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FROM DISPOSSESSION TO PEACE
The contribution of communities of faith



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3

**Editorial: FROM DISPOSSESSION TO PEACE
The contribution of Communities of Faith**

by M. Abdus Sabur

4-5

**PRISONERS OF WAR IN ISLAM ENJOY
CLEMENCY, FOOD AND CARE PREFERENCE**

by Shafqat Munir

6-7

**ASYLUM SEEKERS AND THEIR QUEST
FOR SURVIVAL IN THAILAND**

by Mariya Salim

8-9

ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT

by Lawrence Maund

10-11

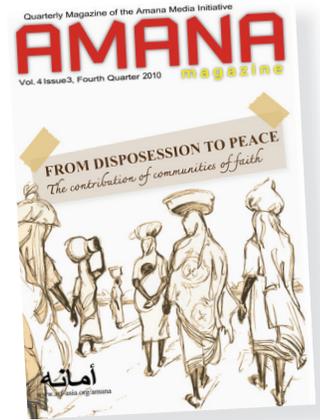
**“FORGOTTEN PEOPLE” THE IDPs:
LIVE ‘VICTIMS’ OF ETHNIC VIOLENCE**

by Erkinbek Kamalov

12-14

**A HOUSE IS NOT A HOME
FOR MIGRANT WORKERS
AND THEIR FAMILIES**

by Dr. Clarence J. Dias,



AMANA Magazine

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COVER:

From DISPOSSESSION TO PEACE
The contribution of communities of faith

Page 6 - english.aljazeera.net

Page 10 - adolat.com

Page 12 - Google.com

Page 14 - Google.com

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FROM DISPOSSESSION TO PEACE

The contribution of Communities of Faith

by M Abdus Sabur

In line with AMANA's role of advocacy for peace, human rights and justice, this issue addresses the plight of those dispossessed: prisoners of war, refugees, asylum seekers, the internally displaced and migrants. According to the 2009 UNHCR Report, the total number of refugees in the world was about 45 million, of whom about 17 million are outside of their countries and the number of internally displaced persons has reached about 28 million. These figures do not seem to have raised major concern on the part of States and the international community. However, UNHCR, being an inter-governmental agency, tries its best to extend humanitarian assistance and faith communities and NGOs do their part.

Natural disasters do contribute to this problem, but very little effort has been made to address the root causes of protracted conflict and war which are responsible for such a huge number of refugees and internally displaced peoples. The way modern war is conducted and prisoners of war are treated is the worst form of degradation of human dignity, as we have seen in the pictures from Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, under the occupation of the United States.

The post-colonial nation state is supposed to empower people in realizing the collective vision of a peaceful and prosperous society. Instead, we are witnessing that the state mechanism and governance system are not only failing their own people, but are largely responsible for their dispossession and displacement. Most frequently, this is done not only against their will, but also in the face of nonviolent and violent protest and opposition on their part.

The chauvinism of the majority and the suppression of religious and ethnic minorities have become so common that they breed indifference. As people of faith, we are often also failing to fulfill our own obligations. The faith and secular traditions, both offers us inspiration to serve and empower the dispossessed and restore the peace." To this one "The faith and secular traditions, offer us, both, the inspiration to serve and empower the dispossessed and restore the peace. Here are three example:

(1) The Qur'an says : those who give(them) asylum and aid, -these are (all)in very truth the believers: for them is the forgiveness of sins and a provision Most generous.(Surat -al -Anafi).

(2) The spirit Of Article 12 of the Declaration of Human Rights, in Islam is that anyone who is persecuted, within the framework of Sharia , is entitled to seek asylum in another country. The host country shall be obliged to provide protection to the asylum seeker.

(3) The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 14) states that every one has the right to seek and enjoy in other countries, asylum from persecution

The opening article in this issue demonstrates that the core values, principles and guidelines of modern international humanitarian law were articulated centuries ago in the Qur'an, in what the Prophet said and did for the protection of vulnerable people. The next two articles in the issue portray the betrayed hopes and shattered dreams of refugees in their "host" country but also document how much can be done by communities of faith, especially by the youth to restore not only individual human security and well-being but community peace as well. The next article in the issue argues, in the context of Kyrgyzstan that unless the situation of victims of ethnic conflict who are internally or externally displaced is effectively addressed, there can be little democracy and no enduring peace. The final article in the issue deals with the plight of migrant workers and their families for whom, whether legal or illegal, all too often, a house is not a home.

It is the hope that this issue of AMANA will not only raise awareness and deepen understanding but also help initiate a process that leads from dispossession to peace.



Mr. M. Abdus Sabur is Secretary General of AMAN and the Asian Resource Foundation



PRISONERS OF WAR IN ISLAM ENJOY CLEMENCY, FOOD AND CARE PREFERENCE

By Shafqat Munir

It is time that the Western and American media learn from the very wise statement of President Obama, snubbing an American church leader for launching an anti-Muslim movement saying that such acts would provide a breeding ground for terrorists in the name of religious war. On several other occasions, Obama had tried to tell the world that the on-going, so-called, Islamophobia, generating hatred against Muslims, will not benefit world peace. It is time to recede the so-called war on terror targeting the Muslims as a whole, instead of a few hand-picked terrorist groups (al-Qaeda and Taliban) who are misinterpreting Islam.

Islam is a religion of peace and tolerance and stands against waging wars and killing people, especially the innocent. However, it does not overlook the possibility that mankind may resort to war against each other. Thus it shows keenness on regulating warfare and sets rules for dealing with the prisoners of war or captives. The very spirit of the Geneva Convention relating to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, (75 U.N.T.S. 135, entered into force 60 years ago on October. 21, 1950), particularly its Article 3, duly reflects the essence of the teachings of Islam on the subject.

Sheikh Muhammad Abu Zahra, in his book 'Concept of War in Islam' writes: "Islam advocates clemency with captives. History has never known warriors so merciful to their captives as the early Muslims who followed the teachings of their religion. Numerous religious texts demand clemency with captives."

Article 3 of the Geneva Convention says: "In the case of armed conflict not of an international character, occurring in the territory of one of the High Contracting Parties, each party to the conflict shall be bound to apply, as a minimum, the following provisions:

1. Persons taking no active part in the hostilities, including members of armed forces who have laid down their arms and those placed hors de combat by sickness, wounds, detention, or any other cause, shall in all circumstances be treated humanely, without any adverse distinction founded on race, colour, religion or faith, sex, birth or wealth, or any other similar criteria. To this end the following acts are and shall remain

prohibited at any time and in any place whatsoever with respect to the above-mentioned persons:

- (a) Violence to life and person, in particular murder of all kinds, mutilation, cruel treatment and torture;
- (b) Taking of hostages;
- (c) Outrages upon personal dignity, in particular, humiliating and degrading treatment;
- (d) The passing of sentences and the carrying out of executions without previous judgment pronounced by a regularly constituted court affording all the judicial guarantees which are recognized as indispensable by civilized peoples.

The debate on the rights of prisoners of war has come to the discussion table of late, when the world saw grave violations of the Geneva Convention at the Abu Ghraib prison and the Guantanamo torture centre where American troops meted out the worst-ever inhuman treatment to the inmates of these prisons. The stories about these jails are clear violations of all norms, laws and decency and whatsoever claims of human rights. Unfortunately, the claimers of human rights, the Americans, tortured, brutally harmed and insulted the prisoners of war and made a mockery of their religion.

The so-called civilized players played havoc with their prisoners of war, violating the Geneva Convention whereas the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him), urged his followers to treat their captives with clemency. He said to them "You are recommended to treat your captives kindly." He also urged his Companions on the day of Badr to be kind to their captives. Accordingly the Companions of the Prophet, (Peace Be Upon Him), gave their captive preference over themselves in matters of food and care. This is the tolerance of Islam and its respect for human dignity.

Jihad is not what the Western media is propagating, and tainting it with al-Qaeda and Taliban brands that do not have any authority in Islam. Rather, It is the scholars of Islam who have the authority to speak about Jihad. The Islamic scholarly view of Jihad is: "Muslims learned two kinds of Jihad. The first is Jihad on the battlefield where people give themselves to the cause of Allah and the second one is Jihad against

one's desires, that restrains man's rage and allows him to fight his foes with clemency and not in accordance with the laws of the jungle."

The Holy Qur'an clearly talks about teachings of Islam with reference to prisoners of war. It says: "So when you meet in battle those who disbelieve, then smite the necks until when you have overcome them, then make (them) prisoners, and afterwards either set them free as a favor or let them ransom (themselves) until the war terminates." (Muhammad: 4)

The scholars interpreted this Qur'anic verse saying it provides alternatives: either the Muslim commander should free those captives who cannot offer ransom either in the form of money or an equivalent number of Muslim captives. This is what is now known as an exchange of prisoners. That kind of ransoming should be adopted, since it leads to the release of two big groups of prisoners – Muslims and non-Muslims, the warring parties in the battle.

Sheikh Atiya Saqr, former head of Al-Azhar Fatwa Committee, states: "The Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him), urged Muslims to show good treatment to war captives; he said to his Companions: "Treat the prisoners of war kindly." Relating how the Companions complied strictly with this order given by the Prophet, (Peace Be Upon Him), one of the prisoners of Badr, Huzayr ibn Humayr, states: "I was with one of Ansari families, after being taken as captive. Whenever they had lunch or dinner, they used to give me preference by providing me with bread while they'd eat only dates, in showing compliance with the Prophet's order of treating prisoners well."

The testimony of the prisoner of war in captivity of the Ansari Muslims clearly exhibits that Islam requires that prisoners of war, Muslim and non-Muslim alike, should be accorded with good treatment and given preference in food.

If one goes by the teachings of Islam, expressed in The Holy Qur'an and Sunnah (acts of the Prophet Muhammad, (Peace Be Upon Him) and interpretations and sayings of the Companions of the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) and the scholars of Islam, one would find that they strictly impose the following injunctions during the time of peace and the time of war:

- No one should be burned alive or tortured with fire
- Wounded soldiers who are neither unfit to fight,

nor actually fighting, should not be attacked

- Prisoners of war should not be killed
- It is prohibited to kill anyone who is tied up or in captivity
- Residential areas should not be pillaged, plundered or destroyed, nor should the Muslims touch the property of anyone except those who are fighting against them
- Muslims must not take anything from the general public of the conquered country without paying for it
- The corpses of the enemy must not be disgraced or mutilated
- Corpses of the enemy should be returned
- Treaties must not be broken.

Islamic ethics and values to protect prisoners of war are clear, and all modern day international arrangements and conventions are actually derived from Islamic values and system. Saving life is saving humanity and killing a person is like killing humanity. This is the spirit of Islam. The Holy Qur'an clearly says:

"If any one slew a person – unless it be for murder or for spreading mischief in the land – it would be as if he slew the whole people: and if any one saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people..."(Surah Al Ma'idah 5:32).

The true followers of the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him), the Muslims, and the Islamic texts are clear and categorical in ascertaining that Islam requires that prisoners of war, Muslim and non-Muslim alike, should be accorded with good treatment. But unfortunately those who are waging a malicious propaganda against Islam and the Muslims are the ones who are committing grave violations of their own professed Geneva Convention on Prisoners of War. They should learn from Islamic texts on how to deal with prisoners and should close down their torture cells (Guantanamo and other infamous prisons) and conduct free trial of the prisoners there in accordance with relevant laws and UN conventions.



ASYLUM SEEKERS AND THEIR QUEST FOR SURVIVAL IN THAILAND

By Mariya Salim



For those of us blessed with a home, a family, and most importantly an identity, it is difficult, rather, impossible to perceive what it is like when one has to make use of a dictionary or a convention to define “who” we are, what our rights are and where we belong. One may use different definitions to define a migrant worker, or an asylum seeker, or perhaps a refugee, but for those being defined, there is a lot in common. They are individuals who face innumerable challenges everyday; challenges of poverty, of vulnerability to exploitation, of survival and those of identity.

Thailand is not a signatory to the UN Refugee Convention and hence asylum seekers in Thailand, from Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Myanmar among many other countries, who number in hundreds of thousands today, face problems of survival. In the past three months I have personally seen a number of asylum seekers, who seek registration with NGO’s, hoping they would be supported in their quest for survival. Fear of prosecution because of a difference in belief, of political opinion and many other reasons have forced

these families to flee their homes in hope of “settling down” in “peace” in an alien territory.

Md Anis (name changed) fled from Pakistan to seek asylum in Thailand, after both he and his family had received repeated death threats in Pakistan. He was a social activist, and was tainted by many because of his Ahmadi background and belief. Finally, after gun shots were fired at his house he decided to move to Thailand with his child and pregnant wife, not knowing of the difficult times that lay ahead. His wife delivered a baby girl, now 2 months old, in Bangkok. Today, he is surviving with little or no money, with most of what he brought from his homeland, exhausted.

“They will punish us.” These words continue to haunt me, even days after I interviewed Lisa (name changed on request), a 17 year old asylum seeker from Sri Lanka, who fled to Bangkok with her three younger siblings and mother, after their father disappeared and they realized that they were being “hunted down” by a few “gunned people” to be taught a lesson because their father had left a particular organization to lead

a normal life with his wife and kids. The pastor in their church advised them to go to Thailand, when he learnt that Lisa's mother had decided to kill herself and her children because of her desperation, not knowing what lay ahead. Today, though they face no threat to life as in Sri Lanka, their situation is scarcely better. Lisa tells me that the support that her family gets, in the form of food from a few NGO's will stop in 2010. When I asked her mother how she will survive with four children here, she told me 'I believe in God. He will help us'.

This is the story of just two of the thousands of families who fled to Thailand, leaving the comforts of their homes, because of fear of persecution for reasons of differences in belief, political ideology and in some cases, because of threats to their life because of a sheer misunderstanding. Little did most of them know that there were tougher times and circumstances awaiting them in the 'land of Smiles'.

AMAN has, in its limited capacity, tried to assist these people. With individual contributions and donations, today, five families receive one-time partial rental support, on a rotational basis. AMAN also tries to provide those in need, emergency relief, clothes and food. There is a strong desire to help these families on AMAN's part, but there are very limited means. The organization has been trying to raise funds for these families, to help them survive and thus, welcomes support from organizations which are capable of helping. It is important to understand how these families cope with numerous serious issues daily in Thailand. On November 30th, 2010, AMAN gave a small emergency fund to a Cambodian man whose wife was in the hospital and who needed support for covering the costs of delivery. This man, on the death list of one of the political parties in his country, will now have to find further ways and means of caring for his wife and new-born child.

Presently, AMAN has begun an appeal, in all the countries it works in, to donate a meal's worth, so that these small contributions can be consolidated and families in dire need can be given some sort of food support.

The need of the hour is not just helping these people who come to Thailand in the hope of a better life, but, in my view, some sort of dialogue needs to be started with the governments of the countries from where these people come, to guarantee them protection and the right to live with dignity and respect. However, in the meanwhile, those who have fled their country, because of circumstances beyond their control, need help. Workshops and conferences are of grave importance to understand the issues better. Additionally, greater emphasis should be laid on mobilizing and utilizing resources to guarantee support; and to ensure at least the minimal level of survival to these families who came to Thailand in the hope of a life, even if not a better life!



DONATE A MEAL APPEAL

Asylum seekers in Thailand are in abundance, there are families here, with little children surviving with nearly nothing, who flee to Thailand and some other countries to escape death in their own land. What makes them even more vulnerable is that a number of countries including Thailand have not even signed, much less ratified the UN Refugee Convention.

We, in AMAN, want to help these families, and others similarly situated, but cannot do it on our own. We need your help.

All we ask of you is to donate two meals a month, (one meal=4USD), for either six months or a year. This money will be used to help feed an entire family.

For more information please write to
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The author of this article is the Editor of the magazine. She is also the Regional coordinator of AMAN's Women's program and is currently in charge of its refugee program.



ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT

: By Lawrence Maund

Peace is not always enjoyed along Thailand's western border with Burma where clashes between ethnic minorities and the Burmese national army over land rights and territorial expansion are known to erupt from time to time. The victims of these clashes are not only soldiers, but also civilians, householders, farmers and children who live in the area with their livestock and farms also being affected. The wounds they suffer, are not only physical but also spiritual and emotional. Clashes in recent years have resulted in a massive influx of people fleeing across the border seeking safe refuge inside Thailand. Though the safety they are seeking is there, other threats and dangers await them.

Back in their hometowns and villages these people lived simple lives, helping each other in plowing their fields, growing and harvesting their rice. Between seasons they spent their time preparing for age-old festivals and ceremonies performed as a way of paying homage to the spirits of nature who look after their land and crops, and to the Buddha who looks after their well-being. They lived together as an extended family, in harmony and with respect for each other. They did not have access to radio and television or newspapers and were thus unaware of the dangers of the world outside. They were ignorant of the unscrupulous agents with promises of work waiting to take their daughters and strip them of their dignity in the hands of rich and aged men. They did not know that there are greedy entrepreneurs waiting to exploit them in factories and workshops, and people ready to abuse them and beat them if they are dissatisfied with their work performance, or corrupt officials waiting for the opportunity to ask for bribes and payment for services offered free to others. They do not realize that the traditional homemade brews, enjoyed in social circles once the sun has gone down, are much less potent and dangerous than the intoxicants manufactured in jungle refineries which they are tricked into imbibing in their new environment. They have not been educated about the diseases that plague the modern world or the harmful effects of chemical pesticides and fertilizers which are unknown in their own towns.

Unaware of the dangers that awaited them, more than a few of those who sought safety in Thailand have fallen victim to these unknown enemies that have been robbing them of the peace they were seeking. Human traffickers have taken their daughters, narcotics their husbands and sons, and chemical pesticides their health. Several have contracted HIV, the virus that can lead to AIDS. It began to seem that. People had escaped one enemy only to fall into the hands of another, and that the peace they were seeking was not to be theirs.

Their plight and their suffering did not go unnoticed by a small group of novice monks studying in a monastic school a short distance away. Many of these young teenagers had themselves been victims of the fighting going on across the border not far from where they were now living. They had seen the soldiers, heard the guns and witnessed their homes being burnt.

"I remember the soldiers coming to our village one day and telling us to pack our belongings and move out. They said they would be back the next day and anybody still there would be killed," recalled one novice. "How could we pack up a lifetime in one day?" he asked. "They did come back the next day as they said they would and we just took what we could and ran for our lives. Those who were too slow were shot and killed. As we ran we looked back and saw the village in flames. We were lucky to get away with a few things. Most people lost everything they possessed, their homes, their land, their animals, everything. It was terrible."

It is not only the young novice who carries memories like that. There are many others like him. Along with the bad memories they carried to Thailand, they also carried traumas of their experience making them easy prey for those ready to exploit them. Remembering the Buddha's teachings on compassion and love for all beings, the novice monks studying at Wat Kong Lom Pariyathi Seuksa School in Wiang Haeng District, Chiang Mai, decided that they had to do something to help. Under the guidance of their school principal, Phra Dr. Thanee, they established the Novices AIDS Intervention and Rehabilitation Network (NAIRN). Through this network they have been working to bring peace and normalcy back to the lives of all affected.

From their own experience, the novices knew the emotional scars people carried with them and realized that before they could do anything else, they had to do emotional healing. The novices brought the young people to their monastery and trained them in meditation as a way of calming their mind and getting rid of the ghosts that haunted them. In the evenings, after school, and on the Buddhist holy days they visited the older people in nearby communities and monasteries to provide meditation training and spiritual counseling. The response was so positive that the meditation program has now become a part of daily life for all in the community. As a result of this intervention, the traumas have passed and the people are again able to live a calm, peaceful life. Their hope has returned.

“I used to think that the future held nothing for me,” one of the young people remarked. “I didn’t dare to dream because I didn’t believe that my dreams could come true. Now I know they can.”

To raise people’s awareness of HIV and AIDS, the novice monks conduct regular trainings for all those in the community, especially the youth who are most vulnerable. Through these awareness raising and education programs, people have a better understanding of HIV and AIDS. They know how to protect themselves and know that they cannot get infected through simple social contact. The stigma and discrimination that once divided the community has now disappeared. The community has been reunited and smiles now appear on faces which were marked by tears.

Sai, a young man living with HIV, recounted how people used to shun him when they learned that he carried the virus. His neighbors even went so far as to build a fence between their house and his so that their chickens wouldn’t mix together with his.

“Thanks to the training done by the monks and novices, they now understand that they cannot get infected just by mixing together,” he said. “My neighbors have now removed the fence and the chickens can play together again. You see,” he added, “through the work of the monks and novices, even the chickens are happy.”

The novices also conduct trainings on Life Skills Development so that the people know how to analyze situations, prevent problems from arising and protect

themselves from exploitation. During these trainings the participants are also educated on human rights. They now know that they can protest the exploitation and abuse they have been subjected to. They know where to go to lodge their complaints and who they can turn to when help is needed.

Through the selfless and tireless efforts of these young novice monks whose average age is 17, peace has returned to a community once ravaged by the greed of war and all is now quiet on the western front.

These young novices have not gone unnoticed and they were recently selected as a recipient of the UNAIDS Red Ribbon Award for their community response to HIV/AIDS, and by the World Bank for their contributions to the Millennium Development Goals. This was recognition well-deserved.

If a group of 17 year-old boys, living a simple life as novice monks, eating only before noon and sleeping on a straw mat, can make such a change in the lives of others and bring peace and happiness into the world, perhaps we should ask ourselves, “Why can’t we?” As one novice put it, “We are not doing anything special. All we are doing is following our religious teachings and putting our faith into action.”

“The Buddha once said that each time a flower is plucked the stars move,” he added. “This shows that all things are interconnected. Problems in the community are everybody’s problem. If we don’t help others when they need help, then we ourselves will have to suffer later.”

(Further information can be obtained by contacting sanghametta@gmail.com)



Lawrence Maund, the author of this article, is an Australian who has been living in Thailand for the greater part of his life. He is founder and manager of the Chiang Mai, Thailand based Sangha Metta Project which promotes the application of faith and traditional cultural values to prevent or respond to crises and improve the quality of life for all.

“FORGOTTEN PEOPLE” THE IDPs: LIVE ‘VICTIMS’ OF ETHNIC VIOLENCE

by Erkinbek Kamalov

Kyrgyzstan will stay in the chronology of World History with its two significant events in 2010. One is fortunately, positive and the other, unfortunately, negative. The first, a positive event: on 7th of April 2010, common people succeeded in overthrowing the corrupt president and his family-based regime from power. The second, a negative event: inter-ethnic clashes between Kyrgyz, an ethnic majority and Uzbeks, the largest ethnic minority, which occurred from 10-13th June in Osh and Jalalabat, the southern provinces of the country. This brief article aims to outline and analyze the difficulties and complexities of research on the position of the “forgotten people” and underline the paramount importance of the issue for Kyrgyzstan.



as well. Unlike the Kyrgyz, titular majority Uzbeks were primarily engaged in the farming and business sectors although they are politicians and public servants, as well as parliamentary members.

What is the problem ?

I do not aim to concentrate on inter-ethnic conflict itself and questions such as who are guilty? What are the causes of conflict? Who should be punished for the crimes committed? Which group had started the conflict first? These are questions for international and national group commissions to investigate; tackle the issue from all sides; and explore all aspects of the problem through a large number of foreign and local experts. Accordingly, I would point attention to the category of people, who were ‘forgotten’: the people who became internally displaced as a result of violent ethnic conflicts in June 2010.

Kyrgyzstan is a multi-ethnic state which consists of more than 80 ethnic groups. Comparatively larger groups among them, apart from the Kyrgyz titular majority, are Russians, Uzbeks, Tatars, Kazaks, Uighurs, Dungans etc. According to the State statistics department’s data: Uzbeks are the second largest ethnic group and are concentrated mainly, in the south of the country’s two provinces: Osh and Jalalabat, though there are some members of this ethnic group in other parts of the country

The violence that escalated in the two provinces in June has been more severe than anything in the past. Earlier conflict between the above-mentioned two ethnic groups had occurred in the 1990s when Kyrgyzstan was part of the Soviet Union. But that unrest had focused on disputes around land and property issues and the inefficiency of local governments. At that time that conflict was ‘stopped’ or frozen by Soviet military force, but the conflict had been left unresolved: there was no special investigation (international or local), reconciliation and forgiveness processes, and peacebuilding initiatives.

But in last new conflict, the violence has engulfed ordinary people, both Kyrgyz and Uzbeks. More and more ordinary people were targeted, which is something unprecedented. This has created a climate of insecurity and fear. It has also depressed an already weak economy and political situation.

Arrangement of two significant events (the Referendum in July and Parliamentary Elections in October) followed these conflicts and undermined the importance of investigation and addressing the IDP (internally

displaced persons) situation and turned the attention of the masses to other political issues.

One of the tactical approaches used, mostly by people who were affected during this last ethnic conflict was to migrate. This is different from being a temporary refugee, because many Uzbeks during conflicts escaped to Uzbekistan and after about a month, almost all of them returned. But later many of them went to Russia for permanent migration or temporary work.

What should be done?

There is a strong need for vital research: both academic and policy (analytical) research. Most studies of migration tend to be based on quantitative approaches, and much of the theoretical work underpinning these studies involve a debate over which factors influenced the decisions regarding migration. I think the trend has to be to take a more qualitative approach and to study the experience of migration and its meaning for the subjects in order to understand the behavior, beliefs and values involved. The aim of such research must include: to explore what factors influenced the decision to migrate, what difficulties were encountered, and in what ways people felt the move had improved or affected their lives.

How it should be done ?

In order to make the research on this issue as effective as possible, and time-measurable, it is better to limit and focus on certain areas. For the sake of the ethics of research, a balanced approach should be applied. This means interviews should cover both Uzbek and Kyrgyz people. However, this is not easy. Because of the background of violence and trauma, the majority are reluctant to be interviewed and share their experiences with researchers. This can make the research process cumbersome and time-consuming.

Potential responders should be from different social groups: students, officials, businessmen etc.

Unconventionally, we can put 'target groups' into two different groups. The first group can be those directly affected by the violence: who have experienced violence themselves, or have members of their families, directly affected, and have suffered loss of lives or property. The second group can be people indirectly affected, meaning they did not suffer directly from any violent incident but still feel that they cannot continue to live in the post conflict environment or place.

While the research is being conducted, it must be borne in mind that in some cases, conflict-affected people had

planned to move temporarily and later return to their place of origin, while in others, the intention was to make a permanent move.

In evaluating the experience of Internally Displaced People, the following structure can be taken into account:

- The experience of migration
- The effect on daily life
- Adapting to a new environment
- The impacts on personal life and on work prospects
- Opportunities lost
- New perspectives

Why it should be done?

We are aware that the destination for most of IDPs is the capital of the country: Bishkek. Because it has a liberal and multicultural urban environment, it is not only a safe refuge for IDPs but also presents new perspectives for work and life.

The importance of research on the position and situation of IDPs is key for Kyrgyzstan, as a democratic country which is striving to become an open society. The international community, including foreign donor agencies and countries put justice and transparency in investigation of recent violence and peace and reconciliation among all people of the country, as prerequisites for the new leadership of Kyrgyzstan to receive financial assistance for its development. Democracy as part of an open society is equally important as economic development for a young country like Kyrgyzstan. Not only rights, but also opportunities, political and economic, for both individuals and groups need to be provided for all: especially, ethnic, religious and sexual minorities, since they are all free and equal citizens of the state.

In the Kyrgyz case, democracy tests both the new leadership as well as every inhabitant of the country, to what extent are they able to be neutral, non-biased and truly honest with themselves and the entire world, in addressing recent violence including the situation of IDPs and other victims.



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A HOUSE IS NOT A HOME FOR MIGRANT WORKERS AND THEIR FAMILIES

By Dr. Clarence J. Dias,



and violators; across cultures, civilizations and time.

What is happening to migrant workers and their families circa 2010, why and on what scale/s is truly mind-boggling. My own way of trying to “unboggle” is to reflect on the following components of the problematique, but the list keeps growing:

I am sure that all of us, firmly believe that the paradigm of human rights will provide the nourishment for those who hunger and thirst for justice for migrant workers and their families, everywhere. We also believe that the human rights paradigm will provide both resources and strength to ensure justice for them.

It is said that the devil is in the detail. One of the tasks that we need to address is not just to demonize, but rather to document incontrovertibly who the devils are, when it comes to exploitation and enslavement of migrant workers and their families. In this context, the devil has many faces: governmental and intergovernmental; multinational and national; global and local; corporate and civil; collective and individual; within and outside: self (male and female) (young and old) (carpet weavers-garment workers-camel jockeys-sex workers-firework makers), family and community; amongst rights-holders and duty-bearers; amongst victims

1. Archetypal and stereotypical images of the migrant worker (male or female): as vulnerable, “at risk”, caught between a rock and a hard place, and on the horns of dilemma.

2. The paradox that in vulnerability lies strength. It is true that lack of strength breeds vulnerability. Yet, vulnerability breeds commonality and identity, which, in turn, breeds leadership. . Thus, in vulnerability lies strength as well. In vulnerability lie the seeds of change and the seeds of social movements.

3. Understanding and reacting: WHY?

“There will always be an England” and a Qatar! In many societies, there will always be Anglo “nobles” who need ignoble tasks to be performed, by children of a lesser God, coming from another clime. There will always be countries whose citizenship is unattainable to a majority of the population because they are foreigners

performing those ignoble tasks.

In both receiving and sending countries, migrant workers constitute a nationally aggregated nameless, faceless statistical mass deprived of identity, dignity and humanity.

The lure of “Bright Lights, Big City” alongside neglected and development-abandoned villages, constitute the “push” and “pull” that seek to explain why people leave their loved ones and homes in search of a job, a wage, a life. They remain exploited and oppressed by the immutable laws of demand and supply; in an enslaving, “free” market. They remain victimized by need, greed and callous indifference on what has become a global, Darwinian “Animal Farm” where indeed, in perpetuity, some remain more equal than others.

4. Understanding and reacting: to INHUMAN WRONGS

Migrant workers face innumerable and incalculable inhuman wrongs including: dehumanization and enslavement: damned if they do and damned if they don't. Do or die, they are ordered. So, they do work, under unacceptable conditions, and they die, unsung, unheralded, all too often, unseen. Caught in a “debt trap” (the arithmetic of enslavement) their fate is death by: voluntary suicide; or by homicide with malice aforethought, or by reckless endangerment in “normal accidents”. They are victims of ruthless and sustained imposition of grievous harm and grievous hurt and of dastardly discrimination: economic, social, cultural, civil and political. For migrant workers and their families, justice is both delayed and justice is also, at the end of the day, denied.

They endure all this while the shameless Global Conspiracy of Silence continues unabated.

5. Understanding and reacting: to the three DIABOLICAL INTER-LINKAGES that exacerbate the situation that migrant workers and their families face:

The plight of migrant workers and their families is exacerbated by three vicious inter-linkages, some subtle, some not so subtle:

- Trafficking in human persons and their limbs and organs
- Transnational organized crime.
- Corruption.

All of these inter-linkages are supposedly regulated by national policies and laws. But because of the inadequacies of such policies and laws, they are now in the process of being regulated by international policy and law as well.

6. “Those who have less in life should have more in law.” Jose Rizal. So, WHAT IS?

“A man's reach should exceed his grasp. Else what's a heaven for?” And so, WHAT OUGHT TO BE:

Much exists in international, regional and national law: ILO Conventions; UN Convention; Regional Conventions; National Constitutions and laws; policies and programs; that can be invoked to mitigate the sufferings of migrant workers and their families. But these legal resources will remain largely unused and underutilized unless there is a sustained, multi-faceted campaign involving advocacy for ratification of the international instruments and for removal of reservations thereto; lobbying for harmonization of international standards followed by harmonization of national laws; effective implementation and enforcement thereof; credible and sustained monitoring and evaluation; and sustained efforts to provide visibility; forum; voice and remedies; through advocacy; solidarity; campaigning for justice for migrant workers and their families.

7. Understanding and acting: TARGETS, GOALS and STRATEGIES

A human rights approach involves two elements:

- Analyzing and Understanding situations and problems through a human rights lens; and
- Acting thereafter, effectively invoking the values, principles and standards of human rights and effectively utilizing the mechanisms and procedures

of national and international institutions for the protection and promotion of human rights.

The targets for action include the UN, regional intergovernmental organizations; governmental organizations (in sending, receiving and transit countries); NGOs; peoples organizations (including trade unions); community-based organizations and, most importantly, self: both individual and collective.



The goals are four-fold: promoting respect for the human rights of migrant workers and their families; enhancing protection of migrant workers and their families; promoting awareness about rights, duties and remedies; and fulfilling and realizing all human rights for all migrant workers, everywhere.

The strategies must be both:

- Reactive: securing redress; remedies; justice; and accountability; and
- Proactive: moving from the “right to know” and the “duty to disclose” to the “power to act”.

For migrant workers, all too often, a house is not a home, as is vividly and poignantly self-evident from visiting the living quarters of the “caged workers” in Hong Kong, for example. Paradoxically, for undocumented migrant workers, a home (of detention) is not even a house – which one is free to enter and leave.

Today’s globalized economy needs migrant workers. But it utilizes them mainly through creating new forms of slavery and slavery-like practices. In the words of the poet, Robert Frost, “The woods are lovely, dark and deep. But I have promises to keep. And miles to go before I sleep. And miles to go before I sleep”. To

“hunger and thirst for justice” for migrant workers and their families will involve a journey of many a mile, across countries, and indeed continents. But even the longest journey, begins with the first step. It is time to commit to taking that first step, even if hesitantly, and in a faltering (especially for the global macro-economists) manner.



Dr. Clarence J. Dias, the author of this article is President of the International Center for Law in Development and has been the external evaluator for the current AMAN evaluation, resource person for AMAN’s Peace Studies Program and facilitator/resource person for the AMAN Muslim Lawyers Network.



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DONATE A MEAL APPEAL

Asylum seekers in Thailand are in abundance, there are families here, with little children surviving with nearly nothing, who flee to Thailand and some other countries to escape death in their own land. What makes them even more vulnerable is that a number of countries including Thailand have not even signed, much less ratified the UN Refugee Convention.

We, in AMAN, want to help these families, and others similarly situated, but cannot do it on our own. We need your help.

All we ask of you is to donate two meals a month, (one meal=4USD), for either six months or a year. This money will be used to help feed an entire family. For more information please write to **mariya@arf-asia.org**

Readers are welcome to send comments. Letters to the Editor will be published in the next issue in February, 2011. You may write to the Editor at **amana@arf-asia.org**



AMAN Assembly and International Conference on Multiculturalism and Global Peace, Pattani, Thailand 26-28 January 2010

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IN PATTANI, THE CITY OF HISTORIC AND UNIQUE CULTURES, AMAN NETWORK MEMBERS, REPRESENTATIVES OF PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS AND INVITED GUESTS WILL COME TOGETHER ON THE OCCASION OF AMAN'S 20TH ANNIVERSARY AND 4TH ASSEMBLY TO LOOK BACK ON WHAT AMAN HAS ACHIEVED AND TO ASSESS THE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF AMAN.

DESPITE THE PROTRACTED CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE IN SOUTHERN THAILAND, SINCE 2004, LOCAL COMMUNITIES, NGOS, GOVERNMENT INSTITUTES, SCHOLARS AND SOME INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS HAVE BEEN ENGAGED IN VARIOUS FORMS OF ACTIVITIES TO REDUCE VIOLENCE AND PROMOTE PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT.

BACK TO BACK WITH THE ASSEMBLY, AMAN IS CO-ORGANIZING AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON "MULTICULTURALISM AND GLOBAL PEACE" IN COOPERATION WITH THE CENTER FOR CONFLICT STUDIES AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND THE ISLAMIC COLLEGE, PATTANI, PRINCE OF SONGKHLA UNIVERSITY; THE INSTITUTE OF RELIGION, CULTURE AND PEACE, PAYAP UNIVERSITY; AND THE PEACE INFORMATION CENTER, THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY.

THE CONFERENCE PROVIDES AN OPPORTUNITY FOR BOTH LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL PARTICIPANTS, ACADEMICS AND ACTIVISTS TO INTERACT, LEARN FROM EACH OTHER AND FIND WAYS TO PROMOTE PEACE AND ENHANCE BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL COOPERATION AND SOLIDARITY.

PLENARY THEMES OF THE CONFERENCE INCLUDE:

- MULTICULTURALISM AND GLOBAL PEACE.
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- WOMEN IN CONFLICT ZONES.
- PEACE-MAKING AND PEACE-BUILDING.
- PEACE EDUCATION AND PEACE RESEARCH.
- THE QUEST FOR PROGRESSIVE MUSLIM IDENTITIES.

THE PLENARY SESSIONS WILL BE INTERSPERSED BETWEEN WORKSHOPS FOCUSING ON ISSUES OF WOMEN AND YOUTH IN THE CONTEXT OF ISLAM AND MUSLIM SOCIETIES: CHALLENGES FACED WITHIN GREATER UMMAH.

THROUGH THE PLENARY SESSIONS AND WORKSHOPS, AN AMAN AGENDA FOR ADVOCACY WILL BE DRAWN UP.

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