar bulldozers and the orchards of oranges uprooted by them. I saw an apartment building where forty families were given forty minutes to leave before it was demolished into a pile of rubble. I have heard the concern of the Director of our Al-Ahli Arab Hospital regarding medical supplies, staffing shortages, and lack of fuel to run the generators essential to critical care. And, I have seen children playing near mountains of garbage which are the breeding ground to rats and the threat of cholera, a disease that I watched devastate India when I lived there.

We must find an end to this madness: We must not become complacent or be desensitized by the images of this human tragedy. Continue to appeal to your government representatives to demand an immediate ceasefire.

It is time that The United Nations and the world community see to it that Israel complies with U.N. Resolutions 242, 338 and 194, so that compliance with Resolution 1559 can be enforced. We must find an end to this madness. Killing and the destruction of the environment is not a war against nations, but it is a war against God.

In, with, and through Christ, The Rt. Rev. Riah H. Abu El-Assal, Bishop, The Diocese of Jerusalem, Palestine, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria.

HOWARD PHONES OLMERT TO OFFER HIS 'PERSONAL SUPPORT': According to the *Australian Jewish News* "Howard Calls on Olmert", 4/8/06, John Howard phoned Ehud Olmert of Israel offering his personal support and in turn Mr. Olmert expressed his 'deep appreciation for Australia's support in the war against Hezbollah'. The article concludes: "Howard and Olmert met at the 2000 Sydney Olympics, when Olmert was still mayor of Jerusalem.

Maybe John Howard would now like to talk to the present Anglican Bishop of Jerusalem! The good Christian Bishop appealed to us in his first letter. Contact us and let us know if you stand with us.

But not to be outdone, on the same page of the *AJN* it is reported Labor's Kevin Rudd ("Pressure Iran, Syria – Rudd") has called for international pressure to be applied against 'reckless' Iran and Syria in order to end their assistance to Hezbollah and Hamas.

When can we expect to hear that these 'great world statesmen' on behalf of the children of Palestine and Lebanon have called for 'international pressure' to be applied against 'reckless Israel and the United States'?