

Pax Christi USA

THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC PEACE MOVEMENT



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PEACEMAKING:

Day by Day

"I think the practical person has a better chance of dealing with nonviolence than people who tend to be dreamers or who are impractical. We're not nonviolent because we want to save our souls. We're nonviolent because we want to get some social justice for the workers."

- Cesar Chavez

* This quote and hundreds more are available in Pax Christi USA's "Peacemaking Day by Day." Visit our Web site, www.paxchristiusa.org, to order your copy today, or contact our sales department for more information at 814-453-4955, ext. 231 or sales@paxchristiusa.org.

A special report on Iran

Greetings of peace! As you may know, I recently returned from my second visit to the Islamic Republic of Iran in the last year. The news of a third U.S. carrier group moving into the Persian Gulf coupled with ongoing reports of U.S. plans for an attack on Iran served as a foreboding backdrop to such a visit. Nevertheless, I am convinced that dialogue is the only way to address the many concerns that separate our two nations and I am further convinced that any military strike against Iran would be catastrophic, both for the Iranians and for us. I hope that the following report on my visit to Iran is both informative and inspiring to you as you continue your work for peace.

In peace,

Dave Robinson

Dave Robinson

Executive Director, Pax Christi USA

Much of the current controversy regarding Iran centers on the Iranian nuclear program. At the same time, very little attention has been focused on the real issues at play. Iran is a signatory of the Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT). Article IV of the Treaty makes clear that all nations "have an inalienable right to peaceful nuclear technology." In fact, the United States energetically pushed Iran to develop a nuclear program in the 1970's. But that was when the U.S.-installed Shah of Iran ruled that nation with an iron fist and with a brutal internal secu-

rity system that rivaled anything Saddam Hussein initiated in Iraq. Of course, at that time, the Shah was "our" brutal dictator and thus the U.S. was very happy to provide him with the initial elements of a nuclear program. When the Islamic Revolution overthrew the Shah in 1979, and then when students seized the U.S. Embassy upon learning that the United States had given refuge to the deposed Shah, the U.S. broke off diplomatic relations. More than that, the Reagan Administration then went on to violate the NPT by working behind the scenes to deny Iran access to nuclear technology by pressuring what is known as the Nuclear Suppliers Group—those developed nations with nuclear programs and technologies that under the NPT were Treaty-bound to provide access to nuclear technology to developing nations.

Shortly after the fall of the Shah, Saddam Hussein invaded Iran and an eight-year war raged. During that period, the U.S. provided unprecedented support to the Hussein regime, including money, weapons and satellite intelligence to assist Saddam in his war with Iran. When I visited Iran last May, I met with chemical weapons survivors in Iran whose lives and bodies had been permanently damaged by exposure to those chemical weapons attacks. It is important to note that at no time during the eight-year war did Iran employ weapons of mass destruction against the Iraqis. Indeed, during our meetings we heard repeatedly that

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Pax Christi USA 35th Anniversary ***The Pursuit of Peace in a Culture of Violence***

** National Conference in Seattle, WA - Seattle University **

** August 10-12, 2007 **

Keynote Speaker:

Jack Jezreel, Executive Director of JustFaith Ministries

Seminar presenters include: Camilo Mejia, Ray McGovern, Jeanette Rodriguez and Ted Fortier, the Pax Christi Anti-Racism Team, Rev. Charles Morris, Sr. Jamie Phelps (invited)

Also a plenary session on the founding of Pax Christi USA, a pre-conference gathering of the grassroots for the Peoples' Peace Initiative, worship, anniversary celebration and more!

Brochures are available for download on the Pax Christi USA Web site, or from the national office, info@paxchristiusa.org or 814-453-4955 ext. 221.

Registration will also be available online this year so check the Web site, www.paxchristiusa.org.

AMBASSADOR OF PEACE JANICE VANDERHAAR RECOGNIZED BY MUSLIMS IN MEMPHIS

In March, Pax Christi USA Ambassador of Peace Janice Vanderhaar was recognized by the organization "Muslims in Memphis" for her and her late-husband Gerard Vanderhaar's "invaluable contributions to interfaith dialogue."

"It seems to me that in honoring the peace and justice work that Gerard and I have done through the years," Janice remarked, "it is a reassuring sign that we were on a right path in our effort to spread a greater understanding of how active nonviolence can be applied to our personal lives as well as a way to resolve conflicts in the world."

PAX CHRISTI USA AND GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY SPONSOR TALK BY JAPANESE ARCHBISHOP

Archbishop Mitsuaki Takami of Nagasaki spoke at Georgetown University in March about the possible remilitarization of Japan and threats to the "peace clause" of the Japanese constitution. Pax Christi USA hosted and organized the Archbishop's delegation, arranging public events, meetings on Capitol Hill, and leading a grassroots campaign to draw attention to efforts to overturn Article 9 of the Japanese constitution, which prohibits the threat or use of force.

PAX CHRISTI ST. LOUIS UNIVERSITY STUDENTS "DIE-IN" ON ANNIVERSARY OF IRAQ WAR

On March 20, an estimated 100 Saint Louis University students participated in a "die-in" to mark the 4th anniversary of the war in Iraq. The "die-in" was a memorial to those who have died in the war and was organized by St. Louis University's Pax Christi chapter and sponsored by the department of campus ministry.

BLUE WATER (MI) PAX CHRISTI PEACE BONDS

Blue Water (MI) Pax Christi members are offering a workshop to interested parties on "Iraq Peace Bonds," a peace tax witness against the war in Iraq. For more info on this effort which includes withholding federal income tax and investing in "peace bonds," contact 810-982-2870, mccpax@advnet.net.

2500 GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS SIGN STATEMENT

Over 2500 individuals and groups signed onto Pax Christi USA's statement on the 4th anniversary of the war in Iraq. The statement was published in the *National Catholic Reporter*. In the March 30th editorial, *NCR* recommended its readers to hook up with a local Pax Christi group, calling our approach "prayerful, thoughtful and ultimately leads to action."

Speech at the January 26 March on Washington

Iraq War

The following speech was given by Bishop Walter Sullivan, former bishop-president of Pax Christi USA and an Ambassador of Peace, from the main stage at the March on Washington, January 26, 2007.

I am Walter F. Sullivan, the retired bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Richmond, Virginia. I stand before you representing Pax Christi USA, the Catholic peace movement in our country. For 12 years I served as bishop-president of Pax Christi.

From its very beginning and throughout, Pax Christi unequivocally has condemned the invasion of Iraq as unlawful and immoral, as well as the 4-year war that has devastated the sovereign country of Iraq and led to the death of thousands and thousands of innocent people. We believe that violence only begets more violence and that war is not the solution to human problems. The leaders of our country keep speaking about the war on terror, and yet the war in Iraq has become the breeding ground for terrorists.

A week ago, about 200,000 people gathered here in Washington at our nation's Capitol on a March for Life to witness on behalf of the unborn and to proclaim the sa-



credness of all of life. We gather today to say that respect for life does not end at the time of birth and that all members of the human family deserve both our respect and our protection.

Today, we too march for life on behalf of the 3,000 U.S. service personnel whose lives have been sacrificed at the whim of national leaders. We walk on behalf of the 25,000 military personnel who have been maimed for life with the loss of limbs. We are also aware of the countless others whose lives have been scarred by emotional and mental trauma. Nor must we forget those families in the United States who have borne the brunt of this tragic and horrible conflict because of the death or injury of a loved one -- a spouse, a son or daughter, a parent, whose lives can never be replaced.

Yes, today we also express our concern for the Iraqi people. Probably over 200,000 have died--not on battlefields but on city streets. We need to think of the 2,000,000 refugees whose lives have been displaced, whose homes have been plundered and destroyed. For 4 years we have witnessed a war of wonton destruction. We continue to ask why are we there in the first place and what do we hope to accomplish? The only answer we can give to this tragedy is the addition of 21,000 more troops which will only achieve the same destructiveness. Instead of a surge of more troops, we need a surge of diplomacy.

This war from the beginning has been a total failure and total waste of manpower and resources. It has cost our country dearly, not only as a financial drain but also through the loss of respect throughout the international community. We call upon our national leaders to change course. They should pay attention to the vast majority of our people who now say no to this war.

Thank you for marching for life, which is truly a march for peace!

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weapons of mass destruction--chemical, biological or nuclear--were considered immoral by Islam and a *fatwa*, or total prohibition, was issued by Ayatollah Khomeini after he became the Supreme Leader of Iran in 1979.

The controversy over Iran's nuclear program arose in 2002 when dissidents revealed that a uranium enrichment facility was being constructed outside the town of Natanz. Iran possesses large uranium mines in its south. Enrichment is part of the process that turns that uranium into fuel for nuclear power plants. Such fuel is enriched to roughly 4%. The same process can enrich uranium to

(IAEA), Iran only had to reveal the existence of Natanz 180 days prior to introducing fissile material into the facility. The "outing" of the Natanz facility was done at a time before that 180 day requirement.

The current accusations that Iran is developing nuclear weapons are centered on a discovery by the IAEA in 2005 of a document that purports to describe how to shape uranium into spheres. The only use for such shaping would be to create a bomb. The Iranians have allowed the IAEA to inspect the document. It is widely believed that the document came from the A.Q. Khan network, the Pakistani nuclear scientist who was secretly provid-



Dave Robinson, Executive Director of Pax Christi USA (left), meets Iranian President Ahmadinejad during the February delegation of U.S. religious leaders to Iran.

96% which would be usable for a nuclear weapon. The Natanz facility was constructed in secret. The Iranians explain the need for secrecy because the U.S. had, since the early 1980's, illegally influenced the nuclear suppliers group to embargo Iran from nuclear technology. In 1984 Israel bombed the nuclear reactor at Osarick claiming that an Iraqi nuclear capability represented an unacceptable threat to Israel. The Iranians believe that had they been open about Natanz, the U.S. or Israel would have acted to thwart its construction or outright destroyed it.

Even the secret construction of Natanz was not a violation of Iran's NPT commitments. Under the inspection agreements with the International Atomic Energy Agency

ing nuclear weapons-related information worldwide for many years. No other evidence has been presented that would point to a decision by the Iranians to weaponize their nuclear program. Nonetheless, the Bush Administration has seized upon this to portray Iran as actively seeking a nuclear weapons capability. The IAEA has thus far discredited all U.S. accusations of additional secret sites and efforts. At the same time, the IAEA has specifically not completely cleared Iran of efforts to develop a weapons program in parallel with its peaceful energy program. Various proposals from the European Union and others have so far stalled under the weight of U.S. insistence that Iran can never be allowed to enrich uranium.

Throughout our week-long meetings with Iranian officials, we were reminded of the fact that the troubles between our nations did not begin in 1979. Indeed, it was the CIA-sponsored coup in 1954 that removed the democratically-elected Mohammed Mosedeq and installed the brutal Shah Reza Pahlavi. The Shah, a U.S.-backed puppet, introduced a period of brutal repression for 25 years until the Islamic Revolution deposed him and ushered in the theocracy that now rules Iran. We were also reminded of the U.S. support for Saddam during his unprovoked war with Iran in the 1980's. And finally, the ongoing U.S. sanctions and U.S.-sponsored Security Council resolutions against Iran continue to cripple the Iranian economy and its ability to develop its infrastructure.

Today, the Iranian population has doubled since the time when the U.S. first supported their development of nuclear power. During our meetings with Iranian officials, the situation was described this way: They need 20,000 megawatts of power which would take 20 nuclear power stations to generate. Each power plant would cost approximately \$1 billion. If they do not have an indigenous capability to keep those power plants fueled, what would happen to the \$20 billion investment? Their first power plant, the Bushtar plant, is being constructed by the Russian Federation. It is currently eight years behind schedule and there are fears that it might never be completed. The Iranians insist that the only secure and reliable route to energy independence lies in developing their own program that could supply plants and fuel for those plants. An indigenous program would not be vulnerable to international or geopolitical pressures.

One of the main points that the Bush Administration has used in arguing that the Iranians are developing nuclear weapons rather than a peaceful energy program is that they sit upon vast oil reserves and do not need nuclear energy. This point was addressed repeatedly by Iranian officials. There are 27 million vehicles in the city of Tehran. The pollution from car exhaust is truly significant. Some 60% of Iranians are under the age of thirty, meaning that they are facing a population boom over the next decade. To meet their growing energy needs through fossil fuels will create vast new pollution problems. *(NOTE: I personally do not think that nuclear energy is the savior for our carbon emissions problems or global warming concerns. However, for the purpose of this report, I have chosen to share what the Iranians have communicated as representing their thinking and concerns. This should not be taken as an endorsement*

by myself or Pax Christi with the choice of nuclear power.)

Additionally, the current restrictions on Western investment in Iran have led to a serious lack of capacity within their oil industry. The Iranians have the capacity to refine only about one-quarter of their oil into usable petro-products, including gasoline. They are in fact importing, at market rates, gasoline while still subsidizing prices at the pump. They are literally going broke doing this. The situation is further complicated by ill-conceived investments in large, state-run automobile factories that provide much-needed employment at the expense of greater pressures on their refined oil needs and vehicular pollution. The argument by Vice President Cheney that Iran doesn't need nuclear power because they have so much oil is simply ignorant of the facts.

Perhaps the most notable insight gathered from my time in Iran was how important respectful dialogue is to overcoming enmities and finding common ground. An interesting example is the letter that President Ahmadinejad sent to President Bush last May. The initiative was highly significant to the Iranian leadership. It was one of the few efforts to break through the impasse that has characterized U.S.-Iranian relations for decades and it was a genuine effort to reach out. Unfortunately, President Bush apparently never even read the letter. Condoleeza Rice dismissed it as a "screed." Several times during our meetings this letter was brought up. The Iranians did not understand why an official communication from Iran was so quickly dismissed. This episode points to the heart of the problem in communication between the current U.S. Administration and the Iranian government. The Iranians believe that President Bush is genuine in his assertion of Christian identity and motivations. They are certainly authentic in their Islamic identity and motivations and were attempting to communicate with President Bush on a level of faith. Much of the letter was centered around questioning how President Bush as a Christian justifies his policies from Palestine to New Orleans. Regardless of what you might think of the positions implied in the letter to President Bush, I think it is a grave mistake to dismiss it as he did. It should have been accorded the respect that such a high-level communication deserves. It was also another in a string of missed opportunities to open dialogue. I also believe that it was the common language of faith that allowed us as religious leaders to dialogue with the Iranians in ways that continue to elude the U.S. Administration.

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Nilufar Choudhury joins Pax Christi USA national staff

Pax Christi USA is very excited to announce the hiring of Nilufar Choudhury. Nilufar joined Pax Christi USA as Development Director in December 2006. She has over over eighteen years of experience in fundraising, teaching and research. Prior to joining PCUSA, she served as Development Director at the Center of Concern in Washington, DC and the Cleveland International Program in Cleveland, Ohio. Nilufar is originally from Bangladesh and has a background in teaching and research. She has a Ph.D. in Political Science with a focus on international development from Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada.

"Nilufar brings a wealth of experience to our work here at Pax Christi USA," stated Dave Robinson, Pax Christi USA Executive Director. "She has a history of working to create a world which is more just, peaceful and sustainable, and we are really encouraged to have another outstanding person with such a strong commitment to social justice join our national staff."

Nilufar brings a variety of experiences and skills to the development work of Pax Christi USA. She has over eight years of experience in directing fundraising efforts for non-profit organizations, skills in strategic planning, foundation and major gift solicitation, prospect research, grant proposal writing and reporting, budget preparation, capital campaign management and donor outreach. Nilufar is a strong advocate for economic and social justice and respect for creation. From her tenure at the Center of Concern, a partner organization to Pax Christi USA, Nilufar brings a deep understanding and appreciation for the social teachings of the Catholic tradition to Pax Christi USA's development office as well as familiarity with the context of faith-based peace and justice work. Nilufar has an extensive background in organizational development, communications, and facilitating activities among people of diverse cultures and backgrounds.

Nilufar will be working out of Pax Christi USA's Washington, DC office and can be reached at 202-319-5543 or by email at nilufar@paxchristiusa.org. Welcome Nilufar!



Pax Christi USA's new Development Director, Nilufar Choudhury.

***For thirty-five years we have stood together.
Commit with us today to help sustain Pax Christi USA's
work for peace with justice for the next thirty-five years!***



Pax Christi USA's Sustainers Circle for Peace with Justice

Pax Christi USA has developed a new way to become a member! More than ever, we need people who are willing and able to sustain the work for peace with justice over the long haul. Join Pax Christi USA's Sustainers Circle by making a regular monthly gift. Consistent monthly donations provide a stable funding base for our programs and save us valuable resources by cutting down on paper, postage, and banking costs. Pax Christi USA's "Sustainers Circle" allows you to make safe and convenient monthly donations directly through your credit card. By committing to becoming a sustainer, you provide Pax Christi USA with important monthly support on which we rely, you help us to be more eco-friendly (less paperwork equals more trees), and you help to build the base from which to make our work even more prophetic, more effective and stronger.

To make it more convenient for you to join our Sustainers Circle, you can fill out the form on the back of the "35th Anniversary Fund for Peace 2007" slip enclosed with this mailing. For more information about the Sustainers Circle, contact Tessa Ryker, Pax Christi USA Assistant to the Development Director, by phone at 814-453-4955, ext. 238 or by email at tessa@paxchristiusa.org.

Once you've joined the Sustainers Circle, your credit card will be charged at the middle of each month. You will never have to worry about renewing your membership again! You can opt out or change your contribution at any time. For you, it is safe and convenient; for us, it is an invaluable resource and an expression of confidence in Pax Christi USA's work to proclaim the peace of Christ in the Church and to the world. Please consider becoming a sustaining member of Pax Christi USA today!

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President Ahmadinejad spent over two hours discussing a range of issues with us. One of our delegates later pointed out how frustrated the Iranians must be: "They can't get the U.S. government to talk at all, and they can't get the U.S. religious leaders to stop talking!"

Upon our return from Iran, the delegation visited Capitol Hill to report on our discussions and encourage members of Congress to initiate their own dialogue with their Iranian counterparts. A sign of hope emerged shortly after we returned when the Bush Administration agreed to participate in the regional conference on Iraq organized by Iraqi Prime Minister Al-Malaki. I specifically asked President Ahmadinejad his thoughts on the Iraq Study Group's recommendation to include Iran in regional discussions on the violence in Iraq. He responded that Iran has a clear interest in ending the violence in Iraq. He said that last year, the U.S. asked the Iranians for help in Iraq. Unfortunately, he said, no one in Iran trusts the U.S. Administration, but regardless, he had "friends" respond to the Administration's request. They never heard another word.

Clearly, the U.S. has the capacity to fully implement its National Security Strategy which asserts the goal of full spectrum domination. Iran can be kept from exercising any regional leadership. But at what price? Is it enough for the U.S. occupation to finalize the new Iraq Oil Law, allowing U.S. oil corporations to control 80% of Iraq's oil and leave the rest of that nation in chaos? Is it enough for the U.S. to keep Iran isolated and potentially strike at and destroy its nascent nuclear program? Is it acceptable to label whole peoples as "evil" and engage them only as enemies and not even dialogue over the issues that keep us at odds? Of course not.

I will end by sharing the story of how our trip to Iran was initiated because I believe it offers a glimmer of hope within an otherwise dismal situation. In the early 1990's, the Mennonite Church began working in Iran after a devastating earthquake. Shortly after that, the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) began sending married couples to spend three years in the holy city of Qom. They studied Farsi and Islam at the Khomeini Institute. Over time, the Mennonites developed relationships with academics in Iran. In 2000, one of their contacts proposed sending a young man to the Summer Peace Building Institute at Eastern Mennonite University. The young man had recently finished his studies and

was entering the Foreign Ministry. It was before 9-11 and so still possible to get an academic visa for Iranians. Six years later that young man is now director of the North and Central American Office in the Foreign Ministry. When President Ahmadinejad decided to attend last year's opening of the UN, this young man, Ali, had an idea. He contacted his friend at the MCC and asked if he could arrange a meeting of U.S. religious leaders with President Ahmadinejad in New York. The meeting was arranged. Another meeting was also arranged, this one with the Council on Foreign Relations' New York branch. After these meetings President Ahmadinejad commented on how different the two meetings were. Both groups asked all the same questions: the nuclear program, the Holocaust denials, the Israel comments, the Iraq war, etc. But the way that the two groups engaged was very different. The faith leaders left President Ahmadinejad with a positive feeling that he had engaged in a mutually respectful conversation. The Council was quite another story. This led to the invitation to continue the conversation in Tehran and that became the delegation that I joined.

The seed of peace was planted in the rubble of the earthquake, nurtured more than a decade through the steady development of relationships, and bore fruit in the heart and mind of a young Foreign Ministry official. It is he who I hold in my heart as a sign of hope. And he is not alone. There are many other Iranians in positions of influence who genuinely seek a normalized relationship with the U.S. and who, through various experiences, have developed a sincere regard for the United States and its people. It is a little known fact here in the U.S. that when the September 11th attacks struck our nation, it was followed by over a million Iranians in the streets of Tehran who held a candlelight vigil in solidarity with the U.S. and its people.

My trip to Iran reinforced my belief that the human heart is a universal organ in which seeds of peace can find real nourishment. If a million citizens of a nation that we regard as "evil" can overcome decades of U.S.-supported violence and open their hearts to our pain in a moment like 9-11, then there is indeed hope for our troubled world. As peacemakers, we are called to plant seeds of peace, the fruits of which we rarely see. It is heartening to have been able to see the seeds planted by peacemakers decades ago bear such fruit in this tension-filled moment.

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Visit www.paxchristiusa.org for more educational and spiritual resources for peace.

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