

# PEACEWAYS



Issue # 206

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The Newsletter of the Central Kentucky Council for Peace and Justice  
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## WHERE YOUR **INCOME TAX** U.S. FEDERAL BUDGET 2008 FISCAL YEAR **MONEY REALLY GOES**

### Total Outlays (Federal Funds):

**\$2,387 billion**

**Military: 51%—\$1,228 billion**

**Non-Military: 49%—\$1,159 billion**

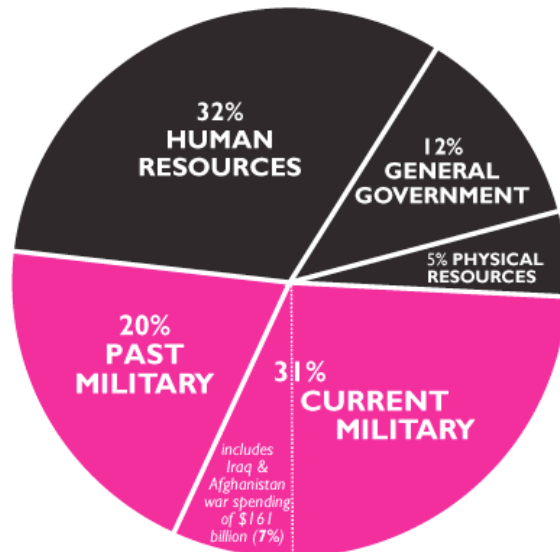
What you're looking at is the annual report from the War Resisters League on where your income tax money really goes.

"Current military" includes Dept. of Defense (\$585 billion), the military portion from other departments (\$122 billion), and an unbudgeted estimate of supplemental appropriations (\$20 billion). "Past military" represents veterans' benefits plus 80% of the interest on the debt.

These figures are from an analysis of detailed tables in the "Analytical Perspectives" book of the Budget of the United States Government, Fiscal Year 2008. The figures are federal funds, which do not include trust funds — such as Social Security — that are raised and spent separately from income taxes. What you pay (or don't pay) by April 17, 2007, goes to the federal funds portion of the budget. The government

practice of combining trust and federal funds began during the Vietnam War, thus making the human needs portion of the budget seem larger and the military portion smaller.

Analysts differ on how much of the debt stems from the military; other groups estimate 50% to 60%. The War Resisters League uses 80% because with the belief that if there had been no military spending most (if not all) of the national debt would have been eliminated.



### Current Military

**\$727 billion:**

- Military Personnel \$136 billion
- Operation & Maint. \$249 billion
- Procurement \$111 billion
- Research & Dev. \$70 billion
- Construction \$10 billion
- Family Housing \$4 billion
- DoD misc. \$6 billion
- Retired Pay \$52 billion
- DoE nuclear weapons \$17 billion
- NASA (50%) \$9 billion
- International Security \$10 billion
- Homeland Secur. (military) \$31 billion
- Exec. Office of President \$1 billion

(Continued on page 2)

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Printed on recycled paper.

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- *The myth of Muslim terrorism.*
- *Great films presented by UK Gender & Women's Studies Program.*

## The Central Kentucky Council for Peace & Justice

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Submissions of articles or items in the Calendar are welcome. Contact the editor, Michael Fogler, at (859) 299-3074 or michael@lexingtonguitartrio.com. Deadline: the first Wednesday of the month.

The views expressed in *Peaceways* are those of the authors, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Central Kentucky Council for Peace and Justice.

- other military (non-DoD) \$1 billion
- *plus ...* anticipated supplemental war spending requests of \$20 billion in addition to \$141 billion for Iraq and Afghanistan wars already incorporated into figures above.

### Past Military, \$461 billion:

- Veterans' Benefits \$85 billion
- Interest on national debt \$376 billion (80% est. to be created by military spending)

### Human Resources

#### \$748 billion:

- Health/Human Services
- Soc. Sec. Administration
- Education Dept.
- Food/Nutrition programs
- Housing & Urban Dev.
- Labor Dept.
- other human resources.

### General Government \$295 billion:

- Interest on debt (20%)
- Treasury
- Government personnel
- Justice Dept.
- State Dept.
- Homeland Security (17%)
- International Affairs
- NASA (50%)
- Judicial
- Legislative
- other general govt.

### Physical Resources

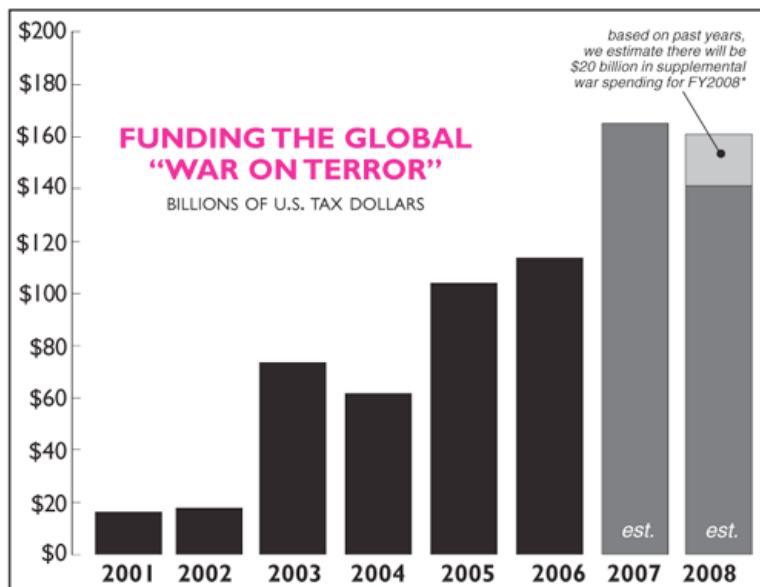
#### \$116 billion:

- Agriculture
- Interior
- Transportation
- Homeland Security (17%)
- HUD
- Commerce
- Energy (non-military)

- Environmental Protection
- Nat. Science Foundation
- Army Corps Engineers
- Fed. Comm. Commission
- other physical resources

For more about refusing to pay for war, contact the National War Tax Resistance Coordinating Committee, PO Box 150553, Brooklyn, NY 11215, (800) 269-7464; www.nwtrcc.org. Support the Peace Tax Fund bill to allow 100% of your taxes to fund nonmilitary programs: Contact: (888) 732-2382; www.peacetaxfund.org.

**War Resisters League:** 339 Lafayette Street; New York, NY 10012; (212) 228-0450; wrl@warresisters.org



"I knew I could never again raise my voice against the violence of the oppressed in the ghettos without having first spoken clearly to the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today—my own government."

— Dr Martin Luther King Jr.

# UN research refutes “clash of civilizations”

by Bill Miller

Is there a conflict between the Koran, the Torah, and the Bible? Not according to a recent UN report and former Secretary General (SG) of the UN, Kofi Annan, who believes that religion is not the main culprit in promoting hatred and mistrust between the Western and Muslim worlds.

Shortly before retiring after a 10-year stint as SG, Annan commented on how it is not “faith... but the faithful” that interpret the sacred books and react to one another, often with devastating consequences that create many of the problems.

One of the conventional beliefs underlying the notion that there is a “conflict of civilizations” (often embodied in an intrinsic, unyielding religious conflict) between the West and the Muslim societies is based upon theories promulgated by authors such as Samuel P. Huntington in his *The Clash of Civilizations: Remaking of World Order*.

A recent UN report issued by the **Alliance of Civilizations Project**, which had 20 outstanding members such as Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Frederico Mayor (former UNESCO Director-General), squarely refutes this notion.

The Alliance of Civilizations Report suggests that many of the problems confronting the Western and Muslim societies can be localized in several areas. For example: Globalization can create challenges to traditional lifestyles. The introduction of something culturally diverse (such as movies, cartoons or paintings) may be perceived as decadent or damaging to a more traditional, religious society. A person living in abject poverty may feel tremendous resentment against others and be resigned to a very low standard of living and quality of life. Consistent discrimination by one group against another can exacerbate misunderstandings and hatred.

A large number of suicide bombers who survived indicated that the main reason they participated was due to a feeling of helplessness and a belief that

there was no other way to have their grievances addressed. Desperation trumped religious fervor.

Shamil Idriss, Acting Director of the Alliance of Civilizations Project, stresses that there are several Western policies affecting Muslim countries that increase the tension. Two of the most prominent policies are the constantly festering Israeli-Palestinian imbroglio and the military operations in Muslim countries, especially in Iraq.

On the Muslim side of the coin, there are negative influences such as a bitter debate between progressive and regressive leaders on a myriad of social, political and religious issues, especially the interpretation of the Koran and Islamic law. Many of these key players have thwarted reforms and adopted repressive political, cultural and legal policies against their opponents and the general public.

Another report issued by the UN Development Program (UNDP) vividly described how the social and economic progress in the Arab world is considerably slower than in the West, and is actually stagnant or atrophying in some areas.

The Alliance of Civilizations Report proffered several common-sensical and specific recommendations to overcome this challenge to social and economic progress and promote a dialogue between Western and Muslim countries. Note the following:

✓ A re-affirmation by the international community would seek to find a permanent and equitable solution to the Middle East crisis and the development of a White Paper that objectively analyzes the Israeli-Palestinian situation. By providing a narrative of each group’s position, reviewing the successes and failures of other peace initiatives and delineating specific conditions that must be adhered to by all parties, it is hoped that the two sides will develop their own strategy for a peaceful coexistence with two separate states living in peace.

✓ Establish an international conference that brings together all parties that have a legitimate role to play in

the peace process and developed a Forum for the Alliance of Civilizations. Both would be under the auspices of the UN. In particular, the Forum would provide a formal mechanism that would encourage representatives of governments, the private sector, international organizations and civil society to engage in partnerships and to commit them to action in overcoming this gulf between the two societies.

✓ Training would be implemented in intercultural understanding for journalists to better understand the religious and political forces at play. Also, journalists, as well as religious and political leaders, are encouraged to write objective articles that would provide background information, an analysis of complex issues and develop a bridge for better understanding.

This will be a major challenge since many journalists often parachute in and write an article on something they know little or nothing about, look for the most sensational and negative angle on a story, and tend to report a story as “us versus them.”

Other recommendations include promoting youth exchange programs and reviewing educational materials to guarantee accuracy, fairness and balance when discussing other cultures, especially religion (not to be confused with censorship).

Some UN reports are rather lengthy and jargon-laden. This is not one of them. The recommendations are practical, comprehensible and possibly achievable. The Alliance of Civilizations Report, which is a very important blueprint for understanding the basic causes of much of the conflict between the West and Muslim societies, should be acted upon immediately by the UN and should be a must-read for anyone interested in isolating and remedying the basic causes of conflict. More information can be found at [www.UNAoC.org](http://www.UNAoC.org).

Winston Churchill once said, “A fanatic is one who can’t change his mind and won’t change the subject.” Perhaps

(continued on page 6)

# Film delves into lives of suicide bombers

by Hala Shah

“Paradise Now” — a film by Palestinian director Hany Abu-Assad, and shot on location in the West Bank and Israel — aims to do what many viewers will certainly see as unimaginable: delve into the motivations and psyches of suicide bombers, attempting to humanize these young men and women who make the decision to kill and be killed.

In setting out to make a film that would explore the motivations of suicide bombers, Abu-Assad made a surprising discovery, he said during a recent round-table discussion with reporters: that anybody, in his eyes, could become a suicide bomber when placed in the same situation as the Palestinians.

“I was first of all surprised during the research that I found a lot of stories that are human stories. That I couldn’t believe,” he said in his rough English. “How stupid I was to think that they are not human beings, or they are different than me and you.”

Following the lives of Khaled and Said, two young Palestinian mechanics who have been friends since childhood, “Paradise Now” focuses on what is to be their final days alive as they prepare for their long-anticipated suicide mission in Tel Aviv. The film also explores the role of Suha, a young woman educated in the West — and Said’s love interest — in causing the friends to reconsider their plans.

The common belief is that suicide bombers are motivated purely by religious zeal, but Abu-Assad said he realized how different the suicide bombers are from one another and how complex their range of motivations is. His research included studying interrogation transcripts of failed suicide bombers and official Israeli reports, as well as talking to suicide bombers’ friends and families. In doing so, Abu-Assad, a native Palestinian now living in the Netherlands, said he found that there is no typical suicide bomber; each has his or her own motivation, religious or not.

For Khaled and Said, signing on to a

suicide mission is an automatic decision, something they’d each thought about for years. But they each have a different motivation. Khaled believes that attacking Israel would be a step toward liberating Palestine and releasing Palestinians like himself from crippling oppression. “If we can’t live as equals, at least we can die as equals. In this life we’re all dead,” Khaled screams in a desperate debate with Suha.

Said’s motivation is more personal: his father was executed by Palestinians for being an Israeli “collaborator.” Israel does not just make his daily life miserable, as it does for Khaled; it killed his father, and with it his life. With the burden of his father’s transgression on his shoulders, retaliation is the only answer, in his eyes. But if signing up for a suicide mission was easy for them, going through with it is another matter, and they spend the bulk of the movie debating whether to do it, each reversing his decision at least once. At one point, Said is about to board a bus when he sees a little Israeli girl and reconsiders. The audience remains in suspense until the very end of the film, unsure whether either of them will take that final step.

For Abu-Assad personally, retaliation in the form of suicide bombing does not solve the problem. The little Israeli girl on that bus never loses her status as a human. And, he said, civilian bus riders, who often are themselves poor, should not be the target of suicide missions, since they have no power to change Israeli policy. “You [the would-be bombers] are the poor people from the Palestinian society killing yourself for the poor people in the other society. You are not killing the people who are responsible for the policies,” Abu-Assad said.

Shot in Nablus, Nazareth, and Tel Aviv in Arabic with English subtitles, the film’s crew and cast members lived as vulnerably as the characters of the film. “In general the place was under siege, like people can’t go in and out without permission of the Israeli army,” Abu-Assad said. “And this made the place a bit unhealthy. People became

paranoid. I became paranoid after some time.”

Filming amidst rivaling factions — one representing Palestinian Copts and the other calling itself the Freedom Fighters — the cast and crew wondered how these two groups would react to the film. The Freedom Fighters, which Abu-Assad said, “want to fight for democracy and peace,” provided the cast and crew with protection and minor suggestions on how to accurately portray them. But the fear escalated when the Palestinian Copts kidnapped a crew member, whom they later released. Some crew members abandoned the shoot.

The Freedom Fighters were present during the filming of Khaled’s and Said’s martyr videos. Abu-Assad was worried they would interfere, fearing the videos were “not in their taste.” However, their only interference was a suggestion on how actor Ali Sulaiman (Khaled) should hold his gun, which the Freedom Fighters actually loaned to the cast for that scene. Rather than rattling his nerves, the event revealed two signs, he said: “The first sign was that the content of the film is very close to reality. And secondly, I can be sure that every detail was done in an authentic way.”

In these scenes of filming the martyr videos, Khaled struggles to recite his message as the camera repeatedly fails and the other men involved in the attack casually snack on some pita sandwiches. The lightness of the surrounding men’s demeanor and behavior is incongruous to the intensity of the moment. Abu-Assad explained that downplaying the situation is “what they do in real (life).” By turning the moment into the simple act of signing a contract, “they make it as it’s usual, it’s not a big deal. They make from it, ok, this is a soldier who wants to commit an action he believes in,” said Abu-Assad.

Abu-Assad’s primary goal is creating a story, since a people’s survival depends on the preservation of its story, he said.

**(Continued on next page)**

# Improving the world through forgiveness

by Jane Lampman

The world of investment banker Azim Khamisa shattered into pieces in 1995. His only son, a student at San Diego State Univ., was shot and killed by a 14-year-old gang member as Tariq was delivering pizzas in a part-time job.

"When I learned of Tariq's death, it felt like a nuclear bomb detonated inside of me," Mr. Khamisa says. "The pain was so excruciating that I had an out-of-body experience. I believe I went into the loving arms of God. Held there for a long time until the explosion subsided, I returned...with the vision that there were victims at both ends of the gun."

That vision enabled Khamisa to make a crucial choice: forgiveness.

Choosing forgiveness has not only transformed his life and that of the murderer and his family, it also led him to create an antiviolence program that has measurably altered attitudes among youths in San Diego and other cities.

This power of forgiveness to reshape the lives of individuals and communities is behind a new national Campaign for Love and Forgiveness initiated by the Michigan-based Fetzer Institute, a private nonprofit research and education foundation. Recently the institute launched a collaboration with public television and community organizations across the United States.

"The No. 1 goal is to have love and forgiveness become central in people's lives," says program officer Mickey Olivanti. Research on forgiveness has

demonstrated not only that it liberates lives and relationships but that it also can markedly improve health and well-being. The campaign includes three PBS documentaries (which include Khamisa's story), a letter-writing initiative, online discussions, and local community projects and special events in several cities with the theme: "Change Everything. Love and Forgive."

In the letter-writing project, individuals are encouraged to compose an intimate, handwritten letter to mend a relationship, express deep appreciation for a friend or family member, renew a lapsed tie, offer or seek forgiveness. Tips for writing a meaningful missive are posted on the website ([www.loveandforgive.org](http://www.loveandforgive.org)).

The campaign was launched on PBS stations in December with the first documentary, "The Mystery of Love." One segment depicts the remarkable bond of friendship that has developed since 1995 between Khamisa and Ples Felix, the grandfather and guardian of Khamisa's teenage killer. (Mr. Felix is African-American; Khamisa was born in India, raised in Africa, and emigrated to escape the horrors of Idi Amin's Ugandan rule.) After his son's death, Khamisa created the Tariq Khamisa Foundation to develop and hold antiviolence forums in elementary and middle schools throughout San Diego.

Seeking to inspire youths to choose nonviolent alternatives for solving their differences, he invited Felix to join him in the work ([www.tkf.org](http://www.tkf.org)). Kids in a school or gang environment are often tempted or urged by peers (or even parents) to retaliate if they are attacked.

When the two men tell schoolchildren their story, they ask "Would he have become my friend if I'd wanted revenge? Revenge is never the right response. Conflict will never go away, but from conflict, brotherhood and unity are possible."

The school kids hear from former gang members and also learn about Tony Hicks, Tariq's killer, who is in prison for 25 years to life and expresses remorse for his bad choices. Now 26, Tony communicates with Khamisa as

**(Continued on page 6)**

## Film on suicide bombers (continued)

"The Jews survived because they kept their story. Two thousand years they kept their story," he said. In that story, Jews were the underdogs, but now their role in the narrative has flipped, he said. "They came back to tell their story, but from the oppression point of view. And with this they are losing their story."

Abu-Assad believes that Palestinians now have the opportunity and ability to harness the power of their own stories. The roles are reversed, "the underdog who refused to be a slave has become us now. We lost the land, we lost the military struggle, we lost everything," Abu-Assad said. And with nothing left, the Palestinians are forced to assert themselves through stories "We are not giving up. In contradiction, we are becoming more aware of ourselves and aware of our story... We become part of history, of this story of humanity," said Abu-Assad.

In capturing the story of the Palestinians, Abu-Assad refers to Da Vinci's painting "The Last Supper." With film as his medium, the scene is literally recreated in "Paradise Now" with the two suicide bombers and 11 others involved in the mission lined up at the table for the bombers' final feast. It

was Abu-Assad's way of connecting suicide bombing to its roots in religious tradition. "To kill yourself with your enemy is a mythical story in the Bible," he said.

But while suicide bombing may trace its roots to religion, Abu-Assad said, today there is more to it than just the religious perspective. "I am retelling the story, but not anymore from the God point of view," he said. "I am repainting the painting, but from the now point of view."

That point of view is nothing if not upsetting. The film sets it up so that viewers spend much of its 90 minutes hoping that the young men find a way not to take that final step to supposed Paradise. But there's little redemption here, little sense that the violence of this bloody conflict is likely to abate anytime soon. To many, the mere act of humanizing suicide bombers is immoral, a form of justification. Abu-Assad, though, manages to pull it off by showing a point of view rarely aired in the West and depicting the situation as what it is: a tragedy.

*Hala Shab is an intern at Beliefnet and a student at New York University. This article appeared originally on [www.beliefnet.com](http://www.beliefnet.com), the leading website for faith, spirituality, inspiration & more.*

# The automobile is *not* the answer!

by James Howard Kunstler

It's actually kind of funny to hear Americans complain these days about the cost of gasoline and how it is affecting their lives. What did they expect after setting up an easy-motoring utopia of suburban metropolises that make incessant driving inevitable? And how did they fail to register the basic facts of the world oil situation, which have been available to us for decades? Those facts are as follows: oil fields follow a simple pattern of production and depletion along a bell curve. Universally, when an oil field gets close to half the amount of oil it originally possessed, production peaks and then declines. This is true for all oil fields in the aggregate, for a nation and even the world.

In the United States, oil production peaked in 1970 and has been declining ever since. We extracted about 10 million barrels a day in 1970 and just under five million barrels a day now. Because our consumption has only increased steadily, we've made up for the shortfall by importing oil from other countries.

There is now powerful evidence in the production figures worldwide that we have reached global peak oil production. The collective nations of the earth will not make up for this by importing oil from other planets.

Contrary to a faction of wishful thinkers, the earth does not have a creamy nougat center of oil. Oil fields do not replenish themselves. Also contrary to the prevailing wish, no combination of alternative fuels will allow us to keep running the interstate highway system, Wal-Mart, Walt Dis-

ney World and the other furnishings of what Dick Cheney called our "non-negotiable way of life."

People who refuse to negotiate with the circumstances that the world throws at them automatically get assigned a new negotiating partner: reality. Reality then requires you to change your behavior, whether you like it or not. With global oil production peaking, we are now subject to rising oil prices, as markets are forced to contend with allocating a resource heading in the direction of scarcity. Oil prices are only likely to go higher — though there is apt to be a ratcheting effect as high oil prices depress economic activity and thus dampen demand for oil which will depress prices leading to increased consumption which will then kick prices back up, and so on. The prospects for more geopolitical friction over oil also self-evidently increase, as industrial nations desperately maneuver for supplies.

Mainly though, the danger lies in the resulting instability of the super-sized complex systems that we depend on daily.

Trouble with oil will spell huge problems with how we grow our food, how we conduct trade, how we move around and how we inhabit the terrain of North America. These systems are going to wobble and eventually fail unless some effort is made to reform their scale and their procedures. For example, Wal-Mart's profit margins will disappear as higher diesel fuel prices hit its "warehouse-on-wheels."

Now, in the face of this, you'd think that the national leadership in politics, business and science would prepare the public for substantial necessary changes in the way we do things. What we are seeing across the board, though, is merely a desperate wish to keep the cars running by any conceivable means, at all costs. That is the sole target of our focus. Our leaders don't get it. We citizens have to make other arrangements.

But we must. We have to live differently. We're going to have to re-inhabit and reconstruct our civic places — es-

pecially our small towns — and we're going to have to use the remaining rural places for growing food locally, wherever possible. Our big cities will probably contract, while they densify at their centers and along their waterfronts. Our suburbs will enter a shocking state of economic and practical failure.

We cannot imagine this scenario because we have invested so much of our collective wealth the past 50 years in the infrastructure for a way of life that simply has no future.

We'd better start paying attention to the signals that reality is sending or we will be living in a very violent, impoverished and demoralized nation. And we have to begin somewhere, which is why I suggest we start by rebuilding the national passenger railroad system. It would have a significant impact on our oil use. It would put a lot of people to work on something meaningful and beneficial to all ranks of American society. The equipment is lying out there rusting in the rain, waiting to be fixed. We don't have to re-invent anything to do it.

The fact that we are not even talking about such solutions shows how unserious we are. ■

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## Forgiveness (continued)

well as his granddad.

Community groups in 10 cities so far are using the first documentary to encourage local public conversations. In Richmond, Va., Hope in the Cities, a group working on racial reconciliation, is partnering with the Interfaith Council for four weeks of dialogue on brotherly love in education. They'll also join with another local group, First Things First, for a series of all-male dialogues aimed at getting men to look at the power of love as they engage in the business world.

In Bloomington, Ind., Namaste-Sacred Arts is sponsoring a series of dialogues both in the community and among women inmates in the county jail. "The concept is to promote love in the community as a real force for change," says coordinator Lisa-Marie Napol. ■

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## UN Research (continued)

the "clash of civilizations" believers will read this report, change their minds and change the subject. A just and lasting peace in the 21st Century may depend upon it. ■

*Bill Miller, former Chair of the UN Association of the USA Council of Chapter Presidents, is the President of the Frankfurt Chapter UNA-USA.*

# Events at a Glance

<i><b>Date/Time</b></i>	<i><b>Event Description</b></i>	<i><b>Contact</b></i>
Thursday, March 29 7:00 pm	<b>Film: <i>Hidden Warriors</i></b> , State Theater in the Kentucky Theater on Main Street. North Vietnamese women who defended the strategic Ho Chi Minh Trail after 1965 tell war stories never before heard by American audiences. Co-sponsors: UK's Asia Center, Office of International Affairs, Patterson School of Diplomacy, and the Departments of Anthropology, Geography, History, and Sociology, and One World Films and the CKCPJ.	UK Gender & Women's Studies Program, 257-1388
Wednesday, April 11 7:00 pm	<b>Film: <i>In My Father's House</i></b> , Gaines Center's Bingham-Davis House, 318 E. Maxwell St. The filmmaker left her father's house in Morocco to escape the constraints her culture and its traditions have put on women. She returns now to confront those traditions, her own family and herself.	UK Gender & Women's Studies Program, 257-1388
Thursday, April 19 5:30 reception/silent auction	Kentucky Conference for Community and Justice (KCCJ) Annual LK Weinberg Humanitarian Award Dinner, Marriott Griffin-Gate Resort on Newtown Pike. A fundraiser: \$100/seat.	Jill Hanna, 255-6999
1 <sup>st</sup> Wed. of the month, 7:30 pm	<b>CKCPJ Board Meeting</b> , Friends Meeting House, 649 Price Avenue. All welcome.	Kerby Neill, 293-2265
Every Sunday 6:00 pm	<b>Sustainable Communities Network</b> , Third Street Stuff, on North Limestone near the corner of Third Street.	Jim Embry, 312-7024
1 <sup>st</sup> Wed. of the month, 4:00 - 6:30 pm	<b>Franciscan Peace Center</b> , 3389 Squire Oak.	Pat Griffin 230-1986
Every Thursday, 5:30 - 6:00 pm	<b>Interfaith Prayer Vigil for Peace</b> , Triangle Park in downtown Lexington.	
2 <sup>nd</sup> Wed. of the month, 7:00 - 8:30 pm	<b>Humanist Forum of Central Kentucky (AHA)</b> , Unitarian Universalist Church, 3564 Clays Mill Rd.	Dick Renfro, 255-7029
3 <sup>rd</sup> Thursday of the month,	<b>Kentuckians for the Commonwealth (KFTC)</b> , Episcopal Diocese Mission House, corner of 4th St. and Martin Luther	Janet Tucker, 389-8575
New meeting schedule TBA soon.	<b>Lexington Living Wage Campaign</b> , Community Action Council, Georgetown St., Lexington.	
4 <sup>th</sup> Tuesday of the month, 7:30 pm	<b>Bluegrass Fairness Steering Committee</b> , Price Center, 389 Waller Avenue	806-4114 info@bluegrassfairness.org
4 <sup>th</sup> Thursday of the month,	<b>Central Kentucky Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty</b> , Central Library, downtown.	Will Warner, 278-9232
1 <sup>st</sup> Monday of the month, 12:00 noon - 1:30 pm	<b>Kentucky Migrant Network</b> , Cooperative Extension Building, 1141 Red Mile Place.	Andrea Tapia, 268-3353

● *Denotes article in this issue containing more information.*



"No nation can make itself secure by seeking supremacy over all others." – Kofi Annan

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## The myth of Muslim terrorism

by Kenneth Ballen

Those who think that Muslim countries and pro-terrorist attitudes go hand-in-hand might be shocked by new polling research: Americans are more approving of terrorist attacks against civilians than any major Muslim country except for Nigeria.

The survey, conducted in December 2006 by the University of Maryland's prestigious Program on International Public Attitudes, shows that only 46 percent of Americans think that "bombing and other attacks intentionally aimed at civilians" are "never justified," while 24 percent believe these attacks are "often or sometimes justified."

Contrast those numbers with 2006 polling results from the world's most-populous Muslim countries – Indonesia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Nigeria. Terror Free Tomorrow, the organization I lead, found that 74 percent of respondents in Indonesia agreed that terrorist attacks are "never justified"; in Pakistan, that figure was 86 percent; in Bangladesh, 81 percent.

Do these findings mean that Americans are closet terrorist sympathizers?

Hardly. Yet, far too often, Americans and other Westerners seem willing to draw that conclusion about

Muslims. Public opinion surveys in the United States and Europe show that nearly half of Westerners associate Islam with violence and Muslims with terrorists. Given the many radicals who commit violence in the name of Islam around the world, that's an understandable polling result.

But these stereotypes, affirmed by simplistic media coverage and many radicals themselves, are not supported by the facts – and they are detrimental to the war on terror. When the West wrongly attributes radical views to all of the world's 1.5 billion Muslims, it perpetuates a myth that has the very real effect of marginalizing critical allies in the war on terror.

Indeed, the far-too-frequent stereotyping of Muslims serves only to reinforce the radical appeal of the small minority of Muslims who peddle hatred of the West and others as authentic religious practice.

Terror Free Tomorrow's 20-plus surveys of Muslim countries in the past two years reveal another surprise: Even among the minority who indicated support for terrorist attacks and Osama bin Laden, most overwhelmingly approved of specific American actions in their own countries. For example, 71 percent of bin Laden supporters in Indonesia and 79 percent in Pakistan said they thought more favorably of the United States as a result of American humanitarian assistance in their countries – not exactly the profile of hard-

core terrorist sympathizers. For most people, their professed support of terrorism/bin Laden can be more accurately characterized as a kind of "protest vote" against current US foreign policies, not as a deeply held religious conviction or even an inherently anti-American or anti-Western view.

In truth, the common enemy is violence and terrorism, not Muslims any more than Christians or Jews. Whether recruits to violent causes join gangs in Los Angeles or terrorist cells in Lahore, the enemy is the violence they exalt.

Our surveys show that not only do Muslims reject terrorism as much if not more than Americans, but even those who are sympathetic to radical ideology can be won over by positive American actions that promote goodwill and offer real hope.

America's goal, in partnership with Muslim public opinion, should be to defeat terrorists by isolating them from their own societies. The most effective policies to achieve that goal are the ones that build on our common humanity. And we can start by recognizing that Muslims throughout the world want peace as much as Americans do. ■

*Kenneth Ballen is founder and president of Terror Free Tomorrow, a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to finding effective policies that win popular support away from global terrorists.*