

update

UNRWA/Jesuit Refugee Service

Bulldozing Gaza

25,000 Palestinians have been made homeless by Israeli house demolitions in the past four years. Peter Hansen, Commissioner-General of the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), has written: "very few of the demolitions target the families of suicide bombers or of those wanted by Israel. Instead the victims are simply people living in the wrong place at the wrong time ... tanks and bulldozers come in the night. Instructions to evacuate are shouted through loudhailers and families grab what meagre possessions they can before their world comes crashing down. This is repeated over and over again, night after night, with an appalling regularity ... Schools in Gaza are facing a tidal wave of traumatised children, many of whom have been roused from their beds by the bulldozers or lie awake, fearful that their home will be next. UNRWA now provides trauma counselling in each of its 169 schools for these innocent victims of the intifada."

Israel's primary weapon of house destruction is the 64-ton D9 armoured bulldozer, provided to Israel under the US Foreign Military Sales Program by the heavy equipment company, Caterpillar Inc. Human Rights Watch argues that Caterpillar is complicit in human rights abuses. The Californian-based Jewish Voice for Peace has filed a shareholder resolution urging Caterpillar to respect its own corporate code of conduct and suspend sales of the D9.

Over 2.2 million people in the West Bank and Gaza are now surviving on less than \$2 per person per day. UNRWA provides for the basic needs of half the population and runs the largest humanitarian operation in the Middle East. In November 2004 UNRWA launched a \$185.8 funding appeal. \$67.7m is sought for emergency reconstruction. UNRWA has struggled to keep pace with the rate of demolitions and has so far rehoused just over 1,100 families.

UNRWA's emergency appeal is at: www.un.org/unrwa. Human Rights

Watch reports on demolitions at: www.hrw.org/reports/2004/rafah1004. For information about the Stop Caterpillar campaign see: www.jewishvoiceforpeace.org and www.catdestroyshomes.org

Scourge of child soldiering continues

The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers has published a major report on child recruitment legislation, policy and practice in 196 countries. It shows that the use of soldiers under 18 years of age by official government armed forces has declined since 2001. The end of conflict in Afghanistan, Angola and Sierra Leone resulted in the demobilisation of more than 40,000 children. However, up to 30,000 more were drawn into new conflicts in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia. In Colombia opposition groups and army-backed militia have increased child recruitment. The Tamil Tigers have taken advantage of the ceasefire in Sri Lanka to refill their ranks with abducted children. In northern Uganda seizure of children by the Lord's Resistance Army has spread panic.

Some governments which, under pressure, have stopped directly recruiting children continue to covertly back paramilitary groups and militias which do so. At least six governments which claim to have ended child recruitment continue to deploy children to gather intelligence, directly exposing them to the hazards of war or to violent reprisals. Many states ruthlessly target children suspected of membership of armed opposition groups. They have reportedly been tortured to extract information in Israel, sentenced to death in the Democratic Republic of Congo, killed during 'clean up' operations in Burundi, Indonesia and Nepal and 'disappeared' by Russian forces in Chechnya.

The Optional Protocol to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, setting 18 as the minimum age for direct participation in hostilities and compulsory recruitment by govern-

ments, has now been signed by 116 states. However, at least 60 governments – including Australia, Austria, Germany, the Netherlands, the UK and the USA – continue to legally recruit children aged 16 and 17. Governments which use children for front-line combat include Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Myanmar, Sudan and the USA.

The Coalition calls for sustained long-term investment in disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) programmes. More must be done to ensure ex-girl soldiers are included in DDR schemes – particularly young women stigmatised by their home communities as a result of exposure to sexual violence. The UN Security Council must not only 'name and shame' those who use child soldiers but take determined action – ICC prosecutions, suspension of military assistance, travel restrictions and asset freezing.

In her preface, Graça Machel commends action taken in the decade since she was asked to produce a report for the UN Secretary-General on the impact of armed conflict on children. She notes, however, that it is not enough to get children out of conflict and back to their families and communities. Western governments and corporations have a moral responsibility to stop providing weapons to those who are known to recruit children.

Child Soldiers Global Report 2004 is online at: www.child-soldiers.org/resources/global-reports

Colombian refugees marginalised

The Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) has drawn attention to the plight of Colombian refugees in Ecuador and measures taken by the Venezuelan authorities to block entry to those fleeing intensifying violence in Colombia.

There has been a substantial increase in the flow of refugees



entering Ecuador. According to the Ecuadorian Immigration Police over 375,000 Colombians entered Ecuador between 2000 and 2003. Human rights organisations estimate that there may be an additional 250,000 undocumented Colombians living in Ecuador. Due to misinformation and fear of reprisals from armed groups, few apply for asylum. Of the 27,000 Colombians who have done so, only 28% have been recognised as refugees. Denied protection, Colombians in Ecuador's urban slums are forced to compete with locals for jobs and access to health, education, electricity and water services. They suffer discrimination and xenophobia just for being Colombian.

Their situation has been worsened by new regulations. Colombians wishing to enter Ecuador are now required to present a judicial document proving they do not have a criminal record. Those who apply for asylum must produce a validated identity document. JRS points out this is not only an unrealistic requirement for somebody fleeing for their life but is also a contravention of the international convention relating to the status of refugees and the 1984 Cartagena Declaration. While the Ecuadorian government demands that Ecuadorians be treated fairly and in line with international human rights law in the US and Europe, it denies these rights to Colombians in Ecuador.

The JRS report is available (in Spanish) at www.ildis.org.ec/migracion5.pdf

Resolution on mobile indigenous peoples ratified

Resolution 068 on Mobile Peoples and Conservation was ratified by the 3rd World Conservation Congress in Bangkok, November 2004.

The Resolution recognises for the first time that mobility has been a highly effective component of community strategies for conservation of wild and domestic biodiversity, promotion of environmental integ-

rity and sustainable use of natural resources. It also notes that policies of mobility restriction and sedentarisation deprive mobile indigenous peoples of cultural identity and access to, and capacity to manage, natural resources, and have frequently led to destitution and abject poverty.

Resolution 068 'notes' the Dana Declaration on Mobile Peoples and Conservation, the outcome of an Oxford-led initiative to increase collaboration between social and natural scientists, conservation practitioners and policy makers (www.danadeclaration.org). The Standing Committee of the Dana Declaration sponsored the participation at the Congress of mobile indigenous peoples' representatives from Jordan, Syria, Namibia, Tanzania and Iran.

A programme of support to the World Alliance of Mobile Indigenous Peoples (WAMIP) is now being developed to ensure that the new Resolution is translated into practice.

Draft of Resolution 068 is at www.iucn.org/congress/members/submitted_motions.htm For further details, contact Dr Dawn Chatty of the RSC at dawn.chatty@qeh.ox.ac.uk

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RSC International Summer School in Forced Migration 4-22 July 2005

This three-week residential course offers an intensive, interdisciplinary and participative approach to the study of forced migration. It aims to enable people working with refugees and other forced migrants to reflect critically on the forces and institutions that dominate the world of the displaced. Designed for experienced practitioners involved with assistance and policy making for forced migrants, and graduate researchers intending to specialise in the study of forced migration. Combines Oxford University's academic excellence with the Open University's

interactive method of study. Includes lectures and seminars by international experts, small-group work, case studies, exercises, simulations and individual study.

The course is held at Wadham College in the heart of Oxford. Course fees: £2,400 (incl. accommodation, breakfast and weekday lunches, tuition fees, course materials, social activities). Some sponsorship available.

Contact the International Summer School Administrator at the RSC (address p62). Tel: +44 (0)1865 270723 Email: summer.school@qeh.ox.ac.uk