

This letter was sent on 11 June 2009 by the following organizations:

Action Canada for Population and Development
Al-Haq
Amnesty International
Arab Sisters Human Rights Forum
Arabic Network for Human Rights Information
ARC International
ARTICLE 19
Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development
Asian Legal Resource Centre
Association pour la Défense des Droits et Libertés
Association of World Citizens
Association for World Education
Baha'i International Community
Bahrain Centre for Human Rights
Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies
Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network
Centre for Economic and Social Rights
Conectas
Creating Resources for Empowerment in Action
Damascus Center for Human Rights
Democracy Coalition Project
East & Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Network
Egyptian Association for Community Participation Enhancement
Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights
Egyptian Organization for Human Rights
Fédération internationale des droits de l'homme
The Federation for Women and Family Planning
Human Rights Council of Australia
Human Rights First Society-Saudi Arabia
Human Rights Watch
International Commission of Jurists
International Service for Human Rights
International Women's Rights Action Watch - Asia Pacific
New Woman Research Foundation
Palestinian Human Rights Organization in Lebanon

Amnesty International previously had criticized various other underminings of the Special Procedures, including problems with the process of selection and appointment of Special Procedures mandate-holders (the organization does not take a position in favor of or against any candidate or mandate-holder). AI expressed disappointment with the insufficiently transparent May 2009 report of the Consultative Group: "The Human Rights Council has been the subject of severe public criticism, some of it well-justified. It is incumbent on the Council and its subsidiary mechanisms to take seriously the rules that the Council has established for itself if the Council is to meet the expectations that surrounded its creation."

In August 2009, 74 NGOs (through Human Rights Watch) appealed to the 47 governments on the Council to end the election of its members by regional bloc slates and make sure that every seat is open to contest. The current system promotes voting deals that one Brazilian human rights group described as "a distorted sense of Third World solidarity" (Reuters).

Open Letter to Member States of the Human Rights Council

Excellencies,

We are civil society organizations from throughout the world that have contributed to the Human Rights Council and its work since its establishment. We have observed with increasing concern developments in the Council, including at the current 11th Session, that are undermining the work of the Council's Special Procedures. This session has seen extraordinary personal attacks by some States on the integrity of mandate holders and specific threats to their independence.

The attacks at this session of the Council have focused in particular on the current Special Rapporteurs on freedom of expression and on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions. These particular Rapporteurs were subjected to threats of disciplinary action because they offered their expert analysis and recommendations on important human rights issues that they brought to the attention of this Council in the proper exercise of their mandates.

Many States engaged in this conduct. Some States have been more direct than others in their threats to remove mandate holders from their functions if they fail to conform to those States' particular interpretation of the experts' mandates. There has been what appears to be a coordinated effort to intimidate Special Procedures, individually and collectively.

We view these attacks and threats as fundamentally an attack on and threat to the Council itself and they are severely eroding the Council's legitimacy and credibility.

We understand that any State that is criticised by a mandate holder will feel the need to respond. We accept its entitlement to endeavour to rebut criticism, to correct any errors and misunderstandings, and to argue its case. It is normal that a State will also offer its interpretation of a Special Procedure mandate. It should do so, however, respectfully and with appropriate measure, just as the mandate holder is required by the Special Procedures Code of Conduct to act with respect and appropriate measure.

Contrary to this approach, however, there is an escalating tendency among too many States to utilize the Special Procedures Code of Conduct as the basis for political attacks on the independence of individual Special Procedures and the entire Special Procedures system. Too often any difference of views about a situation, a mandate or a recommended course of action is turned into an issue of the Code of Conduct. This is a highly selective interpretation of the Code of Conduct, ignoring its fundamental requirement that States refrain from undermining the independence of the Special Procedures mandate holders.

The misuse of the Code of Conduct was anticipated when it was being debated by the Council in its first year. Many States and NGOs argued at the time that the Code needed to be complemented by a Code of Conduct for States. Experience since then has established that need beyond doubt. States should be required, in the words of General Assembly resolution 60/251, "to cooperate fully" with the Council's Special Procedures. To bring a proper balance back to the Council's relations with its Special Procedures, the Council must urgently commit to, develop, and adopt a Code of Conduct for States to guide them in their cooperation with the Special Procedures.

We therefore appeal, in the strongest terms, to member and observer States to act more responsibly and respectfully in their relations with Special Procedures and refrain from all attempts, by word or action, to interfere with the independence of mandate holders or to otherwise undermine their work.

We further call on all States to act in good faith to ensure that the long term integrity and credibility of the Human Rights Council itself are not sacrificed to political expedience.



Global Arms Trade Treaty

IANSA, OXFAM INTERNATIONAL, AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

30 October 2009

More than 100 government officials from around the world attended an event on 6 October at the United Nations, where Amnesty International launched a new briefing on the arms trade. The paper (available at <www.amnesty.org>) sets out a workable human rights rule that must be included in an Arms Trade Treaty to ensure that the treaty is “effective in delivering real security and protecting lives and livelihoods from the proliferation and misuse of arms”. It shows how the absence of international human rights standards for arms transfers undermines security across the globe: contributing to unlawful killings in Guinea and Myanmar, armed violence against women in Guatemala, and war crimes in Somalia and the DRC, for example. A senior UN peacekeeper working in the Democratic Republic of Congo, who is a retired Brigadier General from Pakistan, and the assistant commissioner of police in Jamaica joined with Amnesty International at the event, describing how “hundreds of thousands of people are killed each year as a result of foreseeable patterns of armed violence fuelled by the poorly regulated global trade in conventional arms. This terror trade also contributes to hundreds of thousands more men, women and children being injured, raped, displaced, impoverished, and denied other rights established in international law.”

In a *Guardian* (UK) op-ed on 11 November 2009, David Miliband and Bernard Kouchner welcomed their American counterpart “Hillary Clinton’s announcement on 14 October that the US would back a treaty, the first time the US has said this. “But modern diplomacy is not just about officials working in international organisations,” they added. “It is about making sure the decision-making process reflects the views of an increasingly interdependent and well-informed global society. That is why civil society groups have a vital role to play if we are indeed going to achieve the goal of a universal and robust arms trade treaty. Historically, it has often been the moral argument that has shifted the momentum toward political and social action and been the impetus for change. Today is no different.”

Today at the United Nations, after years of discussions and debates, the vast majority of governments — 153 in total — agreed [on] a timetable to establish a “strong and robust” Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) with the “highest common standards” to control international transfers of conventional arms. There is currently no global treaty on the conventional arms trade. Most of the world’s biggest arms traders — including the USA, UK, France and Germany — will now all back the UN process. Nineteen states [Bahrain, Belarus, China, Cuba, Egypt, India, Iran, Kuwait, Libya, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, UAE, Venezuela and Yemen] abstained but are all expected to take part in the process. Zimbabwe was the only State to vote against. During the debates on the resolution, many countries spoke out and underlined the need for the treaty to be based on international law, including international human rights and humanitarian law.

The Control Arms campaign — a coalition of hundreds of non-governmental organizations in over 100 countries that has promoted the ATT — welcomed the historic breakthrough at the UN ... and called on all States to negotiate a truly effective Treaty. They warned that governments must keep up the momentum to ensure the final Treaty has firm international standards for the global arms trade. Campaigners expressed reservations about the procedure planned for the UN Conference that could give every State the right of veto over final decisions at the UN Conference. They warned [that] a small number of sceptical States must not be allowed to hijack the ATT process when it is clear the world wants a strong treaty.

“All countries participate in the conventional arms trade and share responsibility for the ‘collateral damage’ it produces — widespread death, injuries and human rights abuses,” said Rebecca Peters, director of the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA). “Now, finally, governments have agreed to negotiate legally binding global controls on this deadly trade.”

The agreement in the UN ... means that the eventual ATT will be negotiated in a series of UN meetings concluding at a UN Conference in 2012.

“The Arms Trade Treaty needs a ‘golden rule’ requiring governments to stop any proposed arms transfer that poses a substantial risk of being used for serious violations of human rights or war crimes,” said Brian Wood, Amnesty International’s head of arms control; “such a golden rule could save hundreds of thousands of lives and protect the livelihoods of many millions.”

The resolution on the ATT also highlights the issue of international arms transfers contributing to armed conflict, displacement of people, organised crime and terrorism, thereby undermining peace, safety, security and sustainable development.

“For too long, governments have let the flow of weapons get out of control causing pain, suffering and death in some of the world’s poorest regions. With hundreds of thousands of people dying a year from armed violence, weapons that fall into the hands of criminals and rights abusers destroy communities and livelihoods.” said Anna Macdonald of Oxfam International. “Governments must ensure that negotiations live up to the promise of setting the highest possible standards — this is a life and death situation for thousands of poor people worldwide.”

Notes & Resources

Michel de Montaigne:

*The clatter of arms drowns
the voice of law.*

*World federation is an idea that will
not die. More and more people are
coming to realize that peace must
be more than an interlude if we are to
survive; that peace is a product of law
and order; that law is essential if the
force of arms is not to rule the world.*

- **Justice William O. Douglas,**
US Supreme Court

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton,
confirmation hearing in Senate Foreign
Relations Committee, 13 January 2009:

*America cannot solve the most pressing
problems on our own, and the world
cannot solve them without America.*

*The best way to advance America's
interest in reducing global threats and
seizing global opportunities is to design
and implement global solutions.*

*This isn't a philosophical point.
This is our reality.*

MILITARY EXPENDITURE

Global military expenditure has risen by 45% over the past decade to \$1.46tn, according to the latest annual *Yearbook on Armaments, Disarmament, and International Security* published by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (Sipri). Although the US accounts for more than half the total increase, China and Russia nearly tripled their military expenditure over the decade, with China now second only to the US in the military expenditure league table. "China had both the largest absolute and the largest relative increase," says the Sipri report, and other regional powers, including India, Brazil and Algeria, also substantially increased their spending on arms. Top military spenders in 2008: (1) USA (2) China (3) France (4) UK (5) Russia (6) Germany (7) Japan (8) Italy (9) Saudi Arabia (10) India.



NUCLEAR WEAPONRY

Sipri estimates that in total there are about 8,400 operational nuclear warheads in the world, of which almost 2,000 are kept on high alert, launchable in minutes. Counting spare warheads, those in storage, and those due to be dismantled, there are 23,300 nuclear weapons in the arsenals of eight states – the US, Russia, China, the UK, France, India, Pakistan and Israel, according to the yearbook.

And Matthew Cardinale reports for IPS: "Despite statements by US President Barack Obama that he wants to see the world reduce, and eventually eliminate, nuclear weapons, the US Department of Energy's National Nuclear Security Administration continues to push forward on a pro-

gramme called Complex Modernization, which would expand two existing nuclear plants to allow them to produce new plutonium pits and new bomb parts out of enriched uranium for use in a possible new generation of nuclear bombs."



UNSC RESOLUTION 1540

On 1 October, the Stanley Foundation (www.stanleyfoundation.org) hosted a "civil society session" alongside the official Comprehensive Review of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540, offering "new analysis from dozens of experts" on the 2004 resolution requiring all nations to "adopt and enforce laws to prohibit nonstate actors to manufacture; acquire; possess; develop; transport; transfer; or use nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons and delivery means, in particular for terrorist purposes". The Stanley Foundation views Resolution 1540 "as an effective multilateral mechanism that complements President Obama's call to globally secure all vulnerable nuclear material over four years. In fact, President Obama pledged a US contribution to the trust fund set up to support Resolution 1540 in his recent address to the UN Security Council. The historic Security Council meeting, held during the convening of the UN General Assembly in late September, was the first of its kind led by an American president and resulted in the Security Council pledging to make progress to end nuclear proliferation." Stanley Foundation senior fellow Michael Kraig (see page 55) contributed a working paper to the NGO session, on how "traditional nation-state-focused approaches to non-proliferation cannot adequately address the pressures of proliferation that will continue to mount under globalization".



ARMS & DISPLACEMENT

The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute *Yearbook* figures show an increase in the number of people forcibly displaced by armed conflict in recent years, with internally displaced persons (IDPs) reaching 26 million, more than

twice the number of refugees. According to the report, “for a large share of these people, no sustainable solution is in sight. Mass population displacement is often a result – and even a goal – of violence against civilians”.



CIVILIAN VICTIMS

The Campaign for Innocent Victims in Conflict (CIVIC) is endeavoring to get warring parties to compensate harmed civilians — not on the “grand strategy” level, comments CIVIC Campaign Fellow Scott Paul, formerly of the Citizens for Global Solutions staff, but “internalizing the human costs of war is a humane and commonsense step that states should take at a [relatively] low cost”. Generally, CIVIC (www.civicworldwide.org) “advocates on behalf of victims of armed conflict, working to ensure they receive recognition and assistance from warring parties. CIVIC persuaded the US Congress to establish programs for war victims in Afghanistan and Iraq, guides victims to assistance, brings the human cost of war to the attention of policymakers and the public, and is advocating a new global standard of conduct that warring parties should help where they have hurt. In 2005, CIVIC’s founder Marla Ruzicka was killed in Iraq by a suicide bomber while advocating for families injured and killed in the crossfire. CIVIC honors her legacy and strives to sustain her vision.”



WOMEN, ARMED CONFLICT, & PEACEBUILDING

In recent years, international organizations, NGOs, academics, and certain governments have paid increasing attention to the plight, needs, and rights of women affected by armed conflict. The aim of a 207-page International Committee of the Red Cross “Guidance Document” (available at www.icrc.org) is to provide “a working tool to ensure the provision of appropriate programmes and services to, and with” those women.

Another guide — particularly intended for people with influence over public

services, such as lawyers, teachers and police officers, as well as human rights campaigners and groups — on using the law to press governments to implement their obligations toward women during armed conflict is available from Amnesty International (*Making rights a reality: Violence against women in armed conflict* <[](http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/)>).

Chairing the UN Security Council session (30 September) on human rights and sexual violence, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton introduced a measure calling for a special representative tasked with intensifying efforts to prevent sexual violence against women & children during armed conflicts, saying: “The dehumanising nature of sexual violence does not just harm a single individual or a single family or even a single village or a single group — it shreds the fabric that weaves us together as human beings, it endangers families and communities, erodes social and political stability, and undermines economic progress.” The special representative is supposed to oversee implementation of two Security Council resolutions: 1325 (2000), which urged all parties in conflicts to “respect women’s rights and increase their participation in peace negotiations and post-conflict reconstruction processes”; and 1820 (2008), which “affirmed the ambitions set out in 1325 and established a link between maintaining international peace and security”. The secretary-general’s recent report on *Women, Peace and Security* acknowledges that, despite efforts to promote both resolutions, “progress in implementation is limited and armed conflict continues to have a devastating impact on women and girls”. Secretary Clinton noted that, while the horrors of the DRC and the Darfur region of Sudan are the most widely publicized examples, rape as a tactic of war has been and is still used in war zones across the world, such as Bosnia, Burma, Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Cote d’Ivoire, Chad and Burundi: “In too many countries and in too many cases, the perpetrators of this violence are not punished, and so this impunity encourages further attacks.”

Meanwhile, UNIFEM reminded the Security Council in early October that, al-

though over-represented in numbers of victims and under-represented at the peace negotiation table, women have led successful grassroots peace movements in communities shattered by violence, from Guatemala to Liberia to Northern Ireland. But they have been excluded from the process in the DRC and elsewhere. Civil society organizations have been complaining about this and pressing for more attention to it. “While the UN spent years debating, untold thousands of girls and women around the world have suffered ruined bodies and ruined lives,” said Marianne Mollmann, women’s rights advocate for Human Rights Watch (IPS, 1 October 2009). The UN must lead by example in both peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions, she says. The new special representative should go to “those countries where the population is heavily affected by sexual violence in or after armed conflict” and “advocate directly with governments — including the military, the judiciary, and other armed groups involved” — to deal with sexual violence, Melanie Teff, gender advocate for Refugees International, told IPS.

The Security Council on 7 October unanimously urged all countries and international bodies to take further steps to ensure full participation of women in all stages of conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Saying it intended to include provisions on promoting gender equality when establishing or renewing UN peacekeeping missions, it called on Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to develop a strategy, including appropriate training, to increase the number of women appointed to pursue good offices on his behalf, and to submit within six months a set of indicators to track implementation of the resolution (UN News Centre, 7 October 2009). In a message to the open session on “Women, Peace and Security”, delivered by Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiros, the Secretary-General said: “A growing body of evidence suggests that bringing women to the peace table improves the quality of agreements reached, and increases the chances of successful implementation. ... Experience also suggests that women’s contributions in post-conflict situations can make a critical difference to community survival and reconstruction.” He

observed that “post-conflict gender-based violence” tends to be ignored because “a cessation of conflict is often mistaken for the full return of peace”. His Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, Rachel Mayanja, insisted: “The Council must be relentless in its insistence on women as peacekeepers, peace builders and decision-makers.”

Rethink! A Handbook for Sustainable Peace, from Kvinna till Kvinna (obtainable through WILPF, the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom <www.peacewomen.org>), is “meant to be a tool for people working in areas affected by war and armed conflict and in the peace and rebuilding process”. Asserting that “gender equality as a tool in conflict prevention and peacebuilding has not yet been tested in a measured and constructive way”, it “tr[ies] to show what a holistic model for peacebuilding would look like, a model where gender equality is an indispensable instrument for sustainability”.

See also: UNIFEM’s *On the Agenda: Women’s Essential role in Peacebuilding*.



LAW & HUMAN RIGHTS

The International Council on Human Rights Policy announced in late October the release of its report, *When Legal Worlds Overlap: Human Rights, State and Non-State Law*, which “highlights human rights impacts and dilemmas associated with plural state and non-state laws, such as family laws based on religion, customary justice practices and Alternative Dispute Resolution mechanisms. Drawing on examples of such plural legal orders from around the world, it proposes principles and a framework to guide human rights practitioners and policy-makers. The report also identifies challenges related to incorporation of non-state law in state law, recognition of cultural differences in law, and justice sector reform. Emphasizing the contested nature of culture, especially when dealing with gender equality, religious freedom and indigenous peoples’ rights, it calls for evidence-based assessments of plural legal orders that give special attention to people on the margins of

state and non-state law, and equality between and within communities.” The report may be ordered electronically (www.ichrp.org/en/order); hard copies include a CD of 200+ background documents.

The Global Justice Center has produced a manual (available at <<http://worldpulse.com/pulsewire/solutions/11886>>) to assist in using international law to advance rights. After presenting “a general background on the role of international law and how it can be used in a domestic context”, the manual “touches on the concept of Customary International Law and some international forums for enforcing women’s rights when domestic efforts are not sufficient”. It then surveys some of the tools women are using, beginning with the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), followed by brief discussion of other treaties “with a bit of extra focus on the ICCPR”, and other instruments such as Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. The manual reviews “two other forums for women’s rights — regional bodies and tribunals — [and] discusses the role of constitutions and quotas in advancing rights”.



CEDAW

Facing backlash nearly everywhere, more than 100 representatives of 43 women’s organizations — from 14 countries in the Middle East, North Africa, and the Gulf — met in Amman, Jordan in late June, at the invitation of the Equality without Reservation regional campaign coalition, to share information about “the power and potential” of CEDAW and its Optional Protocol “as international instruments which can and should be used by women’s organizations locally to demand Arab states to honor commitments to gender equality and women’s rights” (Lina Abou Habib, Executive Director of the Lebanon-based Collective for Research and Training on Development – Action). They demanded that CEDAW reservations be lifted in Jordan and discussed the political and social challenges in their own countries. “Whilst there were significant differences amongst participants in their analysis of the role and impact of re-

ligion, conveners by and large agreed that women’s indivisible, inalienable, and universal rights cannot be compromised or relativized,” reported Lina Abou Habib to the Women’s Learning Partnership. The final communiqué issued by the conference conveners emphasized “the necessity to step up campaign activities in all Arab countries, target major state and non-state institutions, strengthen alliance-building within and beyond the region, and invest in further media work and building capacities. Continued collective action, regional and global alliance-building, as well as relentless campaigning, were identified as key strategies for success.”

Reminder: The **Optional Protocol to CEDAW** contains two procedures: (1) A communications procedure allowing individual women, or groups of women, to submit claims of violations of rights protected under the Convention to the Committee; (2) an inquiry procedure enabling the CEDAW Committee to initiate inquiries into situations of grave or systematic violations of women’s rights.



RELIGION, POLITICS, GENDER

The final UNRISD (www.unrisd.org) Religion, Politics and Gender Equality Project reports on Pakistan and Turkey have been issued: *Gender, Religion and the Quest for Justice in Pakistan*, and *Religion, Politics and Gender Equality in Turkey: Confrontation, Coexistence or Transformation?*

A new volume in the Women’s Learning Partnership’s Translation Series, *Iranian Women’s One Million Signatures Campaign for Equality: The Inside Story*, written by women’s rights activist and campaign co-founder Noushin Ahmadi Khorasani, “details the history, strategies, and values that brought together a diverse group of Iranian women, men, and rights activists for the well-known women’s equality campaign. It is a valuable case study of a new model for grassroots movements in the twenty-first century, applicable not only in societies ruled by autocratic governments or influenced by radical fundamentalism, but also in more open and tolerant societies that have

yet to achieve full equality for women.” Mary Robinson (UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, 1997–2002) recommends it as “a moving account of the Iranian women’s courageous struggle for rights. The story is both inspirational and instructive. It provides a wonderfully readable guide to movement building in the 21st century.” Nobel Peace Laureate (2003) Shirin Ebadi says: “It is a testament to the commitment of these women, whose consistent use of non-violent methods to bring about change has, by the time of this book’s publication, led to the indictment and imminent imprisonment of more than fifty of the Campaign’s advocates, including the book’s author.” The book may be ordered at <www.learningpartnership.org>.



MISSING WOMEN

Murder in the Name of Honour (One-world, 2009), presents Rana Husseini’s extensive reporting from Jordan and elsewhere on “so-called honour killings” and the expanding campaign against them.

Dead because their lives are undervalued, the huge numbers of “missing women” in the world, first noticed in 1990 by Indian economist Amartya Sen, are still being studied, in their expanding absence, by researchers at the University of British Columbia and New York University who have found that “the ratio of men to women in developing regions and in some cultures is suspiciously below the norm” (Nicole Baute, “How Did 100,000,000 Women Disappear?”, *Toronto Star*, 6 June 2009). Because of endemic female infanticide in some regions, “people had thought that they [the missing women] were all at the very early stages of life, prenatal or just after, before four years old,” says Canadian economics professor Siwan Anderson. “But what we found is that the majority [of “excess female deaths”] are actually later.” Comparatively poor access to health care is a general factor, but dominant causes that vary by region include: more than 600,000 excess female deaths each year from HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa; abnormal rates of female suicide in China; and in India thousands of dowry-related “injuries”.

Even so, reports Tina Rosenberg (“The Daughter Deficit”, *New York Times*, 23 August 2009), in India and China, “more than 1.5 million fewer girls are born each year than demographics would predict, and more girls die before they turn 5 than would be expected. ... Millions more grow up stunted, physically and intellectually, because they are denied the health care and the education that their brothers receive.” Contrary to common expectations, Monica Das Gupta, who studies population and public health in the World Bank’s development research group, has found that bias against girls is highest in the richest states of India, as well as in certain countries boasting high standards of income & education (South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore), and it also holds among Indian and Chinese immigrants — apparently because when wealthier women have smaller families the pressure to have sons for social security increases, so traditional discrimination actually worsens.



HEALTH

From UNFPA and the Population Reference Bureau, *Health Expectations — Celebrating Achievements of the Cairo Consensus and Highlighting the Urgency for Action*, “takes stock of ICPD [International Conference on Population and Development] progress 15 years later, highlights disparities, and calls attention to areas where accelerated action is needed to meet the commitments made in 1994”. It includes charts, data and figures on maternal health and family planning, young people, inequality, education, population growth, and poverty, and “examines the links between the many areas of action outlined in Programme of Action and some of the associated costs”. It is available at <www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/documents/publications/2009/chartbook.pdf>.

Reproductive Health and Human Rights: The Way Forward (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), edited by Laura Reichenbach and Mindy Jane Roseman, “assesses the past fifteen years of international efforts aimed at improving health, alleviating poverty, diminishing gender inequality, and promoting human rights”.



REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS LAW REFORM

Women’s equality and status in society are directly linked to protection of reproductive rights. Around the world, human rights law and international commitments require governments to reform laws and policies that deny women these rights. *Gaining Ground: A Tool for Advancing Reproductive Rights Law Reform*, from the Center for Reproductive Rights (<http://reproductiverights.org>), is a resource for advocates promoting law reform and provides positive examples of recently adopted laws and policies from around the world in order to help “generate ideas for reform and assess what can be realistically achieved”. Topics include safe pregnancy & childbirth, female genital mutilation and other violence against women, and population policies.



MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDGs)

Over the weekend of 16–18 October, millions of people around the globe used the occasions of World Food Day and World Anti-Poverty Day to press their leaders to meet longstanding pledges for every human being to have the essentials of a decent life. With just six years left until the deadline for reducing extreme poverty by half, Salil Shetty, director of the UN Millennium Campaign, said that Millennium Development Goal supporters “do not accept excuses for governments breaking promises to the world’s poorest and most vulnerable citizens”. José Miguel Guzman, head of the Population and Development Branch at the UN Population Fund, had warned that rising population may swamp anti-poverty goals (IPS, 19 August 2009). In a July report detailing implementation of the declaration adopted at the 1995 World Summit on Social Development in Copenhagen, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said that the global financial and economic crises, volatile food and energy prices, and climate change pose serious threats to advances made in social development in recent years; “this situation threatens to reverse progress towards the internationally-

agreed development goals, including the MDGs". Tamara Kreinin, executive director of the United Nations Foundation's Women and Population Program, told IPS that, whatever the verdict on population growth, "what we do know is that there are 201 million women who would like access to education and services for voluntary family planning and do not have them. ... We also know that universal access to voluntary family planning would help us make huge progress toward reaching the MDGs, particularly [goal] number five [Improving Maternal Health] — which is least likely to be reached."

Two years after its inception, as an aid to working toward the Millennium Development Goals, the Women's Empowerment in Muslim Contexts Consortium (WEMC) is publishing its *Research Programme on Women's Empowerment in Muslim Contexts: gender, poverty and democratisation from the inside out*, a framework "to develop a new narrative of women's empowerment that would indeed bridge the gaps between women's lived realities and decisionmaking at all levels". WEMC (www.wemc.com.hk) is a 5-year Research Programme Consortium funded by the British Government's Department of International Development (DFID) and consisting of eight partners, led by the Southeast Asia Research Centre at the City University of Hong Kong.

Social Watch, a network of grassroots activists and civil society organizations in 60 countries, publishes annual global reports on social and economic issues, with UN human rights standards as their reference point. The dominant theme of the 2008 report, *Rights is the Answer* (at www.socialwatch.org/en/informeImpreso/pdfs/aboutsw2008_eng.pdf), is the centrality of human rights in tackling the global economic crisis. In his introduction to the report, Social Watch's Robert Bissio asserts that the MDGs, rather than being too modest as some complained, were actually a projection of prevailing progress rates on social indicators, but business as usual could not sustain equilibrium, much less improvement.

CLIMATE CHANGE

A comprehensive resource kit from UN-FPA and WEDO on gender, population and climate change — including "how gender equality can reduce vulnerability to climate change impacts" — is available at www.wedo.org/act/climate-change-toolkit/climate-change-connections.

According to CARE International (2 October 2009), the world's poor women usually lack access to opportunities to feed their knowledge and experience into community, national, and global-level adaptation and mitigation strategies. "This jeopardizes larger processes of reducing climate change and its impacts," says Christina Chan, Senior Policy Analyst for CARE. "Well designed, top-down approaches to adaptation can play a role in reducing vulnerability to climate change; yet they may fail to address the particular needs and concerns of women. The global deal must prioritize the needs of the most vulnerable people, and ensure that they have a voice in shaping the world's response to climate change. There can be no climate justice without gender justice."

FUNDING CHANGE

Accelerating Change for Women and Girls: The Role of Women's Funds is a 2009 report of a survey by the Foundation Center (www.foundationcenter.org) and the Women's Funding Network (www.womensfundingnetwork.org). A 2008 report by Social Policy Research Associates found that compared with other funders, the composition of boards and staffers of women's funds are more diverse ethnically, racially and in terms of sexual orientation. The funds go beyond providing financial grants to engage in policy discussion and advocacy. The authors of *Accelerating Change* say: "While grantmaking is the backbone of women's funds, what often makes women's foundations unique is their theory of social change, as well as the role they play as agents in their respective communities."

ELECTORAL CHANGE

The UN offers *Women & Elections: Guide to promoting the participation of women in elections* as a "reference to assist headquarters- and field-based actors from the United Nations, Governments and civil society working to promote greater participation of women in electoral processes in post-conflict countries".

INFORMATION

The International Institute for Environment and Development (www.iied.org) has published a new briefing paper on information and communications technologies and development in the global South, *Village voice: towards inclusive information technologies* (2009).

INDIGENOUS ISSUES

Access to the information that people actually need was one of the emphases of a May 2009 workshop in Guatemala on "Resource Mobilization for Indigenous Women's Rights, co-organized by the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) and the International Indigenous Women's Forum (FIMI), with the support of IBIS-Denmark and UNIFEM. FIMI, an international network of Indigenous women's organizations and leaders that came together in 1995 during the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, "facilitates the participation of Indigenous women leaders from Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas in the United Nations arena and in engagements with feminist movements and organizations," according to Executive Director Monica Aleman (AWID, 31 July 2009). "FIMI strives through its strategic programs to foster a new paradigm that can overcome racism, social exclusion and inequality and promote greater access to economic resources for Indigenous women. ... FIMI relies on two foundational principles ...: the universality and indivisibility of rights. The universality of human rights entitles each woman to exercise her rights, without exception. At the same time, FIMI believes that Indigenous women's rights are dependent on secur-

ing the recognition of collective rights. ... An Indigenous women's identity requires equilibrium between her position within the collectivity of her people and her individuality as a woman. ... Indigenous women's organizations, which have now emerged all over the world, have approached FIMI and AWID to facilitate space and resources to strengthen their networking capacity with other Indigenous women ... and to advance the discourse on Indigenous women's rights."

At the eighth annual meeting of the 16-member UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, some members expressed hope that the new American administration might reconsider US rejection of the 2007 UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (also not accepted by Canada). The May session, attended by more than 2,000 leaders of the world's 370 million indigenous peoples (along with government officials, civil society activists and UN staff) focused on issues of climate change and resource extraction, with reference to international legal norms, including those set out in the Declaration, which calls for governments and corporations to obtain the "free, prior and informed consent of the indigenous communities" for use of their lands & resources and requires that negotiations be based on the principle of equality. An IPS account of the discussion quoted Carsten Smith of Norway, a legal expert who represents the Arctic Saami people: "The declaration is now the shining star for navigation of all indigenous issues. Unfortunately, there is a very huge implementation gap in the world." At a news conference, Lars Anders Baers of the Saami Council told reporters that rapid implementation of the declaration is essential as conflict over Arctic resources heats up, risking further harm to indigenous communities. "As in the cold war, indigenous peoples have become cards in a political game," he said.



UN CONFERENCE ON RACISM

The European Union acknowledged on 6 May that it "did not take the 'heroic' path" (in the words of Czech Foreign Minister Jan Johout) at the UN Confer-

ence on Racism (known as Durban II), which took place in Geneva in April. Germany, Italy, Poland and the Netherlands boycotted the meeting, stating that the draft final declaration overstepped the red lines set by the EU on condemnation of Israel and defamation of religions, other European delegations left the room during the speech by Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, and the Czech Presidency decided to leave the conference afterward. "There was never any common ground, so there was never an EU position before the conference," said Mr Johout, responding to questioning by Members of the European Parliament. "A Europe with a strategy and not acting on an individual basis would probably have been able to use the occasion to speak with a single voice to express its protest at ... inadmissible comments," said European Justice Commissioner Jacques Barrot. "This affair has to serve as a lesson to us and make us reflect so that, in future, we prepare more effective strategies." At the time of the Conference, referring to the long and difficult negotiations, Amnesty International had expressed disappointment about the withdrawal of Australia, Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand and Poland and the refusal of Italy and the USA to join, and welcomed "the forthright manner in which the Norwegian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Jonas Gahr Store, remained engaged in the process and rejected outright President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's inflammatory remarks". AI stated: "True conviction in combating racism requires governments to be there to stand up for what is right and to reject forcefully what is objectionable. While Amnesty International appreciates these countries' reaffirmation of their commitment to continue to combat racism and other forms of discrimination, their continuing engagement on the side of the victims of racism and related forms of discrimination at the Review Conference would have made that reaffirmation much more convincing." They were needed to "strenuously resist and respond to any renewed efforts to politicize the Conference or to detract from the over-riding objective of addressing all forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia or related intolerance in all parts of the world" (AI public statement, 20 April 2009).



UPROOTING

The UNHCR's annual *Global Trends* report, issued in June 2009, states that forty-two million people were forcibly uprooted by conflict and persecution worldwide in 2008. The total includes 15.2 million refugees, 823,000 asylum-seekers, and 26 million internally displaced people uprooted within their own countries. Although the overall total of uprooted people represents a decrease of about 700,000 over the previous year, new displacements in 2009, not reflected in the report, have offset that decline. "In 2009, we have already seen substantial new displacements, namely in Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Somalia", probably bringing the total closer to 45 million, said the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. Afghanistan and Iraq together account for 45 percent of all refugees under UNHCR's responsibility. Of the two million people internally displaced in Pakistan, 80 percent are not in camps, but with poor host communities. The report counts 29 different groups of 25,000 or more refugees in 22 nations who have been in exile for five years or longer and for whom there are no immediate solutions in sight. Of the global total of uprooted people, 25 million, including 14.4 million internally displaced people and 10.5 million refugees, fall under the UNHCR mandate. The other 4.7 million refugees are Palestinians under the UN Relief and Works Agency. The number of asylum-seekers making individual claims rose 28 percent to 839,000. South Africa was the largest single recipient of individual claims, followed by the US, France and Sudan. The number of people whose asylum applications had not yet been processed by the end of the reporting period was estimated at 827,000. Forty-seven percent of refugees and asylum seekers are children under the age of 18. "Those that debate asylum, migration and people on the move in the developed world should meditate a little bit before launching into xenophobic reaction trying to limit the right to seek asylum," advised High Commissioner Guterres. He said that "the capacity of humanitarian organizations like ours is diminishing" because of several factors including a "hardening view" of such organizations by more

governments, the sometimes blurred distinction between humanitarian aid and peacekeeping operations, and, of course, financial pressures. He observed: "The amounts needed to rescue people are less than what is needed to rescue banks."

Also in conjunction with World Refugee Day (20 June), the US Committee for Refugees & Immigrants (USCRI) issued its annual *World Refugee Survey*, citing Gaza, South Africa (because of xenophobic violence there), and Thailand (for its expulsions of Rohingyas and plans to repatriate Hmong refugees forcibly) as among the world's worst places to be a refugee. Other low-ranked countries include Kenya (treatment of Somali refugees); Malaysia (officials selling deportees to gangs along the Malaysia-Thailand border); Egypt; and Turkey. USCRI identified Brazil, Ecuador and Costa Rica as among the best handlers of refugees. It gave Europe a grade of D and the US an F for "refoulement" (returning refugees to places where their lives or freedoms could be threatened) and gave both D for "detention/access to courts".



IMMIGRATION DETENTION

Despite increasingly forceful statements from a range of international human rights bodies and experts against the routine use of detention as a form of immigration control, detention continues to be a frequent response to violations of immigration laws and regulations, such as unauthorized entry or presence of non-nationals in a host country. Amnesty International's April 2009 paper, *Irregular migrants and asylum-seekers: Alternatives to immigration detention*, elaborates states' obligations to provide effective alternatives to immigration detention for irregular migrants and asylum-seekers. It does not deal with alternatives to detention under criminal charge, or for national security or related reasons. The paper is available at <www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/POL33/001/2009/en> and a policy summary is at <www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/POL33/002/2009/en>.



IMMIGRATION POLICY REFORM

The United Nations Development Programme published a report on 5 October 2009, provocatively titled *Lifting the Barriers, Migration, and Human Development*. Aiming to challenge prejudiced assumptions about immigration, editor Jeni Klugman said that when the global recession is over, there will be a new demand for immigrant labor, so this is the time to "make progress in discussion and reform of immigration policy", promoting "the long-term advantages of immigration rather than anti-immigrant protectionism".

Catherine Wihtol de Wenden, research director at the Center for International Studies & Research (CERI), which has just published *Human Globalization* after a recent *Global Atlas of Migrations* (Autrement), also deems mistaken the preference of many governments for a limited "security" approach to immigration issues.

The editor of the International Organization for Migration's bi-yearly newsletter, *Migration*, recently argued that "migration is a structural part of globalisation", so industrialized countries cannot afford to forget that they will need more immigrants at times, and must make greater efforts to reduce racism and xenophobia (www.iom.int).

At least 150 million migrant workers, out of an estimated total of 200 million in the world today, fit the "demographic characteristics of workers who are the most vulnerable" during the current global financial crisis, according to the United Nations, and the economic woes of migrants have global ripple effects. The UN Institute for Training and Research and the International Organisation for Migration sponsored a seminar at the end of June on the problems of migrant workers, whose living conditions are deteriorating in many countries and whose countries of origin often depend on their diminishing remittances. Extensive evidence of rising hostility toward them is being reported. Migrants are not just economic actors, observed UN Under-Secretary-General Cheick Sidi Diarra, the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries

& Small Island Developing States; they are "social beings, who put down roots and form relationships in their new countries".

Despite the hardships, sixteen percent of the world's adult population — around 700 million people — want to move to another country, according to a Gallup poll reported by the *Globe and Mail* (Toronto, 13 November 2009).

The same newspaper had reported in June that "the world should brace itself for millions of climate refugees in coming decades, a mass migration that will be larger than any in human history", according to a document compiled by researchers at Columbia University, Care International, and the United Nations University, citing studies that suggest the number could be as high as 700 million by 2050. "In coming decades, climate change will motivate or force millions of people to leave their homes.... Although the precise number of migrants and displaced people may elude science for some time, the mass of people on the move will likely be staggering and surpass any historical antecedent," says the report, *In Search of Shelter*.

The UN Committee on Migrant Workers monitors States Parties' implementation of the International Convention on the Protection of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (CMW; its full text is at <www2.ohchr.org/english/law/cmw.htm#a72>). Ahead of its 3 December 2009 elections, Amnesty International expressed concern about an insufficient number of nominations received (as of 1 October) and called on all States Parties to the CMW to nominate independent and highly qualified candidates for the election to this body in order to ensure the effectiveness and credibility of the Committee and urged that "national processes for attracting and selecting candidates must be open, transparent and fair", with civil society organizations encouraged to participate at all stages.



HUMAN TRAFFICKING

"It's the same greed, the same lack of regulation, the same lack of government

action that is causing forced labour and that caused the global financial crisis,” Roger Plant, head of the Special Action Programme to Combat Forced Labour at the International Labour Organisation (ILO), told an International Conference on Trafficking in Persons that was organized by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) in Italy in May to assess progress made ten years after the United Nations adopted the Palermo Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its two protocols on trafficking and smuggling.

“The protocols have been ratified by more than 100 countries, and have provided many valuable juridical instruments, but there is poor implementation and insufficient data collection by individual states, making monitoring by international organisations arduous,” reported Zoltán Dujisin, the IPS observer in Palermo (27 May 2009). But “before the protocols the ILO was only looking at the issue of forced labour imposed by states, while we know that 80 percent of forced labour is done by private interests,” Plant told the conference; and efforts to take into account connections among countries of origin, transit, and destination had scarcely begun. According to the ILO, 12.3 million people are in forced labor worldwide. To deal with the problem, international cooperation — involving labor unions and businesses as well as governments — is crucial, he said, but grievously lacking.



CHILD RIGHTS CONVENTION

The Guardian (London) reported in June that the Obama administration is actively pursuing “when and how it might be possible” to endorse the UN Rights of the Child treaty previously ratified by every member nation except the US and Somalia. The pact has been used to bolster child protection laws in several nations during the past two decades; supporters believe this would be broadened and strengthened by US backing and affirm the treaty’s strong support for families. Some opponents in the US, contending that the treaty would enable government officials and the UN committee overseeing the treaty to interfere with parental authority,

have proposed a “parental rights” amendment to the Constitution (introduced in Congress this spring by Representatives Hoekstra and DeMint) — extending to “any source of international law”.



CONVENTIONS WORKING GROUP

Citizens for Global Solutions, UNA-USA, and other NGOs recently launched a collaborative effort to strengthen US support for international law through the ratification of important, broadly endorsed multilateral treaties. Known as the Conventions Working Group, the initiative brings together leaders of national groups supporting individual treaties, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child, CEDAW, the Convention on the Law of the Sea, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the International Criminal Court’s Rome Statute, and the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty.



COUNTER-TERRORISM EXCESS

The Human Rights Council’s special rapporteur on promotion and protection of human rights while countering terrorism, Martin Scheinin, warned on 26 October that many women and gays and groups pushing gender equality are being caught between being victims of extremist groups and victims of counter-terrorism measures (Reuters). In his latest report to the United Nations, he said: “The breadth of Governments’ counter-terrorism measures have resulted in significant gender-based human rights violations. In many instances, governments have used vague and broad definitions of ‘terrorism’ to punish those who do not conform to traditional gender roles and to suppress social movements that seek gender equality in the protection of human rights.” He also expressed concern about the use of rape and other forms of gender-based violence during the interrogation of suspects, the use of profiling, and detention & and ill-treatment of women and children in order to extract information on male family members. He made 17 recommendations to UN member states, including for more attention to gender sensitive reparation schemes for

victims of terrorism. “There’s been a lot of progress in acknowledging terrorism can most effectively be fought with compliance with human rights, nevertheless there’s still a lot to do,” he said.



TRADITIONAL VALUES CONTROVERSY

On 2 October 2009, the UN Human Rights Council adopted (26 member states in favor, 15 against, and 6 abstentions) a resolution put forth by the Russian Federation on “promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms through a better understanding of traditional values of humankind”. It had been amended during the 12th session to remove the stipulation that “traditional values of humankind” should be “in conformity with international human rights law”. Therefore, the resolution did not even belong in the Human Rights Council, Amnesty International had asserted, warning that its adoption would “introduce into the Human Rights Council a seriously flawed concept of ‘traditional values’ without the safeguards necessary to ensure that it cannot be abused to undermine human rights”. AI noted that “numerous UN conventions, declarations and resolutions, as well as the work of human rights treaty monitoring bodies and independent experts, recognize that tradition and culture are too frequently used in efforts to justify violations of human rights, particularly the human rights of women. In previous decades and centuries, mixed-race marriages, desegregation, women having the right to work, to vote, or to own property, are just some of the rights that would have been denied on the grounds of inconsistency with so-called ‘traditional values’. ... The Human Rights Council resolution on the mandate of the newly-appointed Independent Expert in the field of cultural rights, affirms that ‘no one may invoke cultural diversity to infringe upon human rights guaranteed by international law, nor to limit their scope’.”

Objecting that the resolution “sends entirely the wrong message”, AWID (Association for Women’s Rights in Development) also commented on other instances of UN recognition that tradition and cul-

ture sometimes may violate human rights, quoting the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights: “Despite their harmful nature and their violation of international human rights laws, such practices persist because they are not questioned and take on an aura of morality in the eyes of those practicing them.” AWID pointed out that the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women repeatedly has “called attention to harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation, honor killings, spousal abuse, dowry-related violence, and customary laws that deny women’s equality. While there are many examples of progressive interpretations of religion, harmful customary practices and traditional values are often justified with reference to religion.”



RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISMS

Also in October, AWID presented *New Insights on Religious Fundamentalisms*, a briefing on a year of research and a series of publications that “sought to map the major trends, strategies and impacts of religious fundamentalist movements across regions and religions”. The report draws on the results of a global survey of over 1,600 women’s rights activists, in-depth interviews with over 50 key experts, as well as supplementary research and consultations. AWID found that, in every region, women’s rights activists increasingly “are confronting fundamentalist tendencies within the world’s major and minor religions, and several key defining characteristics of these movements appear to resonate across borders and religious divides”, dogmatically opposing democratic values, pluralism, and freedom of thought. “These movements are gaining the power to shape social norms, influence international institutions and national decision makers, and define laws and policies, especially in the areas of ‘morality’ and bodily autonomy. In the experience of 8 out of 10 women’s rights activists, religious fundamentalisms have a negative impact on women’s rights, and over two-thirds regard these movements as obstructing women’s rights more than other political forces.” According to 50%

of them, “a common fundamentalist strategy” is use of violence “to create fear and isolation in order to keep society fragmented, discourage those who resist or challenge the fundamentalist agenda, and intimidate their potential allies”.

In *L’islam face à l’occident. Un heurt de civilisations?* (Editions L’Harmattan, 2009), Romain Yakemtchouk, emeritus professor at the Université Catholique de Louvain in Belgium and editor-in-chief of the *Studia Diplomatica* review, surveys the various forms of Islam throughout the world and urges a drawing together of Islamic and Western outlooks that claim to be based on the same values.



EU EXPERIENCE

European treaties (such as Nice & Lisbon), principles, policies, and processes (such as Cardiff & Bologna) often go by the name of the cities or even villages (such as Schengen, on the Luxembourg borders — standing for free circulation of individuals through Europe) where they were created or confirmed. So the history of European integration has been traced in an illustrated volume, *Mapping European integration through its cities* (Homes International, Brussels, 2009), by Domenico Rossetti di Valdalbero, a manager at the European Commission, where he is Secretary General of the Belgian section of the Union of European Federalists.

In *Saving the European Union. The Logic of the Lisbon Treaty* (Shoehorn Media Ltd, <www.shoehornbooks.com>, 2009), constitutional process expert Andrew Duff, who chairs the European Union of Federalists, offered (ahead of the recent second Irish referendum) a thorough explanation of the treaty he helped to envision — what it actually says, what the EU can and cannot do under the treaty and what the role of the EU institutions will be. He also unabashedly makes 12 recommendations about how (and why) to strengthen the Union’s federalist character.

The young French researchers and high-ranking civil servants who appear in *Questions européennes - Le droit et les*

politiques de l’Union (Presses Universitaires de France, <www.puf.com>, “Major” series, 2009), edited by Thurian Jouno, examine the law, history, structures, and policies (including “sovereignty policies”) of the European Union in a comprehensive fashion, with particular attention to the role of law in the European integration process at all levels.

The European Union and Global Governance (Routledge <www.ebookstore.tandf.co.uk>, “Europe in the World” series, 2009), edited by Professor Mario Telò, is a multidisciplinary discussion of questions such as: What influence does the European Union have in the world? In what way and to what extent is it helping a new global governance come into being? To what extent should it be seen as a “global player” and an “international power in the making”? A variety of perspectives and arguments are presented, although the editor, based at the Institut d’Etudes Européennes at the Université Libre de Bruxelles, acknowledges that the authors “share the conviction that the EU’s weight in the world is rooted in its very existence, as a mature form of multilateral governance”, without indulging in “Eurocentric euphoria”. In addition to various experts’ assessments of specific domestic, regional and foreign policies, monetary integration issues, decision-making procedures & implementation mechanisms, and challenges of Union enlargement and the European Neighbourhood Policy (lacking any “comprehensive strategic design”, according to one contributor), Philosopher Jean-Marc Ferry reflects on “European integration as a way of giving birth to a cosmopolitan world”, comments Michel Theys (Agence Europe, 29 September 2009). Mario Telò concludes that the European Union is “at once more and less than a classical power”, and “is indeed an understated power by default (given the possibility of amassing a classical power through a federal state with appropriated military capabilities) and a provocation for the traditional realist understanding of international relations which linked international power to a hierarchy of capabilities wherein military force maintained a clear primacy”.

Blurred Boundaries

James Carroll

18 May 2009

In Brazil last week, fundamental violations of the natural order occurred - or so it seemed to those made squeamish by snakes. Vast flooding sent Amazon basin waters spilling over river banks, drowning villages and towns, killing dozens, and setting hundreds of thousands to flight. When settlements became inundated, a further boundary between the domesticated world and the wild was breached as poisonous snakes, alligators, lizards, and other reptiles took over what had been roads and streets. Fleeing to higher ground, survivors found themselves competing for dry land with scorpions and other lethal creatures from whom humans normally keep their distance. When flooding washed corpses out of graves, the boundary between the living and the dead was blurred.

Boundaries. Brazil's trouble plucks a chord of universal anxiety, and not just about rising water. Trespassing snakes suggest how set barriers between danger and domestication have been falling all over the place. The fires in California seem like payback for the intrusion of suburban lawns into once-uninhabitable desert terrain. Massive deforestation in the Southern hemisphere has been driving jungle beasts into populated areas, but even the affluent suburbs of the north are stalked by coyotes, wolves, and even bears, the boundaries of whose ex-urban habitats have been obliterated.

"Swine flu knows no boundaries", read a recent headline. And how. Not just that the

virus spreads so readily across national, cultural, and economic borders, but that the illness itself was generated by a leap from animal to human. This was a breaching of a natural barrier of such magnitude that it now merits its own diagnostic category, "transboundary animal disease". Because humans lack immunity from infection that leaps from animals, it can be especially lethal, as the tragic history of HIV/AIDS shows, a disease thought to have originated many decades ago in animal primates. Recent alarms about avian flu include concerns over the close proximity in which many people in developing countries live with poultry, a nexus that makes the danger of transboundary infection acute.

That inter-species boundaries are turning out to be as porous as geographic ones is transforming the meaning of health. But that is only the beginning, as fixed ideas about "natural" boundaries change before our eyes. For example, geneticists now anticipate the capacity to hybridize animals and humans - a chimpanzee, for example, with ever more human qualities. At the other end of the scale, computer scientists, in pursuit of so-called artificial intelligence, look toward the creation of wired humanoids. Who are we then?

In other realms, traditional boundaries fall between child and adult, as prepubescent youngsters are sexualized, and 20-somethings are infantilized. The current financial crisis involves, among other complexities, the collapse of boundaries

between commercial banks and hedge funds. America's political culture has been infected by the fallen boundary between interrogation and torture. Madness took over the mind of a US soldier in Baghdad last week, destroying the boundary between friend and enemy, as he killed five comrades.

Every kind of madness, for that matter, can be defined as collapse of boundaries, which may be why this pervasive manifestation of the phenomenon threatens. Why else does Genesis describe the Creator's act, across successive days, as the establishment of boundaries: between light and dark, earth and heaven, dry land and water, vegetation and living creatures, including "great sea serpents of every kind . . . and every kind of land reptile"? Only then, did God create humans. Boundary making was God's way of drawing order out of primeval chaos. Breached boundaries, therefore, frighten us. Hence primeval terror in flooded Brazil.

In fact, across the eons (not seven days), it has been humans drawing order out of chaos. Ironically, the boundary-less situations, from what we know of evolution, have been the most creative. Our forebears in life, after all, arose out of the place where water and land made mud. Where the boundary fell between jungle and savannah, we learned to walk upright. Where life met death, our unbound feelings taught us memory and hope. We formed the habit of erecting boundaries to be safe, in sum - but also in order to transcend them.

James Carroll, Distinguished Scholar-in-Residence at Suffolk University in Boston, is the author of many books, including *An American Requiem*, *Constantine's Sword*, *House of War*, and *Practicing Catholic*. Years of work toward Jewish-Christian-Muslim reconciliation have led to his current writing on the problem of religion and violence. He is a regular contributor to *The Daily Beast* and his column appears weekly in the *Boston Globe*. This one is reprinted with their permission.

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Perseveranda (“Persy”) So, 52, UNICEF Chief of Education in Pakistan, was killed in the 9 June 2009 bombing of the Pearl Continental Hotel in the city of Peshawar. Although based in Islamabad, she was in Peshawar to help implement programs supporting girls’ education. The hotel was housing many humanitarian workers. Since 1994 Ms So had worked for UNICEF in Pakistan, Indonesia, and her native Philippines.



Photo: © UNICEF

I am optimistic because wherever I have been I have seen that the vast majority of people are willing to live in diversity. It is often a minority that has taken all the others hostage. Therefore I think that when governments and public opinion makers make strategies, they have to give voice to that majority that is against violence, against discrimination and against religious persecution.

~ **Asma Jahangir**,
UN Special Rapporteur
on the Freedom of Religion or Belief,
June 2008

