

## Nonviolent Livelihood Struggle and Global Militarism: Links and Strategies

Acknowledged Nuclear Power. Emerging Super Power. Observer at G8. Aspiring for permanent membership of UN Security Council



Landless march in India, 2007

President Obama smiled at Manmohan Singh (India's Prime Minister), Secretary of State Hilary Clinton invited him over for lunch, the World Bank President certified his economic vision, and the IMF chief patted his back for leading his country on the path of sustained growth. That's India's arrival on the world stage.

Never mind the 150 000+ farmers' suicides. Forget the millions displaced without rehabilitation over the last 50 years. Ignore the fact that the State acts as an agent and arm of corporate interests. Be deaf to the consensus between mainstream political parties (despite the pretence that they offer alternatives). Turn a blind eye to the plunder of forests and minerals in areas inhabited by indigenous people. It really does not matter as long as we can package the India story internationally, as long as we can tom-tom about 7% GDP growth, as long as Indian models and actors get a clap at beauty pageants and film festivals.

While Bush and his successors – no matter if they are Republican or Democrat – wage their war on 'terror', the Indian State unleashes its own war on 'Maoists'. It's business-as-usual whether it's the US or India; whether it's the Republicans or Democrats, Congress or BJP.

Development-induced displacement has the same effect as bombing of communities in a war. It probably uproots more people than a

tsunami or a cyclone. It dispossesses, disempowers, deskills and dehumanises people. The only difference might be whether the uprooting is gradual or sudden. There are remarkable parallels between the US Government's facilitation of the operations of Chevron, Halliburton, Boeing, Lockheed Martin, Bechtel in Iraq and elsewhere, and the Indian Government's facilitation of land acquisition and the privatisation of forests and minerals for the Tatas, Reliance, Mittals and Jindals.

### Indeed, the flavour of the times is:

- the morphing of the Government's role from pretending to provide welfare to acting as handmaiden for corporate interests
- paying lip service to 'democracy', 'human rights', 'justice', 'sustainable development', 'participatory development', 'human rights', 'justice', even while one is in Kabul or Baghdad, Kalinganagar or Nandigram
- pay for use: only those with the means have the right to clean air and water
- universalisation of middle class norms, lifestyle, aspirations and the selling of dreams that can never be realised
- a clinical lack of sensitivity to the growing violence and iniquity that characterises our society
- denial of the systemic and State violence that exists in society and branding self-defence or resistance as 'anti-national', 'anti-

### Editorial

This issue of The Broken Rifle is the last in a series of two devoted to WRI's upcoming International Conference: "Nonviolent Livelihood Struggle and Global Militarism: Links & Strategies".

By coming to India, WRI is coming back to one of its reference points as a pacifist network. But returning to India also brings up the opportunity to make new connections, both thematically and geographically.

Thematically, the conference aims to connect different movements. Thus, in this issue of The Broken Rifle we introduce the work of CONAMURI/Via Campesina in Paraguay – a network of local community activists that will be represented at the conference – on land and environmental issues. Our aim is to make the link between such community resistance and the movement against militarism. At the conference we will be looking at different forms of grassroots nonviolent resistance, as well as at the many faces of militarism, that impacts and deprives local communities of their sources of livelihood.

Wilbert van der Zeijden, the Coordinator of the No Bases Network, writes in this issue about the connection between military bases and displacement – a major issue in the Global South, and at the conference – focusing on the specific case of Diego Garcia. Military bases are only one of the many forms and aspects of militarism to be discussed at the conference.

Another important aim of the conference is to foster transnational alliances, particularly South—South cooperation. This is why we have made a special effort to bring to the conference a diverse spectrum of grassroots movements from Latin America, Africa and Asia.

We expect the conference to create the appropriate environment for making these connections and we hope that it brings inspiration to everyone who will be joining us.

Javier Gárate

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# Uprooted: Foreign military bases and forced displacement

*The English arrived, Mr. Englishman  
arrived in Chagos,  
The English arrived, the English  
uprooted us, cut off our food supply,  
I will not forget,  
Never, I will not forget my family,  
The whistle blew three times to board  
the Mauritius,  
It dumped us in Mauritius.  
I will not forget,  
Never, I will not forget my mother,  
I will not forget those we left there in  
the cemetery.*

The above excerpt is of a song composed by Mimose Bancoult Furcy, who was deported from the Chagos Archipelago in the Indian Ocean in 1971. She was only 13 years old at the time. The UK government, sometimes aided by the US Navy, forcibly expelled the entire Chagossian people, putting them on overloaded ships on which many fell ill, only to dump them – quite literally - on the shores of Mauritius and the Seychelles, hundreds of miles from their home. Without compensation, without explanation, without a resettlement plan, and without any possessions. Why? To make way for a US military base that in the past decades has developed in to one of the major military strongholds from which the US projects power in the Indian Ocean,

Central Asia and East Africa: Diego Garcia.

With expenses for bases estimated to be at least 140 billion US dollars annually for maintenance and construction, the US Pentagon is the largest land-owner on earth, with assets stretching across the globe. Unfortunately it is not a landlord with a good track record when it comes to ecological, societal or moral standards, as the example of the Chagos people shows. In the 1950s and '60s, decolonisation and the growing tensions of the Cold War caused the US to fear that Russian or Chinese aspirations might make the Indian Ocean “a communist lake” inaccessible to the rapidly growing US military machine. To prevent this from happening, the US looked for and found strategically located islands such as the Australian Cocos (Keeling) Island, the Seychelles, and Diego Garcia in the British colonial ruled Chagos Archipelago.

The inhabitants of the Chagos islands were originally brought to the islands as slaves (from Africa) or indentured workers (from India). For generations they built their society around the coconut-oil plantations on which most of them worked. Food,

lumber for housing, medical aid and other essential needs of the islanders were provided for by the plantation owners and the British imperial rulers. Work conditions were relatively good for the Chagossians, the diet healthy. Until the Americans arrived. The Americans needed a base, and the British offered Chagos. The Americans demanded the Islands be cleared of local inhabitants, and the British still offered Chagos, denouncing the 1500 strong population as “negligible”. The Chagossians obviously had no say in the process, and have been obstructed in their fight for justice during the 40 years they have lived in exile.



Chagos Islanders protest outside the House of Parliament in London, UK

*continued from page 1*

development', 'Maoism'

- pitting people against people – i.e., one set of poor against another, eg factory workers against land-losers
- to be a satellite and service economy exporting flowers and software to import wheat & oil

Does it have to be like this? Is 'development' the monopoly of the State and corporate interests? Is Peace the preserve of the UN, various Governments and the military? Or are there People here, somewhere?

Experience teaches that the US and its minions will not bring peace to Afghanistan or Iraq through their weapons and armies. The Indian Government will not overcome the 'Maoist insurgency' using its police and paramilitary forces. It is only public pressure that can bring Governments to their senses. Remember the millions that marched against war in around 800 cities across the world in February 2003. But that was only a beginning and not good enough. There's a long, long way to go before people's will can assert itself more often than just through occasional elections. And Governments are not the only institution that need to change drastically. Present democracy – across the world – is bereft of meaning until the Parliaments, media and courts radically change too.

In terms of immediate practical steps, for instance, we ought to bring enough pressure on the US/UK and others to stop plundering Iraq's oil and the Indian State rescinding its MOUs (Memoranda of Understanding granting unfettered rights on the

forests and mineral wealth in areas inhabited by adivasis [tribal people]) with the Mittals, Tatas, Essars and Jindals. The society at large, for its part, can wake up to the fact that Islamic militants in Afghanistan or Iraq, and Maoists in India could not have been born in a vacuum. There is an inescapable link between injustice and the birth of insurgency. The poverty and injustice in any one corner of the planet has its manifestations everywhere on a global scale. We also ought to realise that Governments will not, and cannot solve any problems. It will have to be people's / civil society groups' nonviolent efforts to bring everyone to the table for dialogue.

## Next, some non-negotiables have to be instituted:

Traditional lifestyles, occupations and resources they are based on (land, forests, water, animals) cannot be touched without an elaborate dialogue (in most places a mockery is made of formal consultation processes), and a proper legal framework for public consultation in a way that those affected have a de facto and de jure veto on decisions impacting their survival.

Cash compensation is an insult to injury where communities' lives are shattered by the ravages of development projects and while the State uses violence to displace and dispossess people.

Peace and Justice on this planet call for a globalisation of a different kind. The Globalisation of nonviolence, of nonviolent resistance, opening the doors for mutual understanding and solidarity rather than markets.

Anand Mazgaonkar

Forced displacement is much more than “just” the removal from one’s house, land or ancestral grounds. In the case of the Chagossians – where a whole community is deported to an unfamiliar place – the displacement has caused illness, depression, impoverishment, loss of self-esteem, and even death. Arriving in Mauritius and the Seychelles, the Chagossians found themselves in a strange land, where locals regarded them as competitors for insufficient jobs. Without education and without any possessions, most were unable to obtain proper housing or jobs, and many were unable to “fit in” to a society that to them was profoundly alien, and often hostile. Many experienced feelings of depression, of psychological stress, and have severe feelings of guilt about their own children, for whom they were unable to provide as they had back home. The jump from the almost paradisaical life in Chagos to having to find food for your hungry children in the trash of others in Mauritius or the Seychelles for some was simply too much to deal with. In the first year of exile alone, 44 Chagossians died. Among them Eliezer Louis “who had much grief and died”; Ito Mandarin who “died after landing of grief and poverty” and the entire Rabruone family that “had no property, was abandoned by everybody and died in disgrace”.

There are 17 similar recorded cases of forced mass displacement of populations to make space for a foreign military base. Examples are found as far apart as Greenland, Puerto Rico, Okinawa and Chagos. There’s a multitude of cases where smaller numbers of people lost housing, livelihood or religious sites – victims of the imperial desires of the US, EU member states or Russia. Expulsion, or displacement, directly caused by the decision of a government to make way for a military base, is but one of the many problems local communities face when they are confronted with a foreign military presence. Communities also report other economic, social, cultural, health and environmental harms, the exploitation of women, increased crime, loss of self-determination, and the inability of citizens to hold military offenders accountable in court. Military bases are usually largely inhabited by young men far away from home, partners and loved ones, and as a consequence the levels of rape, assault, and even murder, are high in the communities surrounding the bases.

The problems around these foreign bases are felt locally but they occur globally. With more than 1,000 overseas military facilities in more than 100 nations, the US has created the largest global military infrastructure in human history.

European countries in addition maintain about 150 such military outposts. Russia keeps about half a dozen bases in former Soviet Republics; India has one military base in Tajikistan. Many of these facilities are direct preparations for warfare, but next to that, bases can function as listening posts, storage for nuclear or conventional weaponry, testing ranges for new weapons, early warning radar stations, treatment or “rest and recuperation facilities” for soldiers, throughput stations for troops on their way to or from a war, even administrative port facilities allowing a country to circumvent local custom procedures for dodgy arms trade deals.

The shared experience of all the communities around foreign military bases brought them together to form the International No-Bases Network in 2003. For many communities, the realisation that there are hundreds of other communities facing similar problems has been a profoundly empowering experience. Sharing information, learning from each other’s successes and failures, the No-Bases groups are now better equipped to jointly struggle against the unjust arrangements accompanying foreign bases. They are empowered by the statements of solidarity in hard times, but also draw inspiration from the successes of others.

One of the successes that the Chagossians may draw inspiration from is found in Vieques, Puerto Rico, where after years of struggle the inhabitants managed to regain access rights to large parts of their island after it had been used for decades as a testing site for new weapons, and as a training site. The struggle of Vieques is long from over, now that the US refuses to clean up the toxic waste and unexploded shells they left behind. Still, the end of the

expulsion of those who lost their land and the regaining of communal lands shows us that even in our most desperate times it can be done. That local communities can stand up to the most powerful governments and claim back their land. That relatively small nations can stand up to the world’s most powerful army and eventually make them go home.

The Chagossian people’s fate is, against their will, linked to that of the men and women serving the American war machine. Surveys show that the men and women serving on isolated island bases like Diego Garcia often suffer from home sickness, restlessness or depression. The Chagossian people who had to leave to make way for them similarly experience a painful longing for their nation, their lands, their community life. American soldier, or Chagossian exile, both are uprooted, to use the words of Mimose Bancoult. They are both misplaced and they both deserve to go home.

Wilbert van der Zeijden is the Coordinator of the International No-Bases Network ([www.no-bases.org](http://www.no-bases.org)) and a Transnational Institute associate ([www.tni.org](http://www.tni.org)).

*The author acknowledges that the book *Island of Shame: the Secret History of the US Military Base on Diego Garcia* by David Vine (Princeton Press, 2009) has been a strong motivation and source for this article.*



Chagos Archipelago





**Nonviolent Livelihood Struggle and Global Militarism**  
International Conference Programme

**January 22. Day 1: Opening Session 16.00 – 18.00**

This will feature one of India's foremost critics of capitalist globalisation and its attendant militarism - Arundhati Roy hopes to attend

**January 23. Day 2: Displacement, 'Development' and Militarism**

Morning session: Mining - displacement, and weapons

\* Speaker: Representative from an African community

**Workshops:**

\* Aluminium mining in Orissa, India (following up morning session)

\* Colombia: rural – urban support links in resisting war related displacement

**January 24. Day 3: Nonviolent resistance from local communities**

Morning session: Nonviolent struggles for land

\* Speaker: Maguiorina Balbuena from Via Campesina Paraguay

**Workshops:**

\* Ecuador and the struggle against war profiteering in the Amazons

\* Germany, S. Korea and Diego Garcia – military bases and displacement

**January 25. Day 4: Forming transnational alliances**

Morning session

\* Speaker: Medha Patkar on the Narmada struggle

**Workshops:**

\* Transnational campaigning against war profiteering – making links with the arms trade movement (ENAAAT) and the local communities

\* The role of nonviolent accompaniment in supporting the return of displaced communities (PBI Colombia, Nonviolent Peaceforce Sri Lanka)

**Closing plenary**

\* WRI's Chair, Howard Clark

\* Local host Anand Mazgaonkar

## The Commitment of Women Belonging to CONAMURI in the Vía Campesina of Paraguay

CONAMURI, as the acronym indicates, is the national coordination which groups together rural and indigenous women's workers' organisations, the first of its kind in Paraguay. On 15 October - the International day of the rural woman - CONAMURI celebrated their tenth anniversary during and their Fifth National Conference under the title "A decade sewing the seeds of hope, constructing equality"

CONAMURI and the National Coordinating Committee for Peasant Organisations (MCNOC), the Campesino Paraguayan Movement (MCP), the Organisation for Land Struggles (OLT) and the recent newcomer Popular Agrarian Movement (MAP) are all members of Vía Campesina Paraguay.

Throughout the past decade, CONAMURI has continued the struggle in keeping with the principles of Vía Campesina International, a global organisation which unites peasant workers, indigenous populations, populations of African descent and small-sized producers from 69 countries throughout the world. The organisation unites men and women in the struggle to ensure that their ways of living and livelihoods are respected. It also works towards ensuring respect for their common interests, thereby rejecting the agro-export model and dependence-based economies which our countries suffer due to the dominance of foreign capital.

As mobilised, active women, our major concern is the advance of agro-business in rural areas and its catastrophic impact on the local population, displacing 70,000 rural workers to the cities. This forces them into overcrowded areas where they fall into the clutches of poverty, surviving in a precarious situation whereby their future is uncertain. Agro-business promotes mono-culture and the

excessive use of chemical products, leading to the accelerated degradation of biodiversity and the contamination of waters and soil.

Indigenous communities also suffer from the devastation of their ancestral lands. By hitting the most sensitive and vulnerable nerve in our society, these consequences are all the more deplorable, from all perspectives. A few weeks ago, for example, 13 members of the Mbya Guarani community, one of the most militant groups in the face of the colonial regime, died as a probable consequence of the exposure to pesticides used in the cultivation of transgenic Soya near their settlements. This area is located in the Department of Caazapá and it was the Department that took unprecedented emergency measures obliging Ministry of Health staff to take matter to the appropriate authorities, despite attempts to play down the incident by private interests linked with the guild of producers.

We are certain that the agro-businesses, interested in producing bio-fuels from our foodstuffs, so as to satisfy the Asian and European markets, will do so to the detriment of our families, our lands and our natural resources. This will lead to a further increase in unemployment, hunger and needs of our people in general. The impact of this on family life can already be seen in the labour migration trends which show that many women have been forced to go to Spain and Argentina, thereby distorting the family nucleus of society. Via Campesino's response to this is to work for Food Sovereignty combined with Integrated Agrarian Reform. Both concepts are reflected in the struggles of CONAMURI and the peasant movement in Paraguay. We are committed to social change, which began in



March of Vía Campesina in Rosario, Argentina in 2008. Photo: Indymedia Rosario

April 2008, with Fernando Lugo's electoral victory - the first defeat in 61 years for the conservative Colorado Party. However, to be honest, the current Government has allowed itself to be pacified by the lullabies of capitalism, and the persecution of peasant movement leaders has even increased during the current government's mandate. The criminalization of social movements has also reached unprecedented levels.

Our eagerness to stimulate debate on Food Sovereignty has led us to mobilize within various Departments within the country, bringing together people at grass roots level, providing information so as to raise as much awareness as possible. We carry out, among other activities, departmental courses and workshops, community radio programmes, a news bulletin which is broadcast via the CONAMURI website and, above all, the successful Seed Campaign, which ended in July after two years of hard work.

Another of the organization's activities is based on reporting cases of intoxication due to the massive use of agrochemicals in fields. The producers of soya and other transgenic crop producers form a caucus of landowners - many of them of Brazilian origin - who do not respect the minimum conditions stipulated in national environmental laws, such as maintaining the structure of natural barriers, not fumigating when it is windy, separating crops from human settlements, etc. Therefore the oligarchy expels men, women and children by destroying their ranches and animals, so as to be able to expand their desert of green Soya.

The memory of the 11 year old boy, Silvino Talavera, is still etched in our minds. He was sprayed with Round Up Ready in 2003, and he died a few hours later in a hospital in the Department of Itapúa. His case was one of the few that came to court, and the accused were sentenced to two years imprisonment in 2005. However, this sentence was reduced to a non-custodial sentence. CONAMURI, through the support it affords to solidarity based organizations, both national and international, promoted the campaign, "Justice for Silvino", which culminated in legal action being taken against the guilty parties at the time, two Brazilian tenant farmers.

Continuing this logic of resistance, CONAMURI is part of the Coordination for Victims of Agro-toxics, which was founded this year. Its aim is to increase visibility regarding the reality of many Paraguayans who suffer the effects of Glyphosate, as well as the multinationals who promote these substances. This coordinating body presents cases and reports of people who have been affected by the use of toxic substances used in farming to the appropriate authorities. The effects of such substances vary from causing miscarriages and embryonic deformities to cancer and, in the worst cases, death.

On the other hand, just to cite an example

of a project carried out by Via Campesina International, this year work started to set up a university for rural workers and indigenous populations, thereby promoting the Engineering in Agro-ecology qualification for 2010. The Guarani Latin American Agro-ecology Institute (IALA) will have its headquarters in the district of Capiibary, Department of San Pedro. We are currently in the process of creating the institute, which will be used as a cornerstone for a grass-roots based, de-colonized education system, which ensures that the students interpret reality based on their own experiences, within an international context. The Guarani IALA has been a dream in the making for many rural workers' and indigenous organizations, as it symbolizes the education of a future generation of professional militant individuals who will stand against the destructive and exclusive neo-liberal model. They will have a different perspective on class, and they will be equipped to create sustainable development models, while safeguarding the culture and values, which they have been robbed of by the current economic, political and social regime.

It is also worth mentioning the global campaign against violence towards women, which Via Campesina will launch on 25 November, the international day against violence against women. As an organization of working women/ female workers, we fully support this campaign. and will take various actions to help raise awareness in society. Violence against women is a major structural problem, as it is rooted in the negative values which perpetuate patriarchal societies and the supposed superiority of one sex over another. This attitude represents a huge step back for us. We, as women of CONAMURI, want a society where there is gender equality, which does not deny anyone opportunities based on gender or social class. We believe that as more women participate in decision making processes, it will be possible to create profound structural change, which will lead to a re-evaluation of women's roles in the future of their countries. It is just a question of justice and respect for dignity.

Therefore, for all the reasons cited above, CONAMURI works in collaboration with other rural workers' and indigenous organisations, believing that Agrarian Reform is the only way to satisfy our peoples' demands. Also, we believe that success can only be achieved through solidarity in the struggle against capitalism which plunders, mutilates, slaughters, alienates and makes Paraguayans ill. Via Campesina Paraguay raises the flag of socialism. Because we are women, mothers, who give life, and we know for certain where to find the enemy of the social transformation we are seeking. This change is our commitment for the present and future of humanity.

Maguiorina Balbuena  
Representative of CONAMURI

## Nonviolent Livelihood Struggle and Global Militarism: links & strategies

International Conference,  
Ahmedabad, India,  
January 2010

War Resisters' International is cooperating with Indian partner organisations for an international conference investigating the links between local nonviolent livelihood struggles and global militarism, including war profiteering. This participatory conference will bring together campaigners from all over the world to analyse the role of states and multinational corporations in depriving local communities of their sources of livelihood, and learning from the experience of nonviolent resistance at various levels – from the community to the global – and at various phases, from preventing displacement to planning for return.

On a broad level, the conference aims to raise awareness both of the range of threats that global militarism poses to local communities and of the possibilities for nonviolent resistance.

On the international level, the conference aims to be a meeting place for those defending communities against globalised forces and those working against various elements of global militarism.

The conference will take place at Gujarat Vidyapith (University), which was founded by Mohandas Gandhi in 1920. It is co-organised by War Resisters' International, Gujarat Sarvodaya Mandal, and Sampoorna Kranti Vidyalaya ('Institute for Total Revolution').

The International Conference will last from 22-25 January 2009, followed by a WRI Business and Council Meeting on 27-29 January.

For more information, go to:  
<http://wri-irg.org/india2010>



# African Seeds of New Hope and Nonviolence

Echoing and heeding the call from Dr. Kenneth David Kaunda, first president of Zambia, to “redouble our efforts for justice and for a true African humanism,” the two of us, as editors and authors of *Seeds of New Hope: Pan African Peace Studies for the 21st Century* (2009) and the forthcoming *Seeds Bearing Fruit: Pan African Peace Action*, do affirm the great potential of the peoples of Africa. Kaunda’s foreword to our first volume called on scholars and activists alike to help create and sustain a society that celebrates human diversity and validates the contributions of every African (as well as Africa-loving persons and organizations), in the pressing quest for social justice, peace, and true independence. It is clear that real empowerment will only be realized when people the world over have control over their own resources and labor. In preparing for our fruit-bearing second volume (and for the WRI conference on Nonviolent Livelihood Struggles), we have come across many examples of nonviolent resistance to both militarism and to the grassroots impact of neo-liberal globalization.

The following three situations illustrate just some of the creative movements taking root right now. These snapshots serve to shine light on some little-known but powerful initiatives:

- A local Catholic priest in Angola, Padre Jacinto Pio Wacussanga — president of the radical human rights association ALSSA—has taken a leading role in defending the rights of the landless

laborers against the “new” military landlords. In 2003, he and his colleagues received repeated death threats. But they are convinced of the strength of nonviolence as a means of changing society.

WRI’s own Jan Van Crieking has written about how the independent media, human rights organizations, and churches in Angola are helping to stabilize the peace so much desired by the great majority of the population. “The consolidation of peace,” Jan has noted, “depends primarily on how the reconstruction process addresses the profound social divisions, political alienation from the one-party state and its institutionalized corruption on all levels, and the poverty that sustained the war for so many years. The reconstruction should, in the first place, meet the needs of the millions of desperately poor people living in rural communities who, completely isolated from large urban and economic centers and confronted with the deadly consequences of widespread land mines in their daily lives, have so far seen too few tangible benefits of peace.

“The resettlement of some four million displaced persons and war refugees continues to be a cause of some concern. But major confrontations have been avoided so far, due to the mediation of churches and other grassroots initiatives.”

- More and more, local groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo understand the need to work on their own and heed the pleas of the young people

who have been most affected by the wars. The Kinshasa-based Ligue des Femmes pour le Développement et l’Education à la Démocratie (LIFDED) is one such group, and their executive director, Grace Lula, is also affiliated with Pax Christi International. LIFDED’s work has centered around the training of women and youth in nonviolence, conflict resolution, human rights, and empowerment.

LIFDED and Lula introduced us to Reverend Biasima Rose Lala, leader of the Great Lakes Ecumenical Forum and coordinator of a children’s aid project that serves both Kinshasa and Goma. She reiterated the connections between economics and violence in the Congo today. “The country is not poor, but we have had bad management of resources that have not been well shared. People are frustrated and we go to war; parents are killed, children become poorer, and the vicious cycle continues.” Lala became a member of the DRC Parliament in order to help monitor the policies created and resources allocated. “On June 3, 2008, the legislature voted in a bill for the Protection of Children,” she noted. “The government is in the best position to deal with children’s issues, but we have to put the resources into education and child protection. We must fight against corruption in government, and create local projects that keep in place the long and rich tradition of African solidarity with one another. We must make people aware of being a nation and as a nation must protect what we have. Power is not a way of taking for individuals; power is a way of serving others. I am hopeful about the future. . . but it is not easy or quick to change people’s mentality.”

Georgette Nyembo is another strong Congolese woman, a church activist who prepared election observers for the Ministry of Reconstruction. She noted that the first step in rebuilding the Congo is, as it has ever been, making clear to every child that “there is a choice between the gun he’s had and the other, nonviolent, lives which he could lead.”

- One form of protest used by the women in the Niger Delta is the threat and use of nakedness. Historical accounts of female opposition show that this form of protest was common to women in eastern Nigeria. For the eastern communities, nakedness in public is considered a “serious and permanent curse” capable of causing physical, economic and political impotency among the men for whom the women disrobe. Such a threat of nakedness usually creates serious alarm among the men folk who are guilty of provoking such a threat, since such an exhibition is usually considered an



Child labour - mining in DRC

extreme and weighty form of demonstration. To warrant this, women must have been pushed to their limits, and before it gets to the stage of stripping, male offenders often push for hasty negotiations in order to avoid the debilitating effects of this type of women's protest.

Nigerian scholar Ifeoma Ngozi Malo brought us stories of how the strategic tool of nakedness "stripped" the offender of all credibility in the public and private spheres. No men, even those from outside the affected communities, ever questioned the use of nakedness—they feared it! Women have stormed the compounds of men they had grievances with, and held their offenders hostage. They refused to let the offenders leave—and danced, sang, and threatened the offender with nakedness. In some cases, they would physically sit on the offender with clothed (and sometimes unclothed) behinds.

The threat or actual use of nakedness, Malo reports, has never been made lightly. Indeed, before any such action is undertaken, the women issue a warning to the offenders on their proposed course of action. When such threat is issued, the offenders usually request a peace meeting with the women to prevent such a course of action. This technique has been used among the local communities who have their means of survival and their environment threatened by the activities of multinational corporations like Shell, Chevron, Mobil, Texaco, and Agip. Women's groups tend to use the method only when their oppressors have pushed them to their limits, and they see no other alternative to get their oppressors to "redress" a wrong.

The people of Africa have the capacity and commitment necessary to question existing structures and relationships, to develop truly African voices of peace. Critical assessment of war and violence on the continent today requires all of us (Africans and those in solidarity) to be activist-students and teachers both: harvesting the seeds already planted and planting new ones along our way.

WRI agitator and Pan Africanist elder Bill Sutherland reflected on the fact that decades past, when the continent was filled with the excitement of the end of colonialism, the seeds of the troubles to come were already present. In these new stories told during apparently difficult times we can see, according to Sutherland, the "seeds of new hope." The world-changing peace movement that will liberate Africa must begin in every African's backyard. We hope that these examples prove inspiring; we all must dig deep and get our hands dirty for a just peace.

Elavie Ndura-Ouedraogo and Matt Meyer



## Prisoners for Peace

### Action

- On 1 December, put aside at least one hour and write at least four cards to prisoners;
- Get your peace group or class or meeting place to organise a card-writing session;
- Set up a stall in your town centre, perform a bit of street theatre, or do whatever else it takes to attract attention and interest.

### Sending cards and letters

- Always send your card in an envelope;
- Include a return name and address on the envelope;
- Be chatty and creative: send photos from your life, drawings;
- Tell prisoners what you are doing to stop war and war preparations;
- Don't write anything that might get the prisoner into trouble;
- Think about the sort of thing you'd like to receive if you were in prison;
- Don't begin, "You are so brave, I could never do what you have done";
- Don't expect the prisoner to reply;
- Remember-next year it could be you ...

For the up to date Prisoners for Peace Honour Role go to: <http://wri-irg.org/node/4718>

### Support our future work

For 50 years, War Resisters' International has publicised the names and stories of prisoners of conscience. Help us keep up the tradition. Send in a special Pfp donation to WRI to help fund next year's research. Send contributions to: War Resisters' International, 5 Caledonian Rd, London N1 9DX, Britain (email [pfp@wri-irg.org](mailto:pfp@wri-irg.org)).

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## A new WRI webshop

You can order merchandise from War Resisters' International on WRI's new webshop at

<http://wri-irg.org/webshop>. The

new webshop offers more books, and also will calculate postage for your order when you go to the checkout.

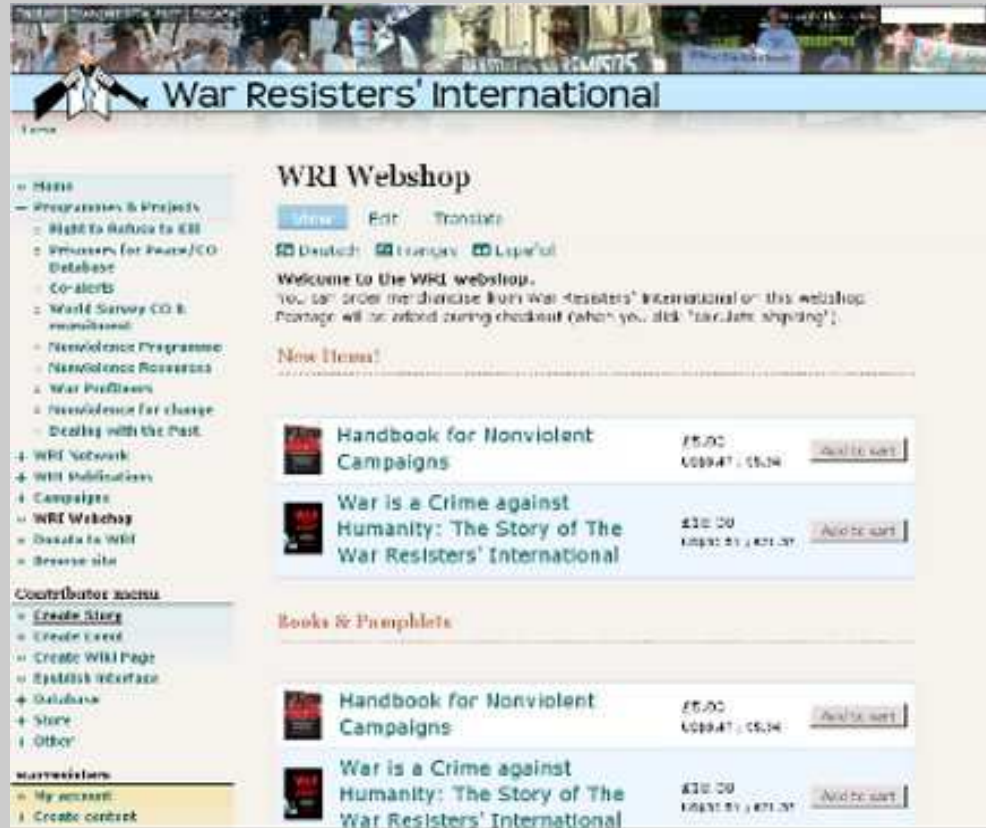
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## The Broken Rifle

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If you want extra copies of this issue of *The Broken Rifle*, please contact the WRI office, or download it from our website.

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## War Resisters' International supporting and connecting war resisters all over the world

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