

Collateral Damage

BY KATHY KELLY

At the beginning of the Iraq war in 2003, one number was crucial to U.S. military officials as they planned airstrikes.

“The magic number was 30,” said Marc Garlasco, the Pentagon’s chief of high-value targeting at the start of the war. “That meant that if you hit 30 as the anticipated number of civilians killed, the airstrike had to go to Rumsfeld or Bush personally to sign off.” If the expected number of civilian deaths was less than 30, neither the president or secretary of defense had to know.

Four years later, the U.S. military still has rules in place that permit the killing of civilians in airstrikes. The anticipated number of civilian deaths is calculated as the collateral damage estimate.

—Source: Mark Benjamin in Salon.com/news/feature/2007/07/30/collateral_damage

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About This Issue

It's that time of year again, when it's so hard to find a parking space at the mall. It has something to do with Christmas, and a teenager who gives birth in a stranger's cave, then has to flee to another country because soldiers are going about killing babies.

Kathy Kelly is a pacifist. As a founder of Voices in the Wilderness, she violated the 1991-2003 UN/US sanctions against Iraq by bringing in medicines and toys. In October 2002, she joined the Iraq Peace Team in Baghdad to maintain a nonviolent presence throughout the US-led invasion. She has returned to the Middle East several times since then, most recently to Lebanon in 2006 during the Israel-Hezbollah war, and to Jordan during the summer of 2007. It is here that she meets the latest families fleeing those who would kill their children.

Books and videos are listed on pages 13-15, including two new books on Iraqis: "Swimming Up the Tigris" by Barbara Aziz and "Beyond the Green Zone" by Dahr Jamail.

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We are saddened to announce the death of Dr. Cornelius Houk. Neil taught at Beirut College for Women in Lebanon, was a member of the Society of Biblical Literature, and published numerous articles on the Old Testament. More recently, he was a meeting facilitator for the Prostate Cancer Support Group at the University of North Carolina. His obituary concludes with these words: "Neil also served on the National Council of Americans for Middle East Understanding."

For that service, Neil, we are most grateful.

**John F. Mahoney,
Executive Director**

(Continued from Page 1.)

During the summer of 2007, in Amman, Jordan, I met Iraqi refugees. Millions of them are scattered across the Middle East—just one more statistic in the calculation of collateral damage. Here are some of their stories.

Umm Daoud

In a crowded, impoverished area of Amman, five teens and their mother share a two-room dwelling. Because it was difficult to find a cab driver who would agree to enter this area, I learned to ask to be dropped at a spot nearby and then I walked to my destination.

One evening, Umm Daoud (her name means "Mother of Daoud") met me and three friends at the outskirts of her neighborhood. It was just after sundown and the streets were in growing darkness as she guided us toward the narrow path leading to her home.

As guests, my friends and I sat on a makeshift piece of furniture—an old door placed atop two crates and covered by a thin mat. She and her children sat on the floor. The only other furniture was a television and a small table. The television remained "on" and Samil, her youngest son, seemed completely absorbed in a "Tom and Jerry" cartoon.

"Tom and Jerry" antics are a favorite in almost every home I've visited in Amman. Spanning multiple generations and regions, the duo's popularity seems to reflect benign values. "Sometimes Tom wins and sometimes Jerry, and sometimes they both win, especially if they team up against an enemy," a young Iraqi woman told me. "You love them both. It's a bit like fights between brothers and sisters."

Incalculably less benign are the "real

life" chase scenes Umm Daoud's family has endured. When I first met them five months ago, Abu Daoud, the father, told me that he had been a prosperous goldsmith in Baghdad. "We had two houses and two cars," added Umm Daoud. "Now, I have two brothers killed, and all this suffering, and no way to take care of my children." Abu Daoud told us that two years ago, Daoud, his teenage eldest child, was kidnapped for ransom in Baghdad. Fearful for their son's life and wanting to save him from torture, the family sold all they had, secured his release, and swiftly escaped with him into Jordan.

Abu Daoud came to Amman and moved his family into their current home, hopeful that he might eventually find employment. But as an "illegal" resident in Jordan, among hundreds of thousands of others who've fled Iraq, he could find no work. He sought help from the few groups doling out food rations and rent assistance. He was taunted by youths who called him an old man and an "Iraqi terrorist," while adults threatened to report him to the authorities as an "illegal." But he had no choice but to continue to seek work.

Five months ago, Abu Daoud learned that a cousin in Iraq had received a death threat. The cousin tried to flee Baghdad, but was murdered before he could do so and his body chopped into pieces. This news further traumatized Abu Daoud. Engulfed by pain and misery, he couldn't bear facing his wife and children each day. Two months ago, he disappeared and Umm Daoud believes he may be living in Syria. Her eyes fill with smoldering fury as she spills out feelings of frustration, mistrust and humiliation.

Two of her daughters are diabetic, but Umm Daoud cannot afford either the twice-weekly insulin injections they need or the lab work required to track the course of their illness. Untreated diabetes can lead to complete blindness and already one of her daughter's eyesight is failing.

Umm Daoud tries to hide all of this from her neighbors. They may be here for a long time, and if the neighbors discover the girls are diabetic, she fears it could destroy their future. Wouldn't it be difficult for them to find suitors? Looking at these beautiful young women, it seems unlikely, but blindness is a frightening condition, so who am I to speculate? Umm Daoud herself is in need of medical attention for a kidney ailment, but her daughters' untreated medical crisis absorbs all of her attention.

Through registering with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), the family receives a "salary" of 60 Jordanian Dinars per month, but this amount barely covers rent. Simple repairs and maintenance are beyond their means: a broken light fixture in the room where they sleep, a faucet with a steady, noisy leak.

Even if they could afford such repairs, they would be terrified to invite a repair man into the home because the daughters are vulnerable and could be exploited. If they were accosted and sought recourse, they would be at the mercy of the accused, who could report them as being illegal and cause them to be deported back to Iraq.

Umm Daoud has experienced exactly such vulnerability and humiliation. A gang in Amman robbed her and she reported the crime to the police.



Kathy Kelly with two of Umm Daoud's daughters.—Photo by Kathleen Murphy.

During the investigation, someone accused her of being a prostitute and the police dropped the case.

One bit of good news interrupted this otherwise unbroken account of misery. Daoud, the son whose kidnapping and torture led the family to flee to Amman, is an avid and talented soccer player. His mother and sisters were elated when he recently qualified to compete in Seoul, Korea, with the Iraqi team. For Daoud, the soccer field—where he can assert his control—has proved therapeutic in recovering from his traumatic experiences. Numerous Iraqis in the “illegal” community pooled money for Daoud’s trip to Korea.

Toward the end of our visit, Daoud called from Seoul. The family was jubilant, except for little Samil, watching his Tom and Jerry cartoon with his back turned to the family. From where I sat, I could see his face. He showed no emotion and never took his eyes off the TV screen. I remembered the playful ten-year old I’d first met, in January of 2007, a little boy whose eyes were alight and animated, who loved climbing onto his father’s lap. The family seems to understand his need to withdraw.

Abu Mahmoud

In late July, 2007, Jordan’s King Abdullah announced that the country’s public schools would admit Iraqi students under 15 years of age. I hoped this would be good news for several youngsters I know who had already missed three years of school.

Before the ruling, one father I knew, Abu Mahmoud, had begged the Jordanian authorities at one school to permit his oldest son, Mahmoud, to just sit in the classroom and listen, but it wasn’t allowed. With the government’s new ruling, children like Mahmoud and his brothers, Ahmed and Ali, may be able to gain admission and perhaps even some remedial help in a Jordanian school. Their sister, Najima, is 16, but the new ruling won’t open classrooms to children over 15.

Although Najima has missed formal schooling for the past three years, she nonetheless had a learn-

ing experience while employed in a printing plant—making books instead of reading them. For 10 hours a day, five days a week, the slightly-built Najima operated a paper-cutting machine that was much larger than she. I asked if that was difficult for her, and she replied, “No! Never! And I learned how to lift very heavy loads.”

Although she was paid very little, the family relied on her income. Her father had sought work, but he was caught, twice, for working “illegally,” and threatened with deportation if he is caught again.

During the past summer, Najima stopped working at the factory. Her father could no longer bear the anguish and humiliation of watching his teen-age daughter work so hard. What’s more, he learned that Najima was being paid much less than other older workers.

Recently, Abu Mahmoud’s parents joined his family in Amman. They left Iraq after a neighbor’s boy was killed by an explosive just outside their home. Abu Mahmoud’s children eagerly welcomed their grandparents into the family fold. Fourteen-year-old Mahmoud sat next to his grandfather, massaging his feet; six-year-old Ali sat in his grandfather’s lap, and ten-year-old Majid, leaned against his shoulder. The grandmother, sitting next to me, occasionally took my hand in hers, smiling softly. When Abu Mahmoud’s wife entered the room to collect empty tea glasses, the children scrambled to help her.

But the arrival of Abu Mahmoud’s parents puts more stress on the family’s precarious financial situation. His father has diabetes; his mother, heart disease. Unable to wait until an appointment could be available through a local charity, he took his mother to a Jordanian heart specialist, whose fee cut heavily into funds needed for rent, water and electricity. Majid rolled up his pant leg to show me the stitches he needed after he fell recently on broken glass and gashed his leg. Emergency treatment cost the family the equivalent of a month’s electricity and water.

A close Iraqi friend in Amman told me he feels like he and many Iraqis are in a cave, a very dark cave. “But God doesn’t create this darkness,” he

said. "People are responsible. And we will be judged by the ways we seek to solve problems."

"You have a very deep faith," I replied. "Yes," he said, "I'm grateful to God for this faith. Without it, I think I would become psychologically sick."

Later, in the home of Abu Mahmoud, I asked Najima what she would most like to study when she gets the chance, as I hope she someday will. "Science!" she said, her eyes dancing. "This is because I will become a doctor. I will help people who are sick to get better."



The author, Kathy Kelly, with the mother and grandmother of Najima. — Photo by Sonia Azad.

Then she added, becoming quite serious, "And I won't charge them any money."

Noor and Nadra

I also was befriended by two young women who were catapulted into nightmare circumstances because, in their view, they simply wanted to be employed. For the purpose of telling their story, I have changed their names to Noor and Nadra.

When American troops invaded Iraq in 2003,

Noor was living with her aunt in a small town near Baghdad. The aunt received a minimal "retirement" salary from the former Iraqi government. As a teenager, Noor had left her family to assist the aunt and to enter college. She loved her aunt deeply and had strong attachments to people in the town. After graduating, she remained with her aunt rather than returning home, where she would be a burden to her parents, who were being supported by her brothers.

Eager to find employment and enjoy a measure of independence, she responded to a neighbor's suggestion to accompany him to his workplace. She was quickly offered a job inspecting the handbags and purses of people entering the offices of a large American contractor. When the first troops arrived to occupy the town, residents walked freely in the streets without much anxiety and working for an American company was not a dangerous undertaking.

Then, two months after she began the job, security took a turn for the worse. The company advised Noor and her neighbor to take at least three weeks off. Afterwards, Noor returned to work, while the neighbor chose not to.

One day, as usual, she awoke at 6 a.m., prepared breakfast for her aunt, said her morning prayers, and went out to the street to catch a taxi for the 15-minute ride to work. As she waited, an assailant shot her twice in the face. When Noor awoke in a hospital, she was blind; her left eye was gone and she had no vision in her right.

Even after Noor no longer lived with her aunt, the aunt was threatened by people who came to ask whether Noor was alive. The aunt packed up her belongings, left the neighborhood that had been her home for so many years, and subsequently died.

Now living in Amman, Noor is a displaced person, a refugee.

Nadra, like Noor, was a college graduate. When the war came, her fluency in English enabled her to find work as a translator for the U.S. military. After a year in Baghdad, she was aware of the dangers, but took her chances and continued on the job.

One day after work, her customary driver called to say his car was broken. She flagged a cab and headed home. Suddenly, the car stopped and two men entered the back seat. She was kidnapped, beaten, burned and raped. Later that night, the men released her, shoving her out of a cab onto a deserted road. Nadra quickly left Baghdad and lived with relatives, but then her relatives' son was kidnapped and killed. They agreed she should leave. But when she moved in with another family of relatives, the same awful pattern repeated when their son, too, was kidnapped and killed. After that, Nadra's extended family worked to send her to Amman.

When I met her, she had been living in Amman for eight months. She would have liked to find work, but lacking permanent residency status in Jordan, she would risk arrest if caught working. Meeting monthly expenses was difficult and she spent many hours alone, often in a state of high anxiety. "I'm exhausted by my memories," Nadra told me, eyes downcast. "But I can't forget."

At least 750,000 Iraqis have fled to Jordan, but many thousands still have not been officially registered with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees. Jordan's weekly newspaper, *The Star*, reported that among the 57,000 Iraqis who have been registered since the beginning of 2007, "12,000 have been victims of torture and need psychological and medical care." (August 9, 2007.)

Noor and Nadra knew that the Danes had sent a team to Iraq to rescue the Iraqis who had worked for them, resettling the employees and their families in Denmark. They hoped the Americans would offer them similar sanctuary, but thus far their wait for word from the U.S. Embassy in Amman has been in vain.

Umm Heyder

In January of 2003, shortly before the U.S. bombed and invaded Iraq, I asked my dear friend, Umm Heyder, to tell me how she felt. "It is very hard," she said, "when all you can do is to sit and wait for your city to be bombed." She paused, then continued, "You see, we have tasted war before."

Last summer, in Amman, I waited for Umm Heyder to arrive with her 17-year-old daughter, who we hoped would be admitted to an Amman hospital for treatment.

I first learned of Umm Heyder from my colleague, Chris Doucot, when our Voices in the Wilderness team delivered medical relief supplies to the Ibn Gazwan hospital in Basra in the spring of 1999. Umm Heyder was standing in a line of women seeking medical care, and Chris struck up a conversation with her. Umm Heyder introduced herself as an English-language teacher at a primary school in Jumuriyah, the poorest neighborhood in Basra.

She told Chris that on January 25, 1999, a U.S. missile had struck her home in Jumurriyah, killing her oldest son. A younger son, Mustafa, was wounded and maimed, but survived. She invited Chris to visit her and her family.

Through a succession of visits during the period when, at U.S. insistence, the United Nations maintained brutal sanctions against Iraq, we learned the every-day consequences of this economic warfare on ordinary Iraqis. Umm Heyder was the only person in her household earning any income. Her salary as a school teacher amounted to 7,000 Iraqi dinars per month, or about 3 U.S. dollars. Twenty-one people lived in her home and the family survived on meager rations provided under the "oil for food" deal.

We tried to remain in touch with her throughout the anxious period of bombing, invasion and occupation. Since early 2004, visits are even more problematic since any contact with Westerners can be a death sentence for an Iraqi. Even local hotels politely told us there was no room for us during a January, 2004 visit to Basra.

In August of 2005, Umm Heyder called the Chicago Voices office in a state of panic. Assailants had attacked the vehicle in which she, her husband and their 16-year-old daughter, Hind, were traveling, just outside Basra. Hind was been shot in her face; the bullet shattered her jaw and teeth. Hind was taken to Baghdad for reconstructive surgery and was told she faced a long recovery and would need a second reconstructive surgery. The hospital conditions in Baghdad were so deplorable that, as soon as Hind could be moved, Umm Heyder took her to the Baghdad home of her mother and sisters. Fearful of the violence in Baghdad, Umm Heyder soon returned with Hind to Basra.

Hind's surgeon told me of the dreadful problems patients and their doctors face in Baghdad. "We longed to taste the sweetness after sanctions would be lifted," he said, "but when they were over, we could see no difference. The hospitals lack medicines, supplies and equipment. It's hard to order supplies efficiently because you can't predict when one or more disasters might occur over the course of a month, and with each disaster supplies are quickly used up in emergency care for victims." He told us that armed men had kidnapped a patient who was never heard from again. The surgeon also told of a colleague who was shot dead in his clinic. Most of his colleagues have fled Iraq because of death threats, harassment and frustration.

In January, 2007, gunmen menaced the home shared by Umm Heyder's mother, three of her sisters, and a niece, and threatened to return. The terrified women immediately fled Baghdad, carrying only their clothing, and joined Umm Heyder's family in Basra.

We'd hoped to arrange for Hind's second reconstructive surgery at a hospital in Amman where there is adequate security and supplies, but we've been unable to secure permission for Umm Heyder and her daughter to enter Jordan. I've sat for hours in the offices of the Ministry of Interior, trying to assure officials that this woman and her daughter pose no threat to Jordan's security.

I hope to welcome Umm Heyder in Amman sometime in December, 2007. I want to embrace her.

I want her to get a break from living in an overcrowded home in a war zone. I want her to enjoy at least a short respite as a care-giver for so many people. And I hope her daughter, Hind, who at age sixteen literally tasted a bullet, will recover swiftly from a second surgery. Hind has just turned 17—and the U.S. has been at war with her every day of her life.

Ahmad

Families that receive the dreaded knock on the door giving them 24 hours notice—leave or you will be killed—must swiftly relocate to other areas where they often face problems finding food, potable water and health care.

An Iraqi friend—let us call him Ahmad—whom I've known for ten years looked weary when he last visited me in Amman. He hadn't slept the night before because he'd been on the phone with his wife who, throughout the night, was terrified by crossfire in the Iraqi village where she stays with their four small children. My friend longed to comfort and protect his wife and kids. But he had been forced to live apart from them, in another country.

Ahmad's life was completely changed when a message—a note wrapped around a bullet—was tossed into his kitchen in Baghdad. It read: "Leave now or you will die like a dog." Many Iraqis have received similar death threats.

Weeks later, assailants killed his younger brother who was returning from university studies. My friend moved his family to a village outside Baghdad and then ran for his life.

In Amman, each embassy to which he has applied for resettlement has given Ahmad the cold shoulder. Although he walked the sunburst streets of Amman, rode in taxis, and ate in kabob shops, he nonetheless lived a shadowy, underground existence for lack of official residency papers—and he had overstayed his visa. Every day Iraqis in Jordan are arrested and deported for working without papers and overstaying their visas. In effect, the looming possibility of deportation is in itself a death threat.

Still, my friend's case is hardly unique. Relative

to many others, he is somewhat fortunate. He was not captured and tortured before fleeing Iraq. His wife has not been raped. His children are still alive.

In May of 2006, President Bush said that Iraqis “have shown diverse people can come together and work out their differences. Years from now, people will look back on the formation of a unity government in Iraq as a decisive moment in the story of liberty, a moment when freedom gained a firm foothold in the Middle East and the forces of terror began their long retreat.”

Ahmad doesn't see it that way. The president's words were spoken at a time when thousands of Iraqi civilians were leaving the country every month, fleeing for their lives to escape escalating violence; in addition, tens of thousands more were being displaced internally.

I shudder thinking of the note threatening murder that landed in my friend's kitchen. Who authorizes these threats? Who pens such a letter? Who delivers it? What kind of organization thrives on sundering families, on death and torture, on driving whole societies into flight, chaos and despair?

Prolonging this war will only perpetuate the violence and displace still more thousands of Iraqis. That's why, this winter, many of us in Voices for Creative Nonviolence (www.vcnv.org) will occupy our representatives' offices and the offices of the presidential candidates. We will protest the death threat to Iraqis that is inextricably packaged within the multi-billion dollar defense appropriation bills.

Sonia

I recently met Sonia, a 12-year-old from England who spent four days in Amman interviewing and befriending Iraqi children close to her in age. She wanted to learn about their experiences with war and violence in their home country.

Sonia loves to play the trumpet and perform classical Indian dances, the latter being somewhat unusual for a Muslim girl. When she was eight, before the U.S. and the U.K. invaded Iraq, she wrote a poem urging respect for the rights of Iraqi children

whose hopes and lives would be destroyed by war. The poem received widespread attention and served to intensify the efforts of peace activists like me to stop the war before it started. Sonia founded the organization “Children Against War.”

In the spring of 2007, Sonia told her mother she wanted to travel to Amman to film and interview Iraqi children there. She felt she could help pay for such a trip with music and dance performances. Thus it was that Sonia and her mother joined me in Amman for a week last summer.

We began at the home of two teen-age girls who speak English fluently. Although the family had been living in Amman for several years, the father still was not allowed to work and the family had very little income. Despite their dire circumstances, the girls and their mother have tried to help other needy Iraqi families in Amman. Sonia told me that the friendly and easy going manner of her first interviewees built her confidence as she set about her filming project.

Next, Sonia met 16-year-old Abeer, who spoke enough English to communicate with Sonia about common interests. They went over their favorite singers and film stars: Shakira, Hilary Duff, Beyonce, and Brad Pitt. Abeer showed Sonia some dance steps and the two of them danced a bit to music played on a mobile phone. Abeer showed Sonia pictures she had downloaded onto the mobile, photos of her cousins in Baghdad and of Baghdad monuments.

At one point, Abeer raised her eyebrows and announced, “This is an explosion,” and clicked onto a horrifying photo of wreckage following a car bombing she had witnessed. “I was sitting in an office,” said Abeer, “waiting for my mother. And I was holding a baby, another mother's baby. I was playing with this baby, and then the bomb exploded and the baby was gone! I don't know what happened, just that next I saw the baby on the floor and she was crying for her mother.” Abeer's terrified panic was followed by sheer relief once she realized the baby was alive and unhurt.

Later, Sonia, her mother and I visited Umm

Daoud and her five children. The teens laughed together, in an uproar over who supported Manchester's soccer team and who was for Liverpool's. The conversation abruptly changed when the younger sisters translated for their 19-year-old brother Daoud as he told Sonia details of what he endured when he was kidnapped. At the time he was 16. He explained that throughout his ordeal, his captors chained one of his ankles and suspended him upside down from the ceiling. They frequently tortured him with electric shocks.

Sonia's watchful mother exchanged glances with me. Was this too much for young Sonia to absorb? That night, Sonia awoke from a dream crying out, "I shouldn't be filming this. I shouldn't be filming this."

Sonia's mother worried about protecting her child from being overwhelmed by the accounts she had heard. Yet she also felt sorrow for the youngsters Sonia had interviewed. "What protection is there," she asked, "for the children to whom this has happened?"

I can't know what nightmare fears awakened Sonia when she cried out, "I shouldn't be filming this." I hope that what she's done will inspire many adults to cry out, "We shouldn't be causing this."

What Have We Done to Iraq?

In my January-March 1997 Link article "The Children of Iraq," I cited former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright who, when asked by Lesley Stahl on 60 Minutes to explain the devastating impact of U.S. sanctions on the children of Iraq, replied: "It's a hard decision, Lesley, but we think the price...is worth it."

I wonder if our government used the U.S. military calculations of 30 civilian deaths in considering the sanctions? If it did, it certainly appears that former Secretary Albright signed off on it.

And what was the ultimate price tag? In December 1995, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimated that over one million Iraqis had died, nearly 600,000 of them children, as a direct result of U.N./U.S. economic sanctions. In October 1996, the United Nations Children's Fund

(UNICEF) reported that 4,500 children under five were dying each month from hunger and disease.

The families we came to know in Basra during those 12 years of economic sanctions had somehow been able to eke out a living. I recall Abu Mohammed, in Basra, who lived in utter deprivation with his wife and four children. In the summer of 2002, when I visited his family, he shook his head and said, "Kathy, you know that we see you like a sister to ourselves and like a mother to our children. But, please," he asked, "can you tell me, after all of these visits, what difference does it make?"

I looked at his daughters, still wearing the thin cotton dresses they had worn when I first met them. They slept in those dresses. They had no shoes. His wife still suffered from arthritis, unable to obtain pain relievers. The TV still didn't work. The roof was still damaged. Abu Mohammed still could barely feed his family. Our visits had made no difference whatsoever.

Small wonder, then, that some people would approach me, in secret, and whisper, "Believe me, Kathy, we want this war."

Poor people in impoverished areas of Iraq hoped that somehow the war would release them from a dictator over whom they had no control and that then they would be welcomed back into the family of nations, earn a decent living, and experience something like normalcy. But the longed-for normalcy never occurred.

At this writing, close to two million Iraqis are internally displaced, having fled violence in their neighborhoods. The U.N. estimates that one out of every 10 Iraqis will try to flee their country in 2007. [For latest figures on displacement and civilian mortality, see report on page 12.]

Television coverage regularly shows blood-spattered streets and charred vehicles at the intersections where suicide bombers detonate their murderous cargo. Gruesome carnage and desperate bereavement are part of every-day life. Every family in Baghdad struggles with fuel and energy crises. There is one hour of electricity every 12 hours; only the

more well-to-do families can afford a back-up generator. Unemployment ranges between 50 per cent and 75 per cent.

A May 8, 2007 "Save the Children" report states that in 2005, 122,000 Iraqi children didn't reach their fifth birthdays. Conditions haven't improved. The World Health Organization reported that 80 percent of Iraqi families have home sewage facilities that contaminate their water sources, and 70 percent of families don't have regular access to clean water. As a result diarrhea and respiratory infections account for two thirds of the deaths of children under age five. Twenty-one percent of Iraqi children are now chronically malnourished.

The report also notes that 70 percent of Iraqis who die in hospitals after violent injuries would have survived if the hospitals were adequately equipped.

Americans enjoy a tremendous advantage compared to those who have suffered in our "wars of choice." We can speak freely, with almost no threat to our personal safety. Let us now speak for the Iraqi people, long afflicted and displaced by war, and let us admit our responsibility for their plight. We caused this war. Can anyone think of a war that didn't create spiraling revenge and retaliation? While some may argue we are not 100 per cent responsible for the aftermath, are we 90 per cent? Eighty per cent? Seventy per cent. We certainly aren't zero per cent responsible. The United States has a serious obligation to fund and facilitate relocation and a decent life and livelihood for millions of people who've fled from their homes.

What Can We Do?

At a small, informal school in the basement of a church in Amman, Jordan, many strings of colorful paper cranes bedeck walls and windows. The school serves children whose families have fled Iraq. Older children who come to the school understand the significance of the crane birds.

Claudia Lefko of Northampton, MA, who helped initiate the school, told the children about

Sadako, a Japanese child who survived the bombing of Hiroshima, but suffered from radiation sickness. During her hospitalization, she believed that if she folded 1,000 origami crane birds, she would be granted a special wish: that no other child would ever suffer as she did. Sadako died before completing the task she had set for herself, but other Japanese children then folded many thousands more cranes, and the story has been told for decades in innumerable places, making the delicate paper cranes a symbol for peace throughout the world.

On August 6, 2007, the story was retold to children who had recently joined the basement school in Amman. Having survived war, death threats, and displacement, they may have been particularly aware of the enormous challenge represented by Sadako's wish.

I am reminded of a poem written by Turkish poet Nazim Hikmet and sung by Pete Seeger, called "The Little Girl of Hiroshima":

*I come and stand at every door
But no one hears my silent tread
I knock and yet remain unseen
For I am dead, for I am dead.*

The poem tells of a child who needs no fruit, nor even bread, needs no rice, or sweets, for she is dead. She asks only for peace,

*So that the children of this world
May live and grow and laugh and play.*

A year ago, the space where the Iraqi children gather was grim and decrepit. The Jordanian parish priest invited volunteers from the community of Iraqis living in the area to help create a place where their children could meet for lessons and games. Several families responded and set about hauling debris out of the rooms, long unused, that had once housed monks in the Eastern Orthodox Church. Walls were sanded and painted, windows installed, and a garden they planted is now in full bloom. Thirty-five children gather for two hours a day, five days a week, under the supervision of a few adults in the community. It's a hopeful spot.

When I visited the school several times a week, months earlier, two of the children, Carom and Carla, were listless and withdrawn. Two seasons later, it was a joy to watch little Carla run to join a team playing tug-o-war, proudly accept a marker and solve simple math problems in front of the class, and actively engage in cooperative games. Her brother races faster than any of the other children his age, and he fills his notebook with careful writing.

How fortunate that these two children escaped the fate of so many Iraqi children now represented by the little girl of Hiroshima, those whose silent tread will never be heard.

Claudia Lefko works to raise money for the school (www.iraqichildrensart.org). For every \$35 dollars she raises, we might guess the Pentagon raises \$35 million. Billions, perhaps trillions, will be spent to send yet more weapons, weapon systems, fighter jets, ammunition and military support to the region.

The song about "The Little Girl of Hiroshima" imagines a child who comes and stands at every door, unheard and unseen. In reality, we can go to the doors of our neighbors and urge them to come with us to the doors of elected representatives. We can be heard and seen. We can learn from past experiences and, as we commemorate the loss of innocent lives, bolster efforts to stop war makers from constantly gaining the upper hand in our lives.

Often, in speaking to groups across our country, I am asked: What can I do? I offer three levels of action:

1. Stay informed:

- Week day radio with Amy Goodman (www.democracynow.org)
- Daily news digest and commentary (www.commondreams.org)
- Voices for Creative Nonviolence (www.vcnv.org)
- News and commentary about Iraq (www.electroniciraq.net)

- David Smith-Ferri's book (www.battlefieldwithoutborders.org). All proceeds go to Iraqi refugees through the Direct Aid Initiative (see below).

2. Involve yourself and your community in a project working with Iraqis:

- Scholarships for Iraqis to study in the U.S. (www.iraqistudentproject.org)
- Direct Aid Initiative, which works to identify Iraqis with acute medical needs and to assist in direct health care delivery (www.electroniciraq.net)
- U.S. health care for Iraqi children with critical needs (www.nomorevictims.org)
- Art exchanges between American and Iraqi children (www.iraqichildrensart.org)
- Blog with Zahra Hamid, an Iraqi woman living in the U.S. who is dedicated to helping Iraqi refugees with medical, financial, educational and social needs and to building bridges between people of the U.S. and Iraq (www.zahrairaq.org)

3. Practice nonviolent direct action to resist U.S. war in Iraq:

- SODaPOP Campaign (Seasons of Discontent, a Presidential Occupation Project). For information, contact info@vcnv.org or telephone 773-878-3815.
- War Tax Boycott (www.nwtrcc.org)

The Author

In 1996, Kathy Kelly (kathy@vcnv.org) helped to initiate Voices in the Wilderness, a campaign to end the sanctions against Iraq. Currently, she is helping to coordinate Voices for Creative Nonviolence (www.vcnv.org), a movement begun in the summer of 2005 that draws on the experiences of those who challenged the economic sanctions between 1991 and 2003.

Displacement and Mortality

Source: *The Global Policy Forum*,
www.globalpolicy.org

Displacement

Violence and poverty have created an unparalleled movement of population in Iraq. In April 2007, well over 4 million Iraqis had been displaced, about 14% of the total population. Of that number, about 1.9 million Iraqis were internally displaced and over 2.2 million had migrated to other countries...

Many professionals have been targeted because of their work. This includes academics, educators, professors, doctors, journalists, politicians, lawyers and judges... According to the Brookings Institution's *Iraq Index*, 2,000 Iraqi physicians were killed and about 12,000 left the country from March 2003 through March 2007...

As of March 2007, an estimated 730,000 Iraqis had fled their homes for other parts of Iraq ... and UNHCR estimates that the pace has increased to 50,000 per month.

Hundreds of thousands of displaced Iraqis—both within and outside the country—are in dire need of assistance—for shelter, healthcare, education, legal aid, food and medicine. UNHCR (United Nations High Commission for Refugees) predicts that Iraq's humanitarian crisis will last for years ...

In January 2007, UNHCR launched a \$60-million appeal to fund its programs for the year, a significant increase from the \$29-million appeal in 2006. Yet, "even \$60 million does not go very far," warned Andrew Harper, Senior Manager for UNHCR's

Iraq Operation Unit. He added that addressing Iraq's total humanitarian needs in the long-term would range in the "hundreds of million, if not billions, of dollars."

Mortality

Johns Hopkins University's Bloomberg School of Public Health has sponsored two studies on Iraq mortality that have been published in *The Lancet*, Britain's most respected medical journal. The first study appeared in 2004 and estimated ... about 98,000 "excess deaths" (deaths above the pre-2003 mortality rate) had occurred in the 18 month period from March 2003 to Sept. 2004... The second Hopkins study estimated that 655,000 excess deaths had occurred from March 2003 through June 2006.

Unsurprisingly, both Hopkins studies have been hotly contested by the White House, Downing Street and many other defenders of the war and occupation. President Bush dismissed the second study out of hand, saying: "I do not consider it a credible report."... When asked later about the report, the president stated that the number of those who had died in Iraq during the occupation had been "30,000, more or less," giving no evidence for this figure. White House Spokesman Scott McClellan later announced that the number quoted by the president was "not an official government estimate."

Update: James Paul, Executive Director of Global Policy Forum, told *The Link* in early November 2007 that the number of excess deaths in Iraq under the occupation probably was approaching a million. He based this view on projections from the excess death rates of the Hopkins studies and from the additional information of the Opinion Research Business poll results announced in September, 2007. "This is not an exact science," Paul said, "but there is solid evidence for a very high number."

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Authors	Publication	Year	Pgs	List	AMEU	Summary
Abdul-Rauf, F.	What's Right With Islam	2004	314	\$23.95	\$12.00	Islam and modernity.
AMEU	Burning Issues	2007	439	\$16.95	\$12.50	The most relevant <i>Link</i> issues from the past 40 years.
Armstrong, K.	Jerusalem: One City, Three Faiths	1999	474	\$17.50	\$16.50	Well written, critically acclaimed history.
Aziz, B.	Swimming up the Tigris	2007	314	\$24.95	\$19.95	Real life encounters with Iraqis.
Baltzer, A.	Witness in Palestine	2007	400	\$26.95	\$19.95	Jewish-American condemns Israel's occupation.
Barnford, J.	A Pretext for War	2004	420	\$26.95	\$19.50	How the White House abused US intelligence agencies.
Baroud, R.	The Second Palestinian Intifada	2006	216	\$18.00	\$16.50	Palestinians respond to efnocide against them.
Beit-Hallahmi, B.	Original Sins	1993	227	\$19.95	\$12.50	Reflections on Zionism and Israel.
Bennis, P.	Understanding the Pal.-Israeli Conflict	2007	196	\$10.00	\$9.00	Excellent primer.
Burge, G.	What Land? Whose Promise?	2003	286	\$23.00	\$17.50	What Christians aren't told about Israel & Palestinians.
Carter, J.	Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid	2006	265	\$27.00	\$19.50	A critical analysis of Israel's occupation.
Chacour, E.	Blood Brothers	2003	240	\$12.95	\$10.95	Updated ed. with introduction by James Baker III.
Chapman, C.	Whose Promised Land	2002	329	\$17.99	\$12.75	Zionism and role of biblical promise; updated edition.
Chapman, C.	Whose Holy City?	2004	253	\$15.99	\$12.50	Jerusalem and the future of Middle East peace.
Chomsky, N.	The Fateful Triangle	1999	578	\$22.00	\$16.95	United States, Israel, and the Palestinians.
Cook, J.	Blood and Religion	2006	222	\$18.00	\$16.50	Can Israel be both a Jewish and a democratic state?.
Cooley, J.	An Alliance Against Babylon	2005	258	\$26.95	\$17.95	Traces the Israeli factor in the US-led invasion of Iraq.
Eady & Mast	Sahmatah	1998	40	\$10.00	\$10.00	One-act play for 2 actors; see <i>The Link</i> , Feb. 1999
Ennes, J.	Assault on the Liberty	2002	301	\$30.00	\$25.00	Updated edition.
Esposito, J.	Unholy War: Terror in the name of Islam	2002	196	\$25.00	\$19.95	Good study of militant Islamic groups.
Esposito, J., ed.	The Oxford History of Islam	1999	749	\$49.95	\$47.95	Illustrated history of Islam's faith and culture.
Faber, S.	Radicals, Rabbis, and Peacemakers	2005	252	\$19.95	\$15.95	Conversations with Jews against the occupation.
Fayez, J. ed.	The Colonization of Palestine	2007	56	\$9.95	\$5.00	Updated listing of 452 destroyed cities, towns, villages.
Findley, P.	Silent No More	2001	323	\$23.95	\$19.50	Confronts America's image of Islam.
Findley, P.	Deliberate Deceptions	1993	326	\$14.95	\$8.00	Former U.S. Congressman on U.S.-Israeli relations.
Finkelstein, N.	Beyond Chutzpah	2005	332	\$22.50	\$17.50	The misuse of anti-semitism & the abuse of history.
Finkelstein, N.	The Holocaust Industry	2000	150	\$13.00	\$12.50	Reflections on the exploitation of Jewish suffering.
Finkelstein, N.	Image & Reality of Israel-Arab Conflict	1995	243	\$18.95	\$17.95	What the facts on the ground are telling us.
Fishbach, M.	Records of Dispossession	2003	467	\$39.50	\$28.50	New facts and figures about the land "swap" of 1947-48.
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Hagopian, E. ed.	Civil Rights in Peril	2004	322	\$22.95	\$15.50	The targeting of Arabs and Muslims in the US.
Halper, J.	Obstacles to Peace	2005	93	\$19.95	\$15.50	Camp David's ungenerous offer; 15 full-page maps.
Hiro, D.	Sharing the Promised Land	1999	400	\$18.95	\$16.95	Good history of the Arab-Israeli conflict.
Hroub, K.	Hamas: A Beginner's Guide	2006	170	\$18.95	\$14.50	Good introductory history.
Jamall, D.	Beyond the Green Line	2007	313	\$20.00	\$18.75	Iraq through the eyes of an unembedded journalist.
Jayyusi, S.	Anthology	1996	754	\$22.00	\$17.50	Collection of modern Palestinian literature.
Karmi, G.	In Search of Fatima	2002	288	\$26.00	\$15.00	Poignant memory of Palestinian exile.
Khalidi, R.	The Iron Cage	2006	281	\$24.95	\$19.95	Why Palestinians don't have a state.
Khalidi, R.	Resurrecting Empire	2004	223	\$23.00	\$17.95	Analysis of the US role in the Middle East.
Laird, E.	A Little Piece of Ground	2006	216	\$9.95	\$8.50	A 12-yr.-old soccer-loving Pal. in occupied Ramallah.
Masalha, N.	Expulsion of the Palestinians	1993	235	\$11.95	\$9.50	Examines Zionist notion of "Transfer;" 1882-1948.
Nathan, S.	The Other Side of Israel	2005	310	\$25.00	\$17.50	How non-Jews are treated in the Jewish state.
Neff, D.	Warriors Against Israel	1988	372	\$19.95	\$7.00	How Israel won the battle to become US's ally.
Pappe, I.	The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine	2006	320	\$27.50	\$19.95	Author is Senior Lecturer at Haifa University.
Prior, M.	Zionism and the state of Israel	1999	304	\$75.00	\$59.50	A moral inquiry.
Prior, M. ed.	Speaking the Truth	2005	254	\$17.95	\$13.50	Ilan Pappé et al. on Zionism, Israel, and Palestine.
Ramadan, T.	In the Footsteps of the Prophet	2007	242	\$23.00	\$18.95	Life of Prophet Mohammad by leading Islamic scholar.
Reinhart, T.	The Road Map to Nowhere	2006	248	\$18.00	\$16.50	How Road Map is used to seize more occupied land.
Rose, J.	The Myths of Zionism	2004	232	\$23.95	\$15.50	The myths used to justify Israel's expansionist policies.
Said, E.	Culture and Resistance	2003	225	\$16.00	\$12.95	Author envisions a secular, democratic Middle East.
Sgrena G.	Friendly Fire	2006	216	\$20.00	\$17.95	Inside story of Iraqi occupation by Italian journalist.
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Stegner, W.	Discovery!	2007	259	\$24.95	\$19.95	Saudi Arabia on the brink of tectonic change.
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Terry, J.	U.S. Foreign Policy in the Middle East	2005	168	\$24.95	\$15.50	The influence of lobbies on government policy.
Warschawski, M.	On the Border	2005	228	\$17.00	\$15.50	An Israeli looks at the forces destroying his country.
Warschawski, M.	Toward an Open Tomb	2006	250	\$12.95	\$10.95	From West Bank massacres to The Wall
Winslow, P.	Victory For Us Is To See You Suffer	2007	224	\$24.95	\$19.95	UNRWA worker on the effects of Israeli occupation.

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- AJPME, **Beyond the Mirage: The Face of the Occupation** (2002, VHS, 47 minutes). Israeli and Palestinian human rights advocates challenge misconceptions about the Occupation and Palestinian resistance to it. **AMEU: \$25.00.**
- AJPME, **Imagine ...** (2005, DVD, 15 minutes). Palestinian education under Israeli occupation. Excellent for discussion groups. **AMEU: \$15.00.**
- Baltzer, Anna, **Life in Occupied Palestine** (2006, DVD, 61 minutes). Anna is the granddaughter of a Holocaust refugee. This is her powerful account of the occupation. **AMEU: \$20.00.**
- Common Ground, **The Shape of the Future** (2005, DVD, 100 minutes). TV documentary examines final status issues of security, Jerusalem, refugees and settlements. **AMEU: \$25.00.**
- DMZ, **People and the Land** (2007 updated version of 1997 film, 57 minutes). This is the controversial documentary by Tom Hayes that appeared on over 40 PBS stations. **AMEU: \$25.00.**
- FMEP, **Searching for Peace in the Middle East** (2006, DVD, 30 minutes). A film by Landrum Bolling. AMEU: \$10.00.
- IAK, **The Easiest Targets** (2007, DVD, 10 minutes). Videos of various aspects of the Palestinian occupation, including the Israeli policy of strip-searching women and children. **AMEU: \$10.00.**
- Jordan Sandra, **Dispatches: The Killing Zone** (2003, DVD, 50 minutes). British correspondent reports on violence by Israeli forces against international aid workers and reporters in the Gaza Strip. Includes the bulldozer killing of Rachel Corrie. Widely shown on British TV, this powerful documentary has been aired on only a few U.S. public access channels. **AMEU: \$10.00.**
- Mennonite Central Committee, **Children of the Nabkah** (2005, DVD, 26 minutes). Why Palestinian refugees must be part of any peace settlement. Comes with useful study guide. **AMEU: \$15.00.**
- Munayyer, F. & H., **Palestinian Costumes and Embroidery: A Precious Legacy** (1990, VHS, 38 minutes). Rare collection of Palestinian dresses modeled against background of Palestinian music, with commentary tracing the designs back to Canaanite times. List: \$50.00. **AMEU: \$25.00.**
- NEF, **Peace, Propaganda & the Promised Land** (2004, DVD, 80 minutes). Excellent analysis of how the U.S. media slants its coverage of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. **AMEU: \$25.00.**
- Pilger, J., **Palestine Is Still the Issue** (2002, DVD, 53 minutes). Award-winning journalist tells why there has been no progress toward peace in the Middle East. **AMEU: \$25.00.**
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