

UNITY

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to the United Nations

Editor: Ian Mathews Ph: (02) 6281 4025 Fax (02) 6285 2529

Post: 4 Stone Place, Garran ACT 2605

E-mail: imathews@ozemail.com.au

Earlier editions of UNity 2004-05 and 2006 are on the UNAA website: www.unaa.org.au
or e-mail the editor.

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[1] Humanitarian crisis hits E Timor and Indonesian quake victims

Paul O'Callaghan, Executive Director of the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) says the combination of the earthquake near Jogjakarta and the political implosion in East Timor has presented a huge logistical challenge for ACFID member agencies engaged in the response to humanitarian needs.

In addition, the United Nations World Food Program is providing highly fortified biscuits to 6,000 children and pregnant women in displaced people's camps in and around the capital, Dili, to complement the government's relief rations. That number is expected to rise in the coming days.

- WFP has also distributed emergency rations to women, children and in-patients in the National Hospital in Dili.
- In the eastern region of Lospalos, rice and fortified biscuits will be distributed to over 1,000 displaced people in the coming two days.
- WFP has re-started operations for children and new mothers in the Oecussi region in the east, where 50 metric tons of rice had been pre-positioned as an emergency reserve.
- WFP is working closely with authorities in Timor Leste to increase food distributions to displaced people in the coming days. WFP and the government have agreed to provide food to 30,000 people in the countryside who have been affected by the recent fighting.
- Plans are also being made for assistance to 1,500 families in Liquica district, west of Dili, as well as for deliveries of rice to communities affected by the fighting in Maubara, Alieu, Baucau and Atauro districts.

Eight member agencies of ACFED are active in East Timor and 15 are responding so far in Java. He said, "I am particularly aware of the risk to agency staff and the difficult decisions which must be made by agencies to protect them. Our prayers are with all those Australian, Timorese and other agency staff at this time.

"The East Timor situation is a sad reminder of the real fragility of emerging, post-conflict states which have suffered great trauma, especially where leaders have been unable to win the confidence of their own people in addressing social, economic and health needs. It appears that conflicting ideologies about nation-building and conflicts, which preceded the Indonesian occupation, have resurfaced. This points to a long process of change towards greater unity of purpose."

ACFID, acting on behalf of its member agencies, and the chief executive officer of World Vision, Tim Costello, sought ministerial help for Defence Force protection of displaced people. "Regrettably, this request for ADF protection did not translate into reality for another two days. Thankfully, there were no fatal incidents in the compounds during this time," Mr O'Callaghan said.

Appeal details are displayed on the ACFID website at:

- Java: <http://www.acfid.asn.au/campaigns/java.htm> and
- East Timor: http://www.acfid.asn.au/campaigns/east_timor.htm

The primary reference point for information about NGO appeals and related issues is the ACFID website at <http://www.acfid.asn.au/campaigns/asiaearthquake.htm> or call **02 6281 9218**

Union Aid Abroad - APHEDA has had an office in Dili since 1999, and though its Australian volunteers have been temporarily withdrawn, local staff are assisting in the relief efforts in Dili.

While troops from Australia, Malaysia, New Zealand and Portugal have are restoring order, many homes have been burned, and reportedly 50,000 people have taken shelter in churches and schools and other buildings in Dili. Another estimated 50,000 have moved to districts outside the capital. All need clean water, temporary shelter, food and health care. The government and international NGOs have been meeting to coordinate support to these camps.

Over the coming weeks APHEDA will consult with its local partner organisations in community radio, trade unions, skills-training community groups, university library, print media, and in the Nurses' Association, on restoring any physical infrastructures that have sustained damage, and assist them in peace-building strategies.

To make a contribution, call Union Aid Abroad - APHEDA: **1800 888 674** (in working hours) or e-mail office@apheda.org.au website: www.apheda.org.au
For more information from WFP email: tarek elquindi@wfp.org WFP Country Director Timor Leste

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[2] UN coordinates earthquake aid efforts

A joint UN emergency assessment team, led by the World Food Program, is assisting the Indonesian government's relief efforts following the earthquake measuring 6.3 on the Richter scale which hit the Indonesian island of Java just before dawn on May 27. Current estimates put the number of dead at more than 6,000 people, and at least 200,000 people are estimated to be homeless. The UN team includes

- Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs(OCHA),
- UN Children's Fund (UNICEF),
- UN Development Program (UNDP), UNFPA and
- World Health Organisation (WHO) and
- Non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

World Food Program is distributing emergency food rations to earthquake survivors including 30 tons of high-energy biscuits which are fortified with essential vitamins and minerals and are sufficient to feed about 20,000 people for 7 days. Other food supplies trucked in include fortified noodles. WFP's long-standing corporate partner, TNT, has helped provide trucks to ensure that food arrives as quickly as possible.

Stocks have been drawn from food WFP already had in Jakarta, and the nearby town of Solo. A shortage of storage facilities in the affected areas has also prompted WFP to send mobile warehouses previously used for its tsunami operations.

A WFP-chartered plane arrived in Solo – approximately three hours by road from the worst-affected areas -- carrying an emergency medical team from Aceh and 2 tons of medicine.

The World Health Organisation has sent emergency equipment, vaccination campaign support and set up a disease surveillance system following the earthquake. WHO has sent vehicles loaded with medicines and communications equipment into the area.

With the death toll now above 6,000, WHO rescue teams are dealing with several thousand injured, including some 1500 very seriously who needed urgent medical evacuation and care. About 200 000 people are displaced from their homes. Bantul District, south of Yogyakarta and with a population of about 790,000, is reported to be the worst hit with the majority of houses destroyed.

At least one of the six hospitals in the district has been destroyed and other hospitals in the area are overcrowded. WHO has several staff working with the Ministry of Health (MOH) in the affected area.

WHO's disease surveillance system will detect and control outbreaks of communicable diseases, including diarrhoeal disease. Such a system was instrumental in finding and controlling disease in Aceh following the tsunami.

UNESCO has offered to assess and repair **World Heritage** sites damaged by Indonesia's earthquake. Recognising that humanitarian emergency relief is the most immediate priority, the UN ESCO says it is prepared to help restore damaged sites such as the 10th-century Prambanan Hindu temple compounds in Java.

For more information:

Australia's contribution of medical aid Minister for Foreign Affairs (02) 6277 7500 e-mail: A.Downer.MP@aph.gov.au Departmental 02 6261 1555 www.dfat.gov.au

AusAID (Public Affairs) www.ausaid.gov.au

Minister for Defence (02) 6277 7800 or Department 02 6265 3343 www.defence.gov.au

For more UN information access

World Food Program www.wfp.org

[UN News Centre](#)
[Key UN Bodies, Agencies, Funds and Programs](#)

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[3] Howard critical of East Timor politics

The Prime Minister, John Howard, says the East Timorese government has not done a good job since the country became independent.

Asked in an interview on May 29 if Australia would have to continue giving humanitarian aid beyond the immediate crisis, Mr Howard said, "Well we'll look at that but that's not the fundamental problem.

"Every time something arises people think it's solved by throwing more money at it. The fundamental problem in East Timor is that the country is not being governed and as General Cosgrove [Australian military commander during independence process] pointed out in an interview with Fran Kelly on Radio National this morning, the circumstances now are very different from what they were in 1999.

"In 1999 there was united national euphoria about achieving independence. Now the division between east and west and the lack of a political capacity to handle it has caused a problem. We are a world away, in a sense, from where we were in 1999 and in the end the people of East Timor have got to solve the problem because East Timor is an independent country.

"I mean we cannot have a situation around the world and particularly in our region where Australia is told to respect the independence of countries and that it's a bully boy if it seeks to express a view or to intervene, but when something goes wrong, Australia is then criticised for not having, quote, intervened earlier.

"Now we have done exactly the right thing with East Timor. We helped East Timor secure her independence in 1999, led that operation and did it very effectively. We stayed for a long period of time as part of the **United Nations** force and then the United Nations decided it was time to let them run their own show. Now sadly they haven't done a very good job of it. They asked us to come back and help them; we've done that immediately and we'll be encouraging them to run their own show again. We'll be giving them help, we'll be giving them advice, but in the end if it is to be an independent country, East Timor has got to run itself."

For more information, call the Prime Minister's office (02) 6277 7700 website: www.pm.gov.au

Greens Senator Kerry Nettle says big questions still remain over the role of the Australian Defence Forces in East Timor before this month's unrest, after questioning Defence officials about the extent of Australia's influence on the East Timorese military.

According to Senator Nettle, Defence's Deputy Secretary Strategy, Michael Pezzullo, said in evidence to a Senate Estimates committee that 28 ADF personnel were in the battalions and Timor military headquarters at the time of recent troubles in East Timor. Mr Pezzullo indicated that they were aware of the problems that were developing in the East Timorese military and that they have had almost daily contact with Timorese officers including those of the level of rebel leader Major Reinado.

"He also indicated that Australian advisers may have been consulted on the sackings of large numbers of the Timor military," Senator Nettle said. "I want to know if Defence had any role in the sacking of troops that precipitated the current crisis.

"I want to know what communication and cooperation Defence has had with the rebel leader Major Reinado. Defence indicated that he was in Australia at the end of last year for training and have agreed to provide more information about ongoing communication with him since then."

The Shadow Minister for Defence, Robert McClelland, asked the Minister for Defence on May 29

- (1) Will he provide details of the humanitarian law training given to East Timorese troops by the Australian military during its first deployment to East Timor?
- (2) Will he outline the institution-building aspects of its original reconstruction program which assisted the East Timorese to develop a legislative framework for their security services and build an apolitical, legally restrained Defence Force?
- (4) What institution-building and humanitarian law instruction is the ADF in Al-Muthanna providing to the Iraqi personnel it is training?
- (5) Will he provide an outline of the overall plan to assist the Iraqis in developing a stable legal and practical framework for their Defence Forces in order to avoid similar problems to those now being faced in East Timor?

For more information, call Senator Kerry Nettle (02) 6277 3501 or 02 9690 2038 E-mail:

senator.nettle@aph.gov.au website www.kerry.nettle.org.au

Robert McClelland (02) 6277 4323 or (02) 9587 8047 e-mail: R.McClelland.MP@aph.gov.au

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[4] NGO letter to the Security Council on Iraq

The United Nations Association of Australia has joined a wide range of other international non-government organisations in sending a letter to the UN Security Council's Permanent Representatives raising a range of contentious issues over the continued occupation of Iraq.

Dated May 19, the letter points out that Resolution 1637 requires the Security Council to review the mandate of the Multinational Force (MNF) in Iraq no later than 15 June 2006. The resolution also requires a review of the Development Fund for Iraq (DFI) and of the work of the International Advisory and Monitoring Board (IAMB).

"We are writing to urge the Council to conduct a rigorous and thorough review of these matters, using the standards of international law and financial oversight which the international community expects to be applied," say the signatories, including John Langmore, national president of UNAA.

"As you are aware, the MNF stands accused of many serious violations of international law. The DFI and the reconstruction programs have been accused of widespread corruption and malfeasance. These are extremely serious matters for the Council to investigate and to act upon."

In light of the Council's impending review, the letter calls attention to:

Detentions and Prisons holding "thousands of Iraqi prisoners for long periods without charge or trial, ... the great majority of such prisoners have been denied fundamental rights such as contact with legal counsel and family members. The MNF has denied human rights organisations' repeated requests for access to prisons and prisoners."

The letter states that according to the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, the MNF held an estimated 14,000 prisoners as of February 2006 in various prisons; that the Government of Iraq holds about 15,000 prisoners... "without charge or trial and often under deplorable conditions." These are clear violations of the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (1966), the letter says.

Prisoner Abuse and Torture: The letter says also that in numerous detention centres and prisons, MNF forces have subjected prisoners to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment,

identified by human rights authorities as abuse and torture. In citing details, the letter says these are clear violations of the *UN Convention against Torture (1985)*, *The Hague Convention (1907)* and the *Geneva Convention (1949)*.

Use of Illegal, Indiscriminate and Especially Injurious Weapons: The letter states that “The MNF has made use of indiscriminate and especially injurious weapons that are banned by international convention or widely considered unacceptable and inhuman. In detailing examples, the letter says they are banned by *Protocol III of the UN Convention on Weapons Which May Be Deemed To Be Excessively Injurious Or To Have Indiscriminate Effects (1980)*. It also notes that the Coalition made use of depleted uranium and cluster bombs in violation of *Protocol I of the Geneva Conventions*.

Attacks on Population Centers and Siege Tactics: Despite the Security Council’s insistence on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, the MNF has repeatedly targeted heavily-populated civilian centres and used siege tactics explicitly prohibited under *Article 14 of the Second Protocol of the Geneva Conventions* – “and they have clearly failed to respect the neutrality of medical facilities. (22) These acts are prohibited under numerous articles of the *Geneva Conventions (1949)*.”

Irregularities in Spending and Lack of Oversight of the Development Fund for Iraq: The letter states that in May 2003, the Security Council created the Development Fund for Iraq under Resolution 1483 and the UN eventually turned over US\$9.978 billion to the Fund and goes on “...Though under Coalition/MNF control or influence, a disturbingly large portion of these funds have been disbursed but not accounted for.” It gives examples of alleged corruption.

Gross Failure to Protect Cultural Heritage: “In spite of many warnings from respected expert groups, the Coalition failed to protect Iraq’s priceless cultural heritage in the early weeks of the invasion and war. ... and the MNF has failed to materially improve its protection of historic buildings and archaeological sites. Rebuilding and restoration by the MNF has been inadequate. Above all, the tragic and preventable looting of Iraq’s archeological sites (some of the world’s most important cultural heritage) continues. These acts are prohibited under the *World Heritage Convention (1972)*.”

Impunity: The letter says “The rule of law cannot function in conditions of impunity. The Security Council has affirmed the importance of the rule of law and the end of impunity, as means towards peace and reconciliation. However, the MNF has claimed broad impunity for its forces, for private security personnel, for foreign military and civilian contractors, and even for the oil companies doing business with Iraq. The Iraqi people and their government have virtually no legal recourse...”

In conclusion, the signatories say “We urge the Security Council to review the MNF mandate rigorously and completely. At the very least, the Council could stipulate specific standards of conduct for the MNF to bring it into conformity with international law. ... We believe the time has come for the Security Council to assume its responsibility, to thoroughly discuss these matters in light of international law, to consult with the international community, and to substantially reconsider, revise or terminate the mandate it has given to the MNF.

The letter is signed by:

Violette Daguere, President Arab Commission for Human Rights; Vicki Semler, Executive Director International Women’s Tribune Center; Agnes Khoo, Executive Director ARENA (Asian Regional Exchange for New Alternatives); Rachel Laurence, Senior Researcher Iraq Analysis Group; Peter Weiss, Vice-President Center for Constitutional Rights; Rachid Mesli, President Justitia Universalis; Lucy Law Webster, Board Member and UN Observer Economists for Peace and Security; John Burroughs, Executive Director Lawyers’ Committee on Nuclear Policy; Denis J. Halliday, Former UN Assistant Secretary General and UN Humanitarian Coordinator in Iraq 1997-98; Robb Davis, Executive Director Mennonite Central Committee; Hans von Sponeck, Former UN Assistant Secretary General and UN Humanitarian Coordinator in Iraq 1998-2000; Chris Toensing, Executive Director Middle East Research and Information Project; Medea Benjamin, Co-Founder Global Exchange; Greg Muttit, Researcher PLATFORM; James A. Paul, Executive Director

Global Policy Forum; Haytham Manna, President Protection of Human Rights Defenders in the Arab World; Cora Weiss, President Hague Appeal for Peace; Rehema Kerefu, National Coordinator Southern Africa Human Rights NGO Network, Tanzania Chapter; Phyllis Bennis, Director New Internationalism Project Institute for Policy Studies; Flavio Lotti, National Coordinator Tavola della Pace; Roberto Bissio, Director Instituto del Tercer Mundo Social Watch; Else M. Adjali, NGO Representative to the UN, Global Ministries United Methodist Church; Jeanne Mirer, Secretary General International Association of Democratic Lawyers; James E. Winkler, General Secretary, General Board of Church and Society United Methodist Church; Clarence Dias, President International Center for Law in Development; John Langmore, National President UN Association of Australia; Sidiki Kaba, President International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH); Regina Birchem, International President Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.

For a copy of the full text, e-mail UNAA national president John Langmore langmore@att.net or phone **03 9486 5331**

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[5] New jobs in Iraq for Australian forces

Australian Defence Force troops, currently deployed in Iraq, have been assigned new tasks as a result of the scheduled withdrawal of Japanese military engineers they have been guarding.

For the past year personnel from the Al Muthanna Task Group have trained soldiers from the 2nd Brigade of the Iraqi Army's 10th Division.

The Australian Government has agreed that, from early June, "a team of about 30 personnel will mentor and assist Iraqi Army instructors at the Basic Training Centre (BTC) at Tallil near An Nasiriyah in Dhi Qar Province," the Minister for Defence, Brendan Nelson, said on May 31. They will replace British instructors who currently provide this support.

There will also be a small ADF contingent based at the Counter Insurgency (COIN) Academy at Taji, near Baghdad, a training 'centre for excellence' in Iraq.

For more information, call the office of the Minister for Defence **(02) 6277 7800**
Department **02 6265 3343** www.defence.gov.au

Shadow Minister for Defence Robert McClelland says the Government is searching for a role for Australian troops in Iraq "when there is clearly a pressing need to address emerging security issues in our region.

Mr McClelland said, "When discussing Japanese intentions in Southern Iraq the Defence Minister said in his Press Club address: 'We do expect that sometime over the next two to three months that they will withdraw. Once the engineers have withdrawn the Australian Government is disposed to redeploying them to another area in Southern Iraq.'

He went on, "First our Iraq commitment was about weapons of mass destruction, then it became about regime change, then about securing the environment for the Japanese. Now the Japanese are withdrawing we are apparently looking for 'other tasks'.

According to the Defence Minister, "There will also be other tasks that will be undertaken which will be a product of consensus and agreement with the Iraqi Government, our allies, the British, the US and others."

Mr McClelland added, "There is clearly an arc of instability in our region. The Government must explain how its open ended and open cheque book commitment in Iraq is consistent with our national security priorities. We should not be shopping around for a new role in Iraq when we are

looking at a protracted commitment in East Timor and potentially the need to address other areas of insecurity in our region.”

For more information, Robert McClelland (02) 6277 4323 or (02) 9587 8047 e-mail: R.McClelland.MP@aph.gov.au

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[6] Audit hearing on detention process

Federal Parliament’s Public Accounts and Audit Committee held a hearing in Parliament House, Canberra on June 2 to examine three reports tabled by the Auditor-General in the financial year 2005–06. These reports are Audit Report No. 32, *Management of the Tender Process for the Detention Services Contract*, with Audit Report No. 34, *Advance Passenger Processing*, and Audit Report No. 21, *Audit of Financial Statements of Australian Government Entities for the Period Ended 30 June 2005*.

The Committee will hold round-table discussions with witnesses from the agencies involved in the audits and the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO), to follow-up on recommendations and changes made as a result of the audit findings.

For more information: contact the secretariat on telephone (02) 6277 4615 or visit the Committee’s website at <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jpaa/index.htm>

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Immigration spends \$1.5m in legal costs against refugee child

Greens Senator Kerry Nettle says that the Department of Immigration has spent nearly \$2 million on one case against 10-year-old Shayan Badraie in an attempt to prove that the department was right “to incarcerate him, causing him psychological damage.”

In answer to a question on notice from Senator Nettle the Department confirmed that the costs of the case against Shayan Badraie was more than \$1.5 million dollars in total with lawyers fees of \$1.39 million dollars. This figure does not include the cost of the settlement (\$400,000) or the costs for the child’s lawyers which could be more than \$1million more.

Senator Nettle said, "The government is now planning to incarcerate more children with its Pacific Solution 2 legislation coming to the Senate in June. They clearly haven't changed. The government has paid lawyers more than three times the \$400,000 they paid Shayan Badraie in settling the case.

The answer to her Question on Notice was:

As at 7 March 2006 the total cost incurred in support of the litigation involving Shayan Badraie was:

Legal fees:	\$1,390, 661.07
Medical Reports:	\$86,974.70
Other Sundry:	\$67,495.51
DIMA travel costs:	\$4,181.43
DIMA accommodation costs:	\$4,260.00
TOTAL:	\$1,553,562.71

This does not include costs for Shayan Badraie’s lawyers or his settlement of \$400,000.

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Detention 'discrimination

In response to questioning by Senator Nettle said also that Department of Immigration officials confirmed on May 26 that proposed new laws allow the minister to discriminate politically by exempting potential refugees from East Timor from being sent to Nauru.

"Clearly the intention of the government is to send West Papuans to Nauru but potential East Timorese refugees could be exempted," Senator Nettle said. "It was very revealing that Department of Immigration officials thought that if refugees came from East Timor alternative arrangements could be made for them instead of sending them to Nauru. This is confirmation that this policy is not about border protection but about political protection for the government's friends in Jakarta."

For more information, call Senator Kerry Nettle (02) 6277 3501 or 02 9690 2038 E-mail: senator.nettle@aph.gov.au website www.kerrynette.org.au

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What next in West Papua?

A seminar on legal issues facing West Papuans was held in Sydney on June 1 with contributions from Justice Elizabeth Evatt AC, ICJ Commissioner on *The Act of Free Choice and its legacy*; Dr G Peter King, Convener West Papua Project, Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, and Research Associate Discipline of Government and International Relations University of Sydney spoke on *The Special Autonomy Law*; Dr Mary Crock, Associate Professor, Faculty of Law, University of Sydney, spoke on *West Papuan asylum seekers & Australian refugee law*; and two of the 42 recently arrived asylum seekers spoke on *Human rights abuses in West Papua*. The seminar was chaired by John Dowd AO QC, President, ICJ Australia.

For more information e-mail: forums@icj-aust.org.au

Or access <http://www.icj-aust.org.au/?no=38>

HREOC on Migration Bill amendments

Human Rights Commissioner Graeme Innes AM has appeared on behalf of HREOC before the Senate Legal and Constitutional Legislation Committee's Inquiry into the provisions of the Migration Amendment (Designated Unauthorized Arrivals) Bill 2006. Mr Innes' opening statement and the Commission's submission on the Bill can be found on the Commission's website at:

Opening statement:

http://www.humanrights.gov.au/legal/submissions/migration20060522_opening.html

Submission:

<http://www.humanrights.gov.au/legal/submissions/migration20060522.html>

For information about the Senate inquiry, see:

http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/legcon_ctte/migration_unauthorised_arrivals/index.htm

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[7] What affects Indigenous health?

Social Determinants and the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is the subject of a lecture by Professor Sir Michael Marmot on June 14 at Sydney University Village, Newtown, NSW. Professor Marmot is the Director, International Centre for Health and Society, and Professor of Epidemiology and Public Health, University College London.

Tom Calma, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Commissioner of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, says the poor health status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is a well known fact. Substantial inequalities exist between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians, particularly in relation to chronic and communicable diseases, infant health, mental health and life expectation.

Since the 1980s it has been recognised that social inequalities are associated with health inequality and the Royal Australian College of Physicians reports that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are the prime example of negative social determinants of health in Australia. Professor Marmot will talk on how improving these social determinants can help to improve the health of Indigenous Australians.

Currently the Director, International Centre for Health and Society, and Professor of Epidemiology and Public Health, University College London, Professor Marmot has worked for the World Health Organisation. He is a co-editor of *Social Determinants of Health* (1999), a definitive survey of the main social determinant of health. In 2004, he authored *Status Syndrome - How your social standing directly affects your health and life expectancy*, an introduction to the social determinants of health for the lay-reader. Tom Calma, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, addressed the issue of Indigenous health inequality and social determinants in his *Social Justice Report 2005* and Professor Marmot contributed a text box to this, setting out what he sees as the main challenges ahead for Indigenous peoples in Australia.

The report can be accessed online at:

http://www.hreoc.gov.au/social_justice/sjreport05/chap2.html .

The lecture, on 14 June, runs from 3.15 pm to 4.15 pm at Carillon Room, Sydney University Village, 90 Carillon Avenue, Newtown NSW 2042. As there is limited seating, register to attend by replying to sjreport@humanrights.gov.au

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Land Rights legislation

Shadow Minister for Indigenous Affairs Senator Chris Evans and Warren Snowdon, Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Northern Australia and Indigenous Affairs, say Labor acknowledges the proposed amendments to the **Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act** include a number of positive measures that are broadly consistent with the reforms agreed to by the Land Councils and Northern Territory Government.

Although they say the amendments in relation to mining are particularly welcomed as they help facilitate economic development on Aboriginal land, that add that Labor cannot offer its full support until the details of the amendment package are fully analysed.

They go on, "Labor is pleased that the consent of traditional owners is still protected under the 99 year leasing scheme. However we are keen to ensure that traditional owners are not pressured into trading off their legal rights in return for basic entitlements, like health clinics, housing and schools. Such a situation would compromise profoundly the integrity of the **Land Rights Act**."

For more information, call Senator Evans on **02 6277 3233**, e-mail senator.evans@aph.gov.au and Warren Snowdon on **08 8942 3830**, warren.snowdon.mp@aph.gov.au

The Australian Medical Association (AMA) has published of an easy-to-read report card which highlights the chronic health situation of Indigenous Australians. Titled '*Undue Punishment? Aboriginal People and Torres Strait Islanders in prison: An unacceptable reality*' it outlines the horrifying effects of prison on the Indigenous population. The report card is available on the AMA website at www.ama.com.au

Pope adds voice

In welcoming Australia's new Ambassador to the Holy See, Anne Maree Plunkett, to the Vatican recently, Pope Benedict XVI raised what he called the painful situation of Aboriginal society, and asked the Federal Government to extend more compassion to Indigenous Australians. The ABC reported the Pope as saying, "In regard to the Aboriginal people of your land, there is still much to be achieved. Their social situation is cause for much pain. I encourage you and the Government to continue to address with compassion and determination the deep underlying causes of their plight."

And he went on: "Commitment to truth opens the way to lasting reconciliation through the healing process of asking for forgiveness and granting forgiveness - two indispensable elements for peace."

For more information, access: <http://www.abc.net.au/worldtoday/content/2006/s1644430.htm>

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[8] Progress report for military justice

Chief of the Defence Force, Air Chief Marshal Angus Houston says considerable progress has been made in implementing the Government's response to the 2005 Senate Report into *'The Effectiveness of Australia's Military Justice System'* and ongoing action from previous reviews of the system. This followed concern about the lack of human rights for individuals within the military justice system.

He says Defence has provided a progress report, the first of four six-monthly progress reports to the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee. This report highlighted significant enhancements to both the discipline and administrative aspects of the Australian Military Justice System.

Among 'significant milestones' achieved so far is:

- The backlog of Redresses of Grievance cases has been cleared and the Defence Fairness and Resolution Branch has been established.
- Colonel Tim Grutzner has been appointed the Provost Marshal-Australian Defence Force. He will head the new tri-Service investigation unit that will be formed following the investigative capability audit.
- Effective immediately, dedicated Service police investigators will be deployed to Iraq, Afghanistan, the Solomon Islands and Timor Leste.
- The impartiality of the Service Tribunal System has been enhanced with the establishment of the Chief Judge Advocate, Director of Military Prosecutions and Registrar of Military Justice as statutory positions and the establishment of the new position of Director of Defence Counsel Services.
- The position of Inspector General ADF has been established as a statutory position to provide independent oversight of the Military Justice System.
- The Defence Inquiry Regulations have been amended to ensure that all persons who appear before an Inquiry receive fair and impartial treatment.
- The administration of the ADF Cadets has been enhanced through the engagement of an expert to examine whether the human rights of children are being respected and the provision of additional resources to the ADF Cadets to improve administrative support.

For more information:

Minister for Defence (02) 6277 7800 Department (02) 6265 3343 www.defence.gov.au
Shadow Minister Robert McClelland (02) 6277 4323 e-mail: R.McClelland.MP@aph.gov.au

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[9] HREOC call to Muslim communities

The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission wants Muslim communities in Victoria to come to a series of public forums to be held in June titled *Unlocking Doors: Muslim Communities and Police confronting discrimination* -

The forums aim to answer such questions as: What can you do when someone discriminates against you? What are the laws that protect you? Can the police help you? How can we all move forward together? Are you interested in talking about solutions?

HREOC says *Unlocking doors* is about taking racism and religious discrimination seriously. It is for all Muslims no matter what age or background. Police are also invited to participate.

For more information call Omeima on **(02) 9284 9829** or Ihab on **(02) 9284 9804** or e-mail ihabshalbak@humanrights.gov.au

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[10] Bottom-trawling, whales and UN

Greens Senator Siewert has renewed her calls for the Australian Government to back an immediate moratorium on high-seas bottom-trawling. The Senate passed a motion last October (by Senator Siewert) that supported a UN General Assembly resolution demanding urgent action on bottom trawling in international waters. She says Federal Government has failed to act.

Giving her support to a major new Greenpeace campaign to stop these destructive practices, Senator Siewert said, "We urgently need an interim prohibition to deal with the threat to deep-sea biodiversity posed by high seas bottom trawling. This would buy us the time we need for sustainable management practices to be developed and adopted under international law."

Senator Siewert said also that Australia should challenge Japan on whaling through the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) or the International Commission on Justice.

An International Panel of Independent Legal Experts commissioned by the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) has released the finding that Japan's so-called 'scientific' whaling is unlawful, confirming advice given by IFAW to the Minister for Environment, Senator Ian Campbell last year, that legal action was appropriate.

The bid to stop Japan's whaling program comes as the Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Teresa Gambaro, attended the fourth Japan-Pacific Islands Forum Leaders' Meeting (PALM) in Okinawa, Japan from May 26 to 27. This year's PALM meeting focused on Japan's future development assistance to Pacific island countries, which many believed is aimed at "buying" votes in the International Whaling Commission.

For more information on IFAW and legal comment see: www.ifaw.org.au
Senator Rachel Siewert **0419 914 424** or e-mail: senator.siewert@aph.gov.au website: <http://www.rachelsiewert.org.au>

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[11] Zimbabwe destruction photographed

Amnesty International has released the first satellite images of the wholesale destruction of a large community in Zimbabwe -- providing the clearest possible evidence to date of the devastating impact of the Zimbabwean government's policy of house demolitions.

"These satellite images are irrefutable evidence -- if further evidence is even needed -- that the Zimbabwean government has obliterated entire communities -- completely erased them from the map, as if they never existed," said Kolawole Olaniyan, director of Amnesty International's Africa program.

Amnesty commissioned the satellite images to demonstrate the complete destruction of Porta Farm -- a large, informal settlement that was established 16 years ago and had schools, a children's centre and a mosque.

The Porta Farm evictions took place while the UN Special Envoy, Mrs. Anna Tibaijuka, was in Zimbabwe. Members of the Special Envoy's team visited Porta Farm and witnessed demolitions and forced removal of people in police and government trucks. The subsequent report of the UN Special Envoy describes how the team was "shocked by the brutality" of what they witnessed. Local human rights monitors reported that during the chaos several deaths occurred, including those of two children.

The satellite images released by Amnesty International were analysed by the American Association for the Advancement of Science, with funding from the MacArthur Foundation in the US.

Satellite images:

<http://amnesty-news.c.topica.com/maaeQXJabqWZrbfE1obb/>

All AI documents on Zimbabwe:

<http://amnesty-news.c.topica.com/maaeQXJabqWZsbfE1obb/>

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[12] Aid NGOs in talks with Wolfowitz

The Australian Council for International Development took part in a World Bank videoconference with the World Bank President, Paul Wolfowitz, and Vice President Kathy Sierra on May 29. They wanted to hear NGO concerns and ideas to shape the Bank's planning process for a substantial increase in its infrastructure lending substantially in the next 2–3 years.

The videoconference included heads of NGO federations from several Asian countries, most of which had participated in the Bank's March preparatory meeting for its annual meeting program. With support from Robert Glasser (CEO CARE Australia) and George McDonald (CEO Habitat for Humanity), the Australian delegation engaged actively and also managed to get some good responses from Mr Wolfowitz.

ACFID chief executive Paul O'Callaghan has invited Mr Wolfowitz to meet with ACFID during his November visit to Australia for the Group of 20 finance ministers meeting.

For more information, call ACFID **02 6281 9218** or access <http://www.acfid.asn.au/>

Australia commits \$7.3m to internet aid for developing countries

Australia will contribute US\$5.5 million over the next three years to support the Development Gateway Foundation's work providing Internet solutions for more effective aid and strengthened governance in developing countries. The funds equal approximately AUS\$7.3 million.

The Development Gateway was launched as a World Bank program and became an independent non-profit organisation in 2001. It is supported by a diverse group of public and private donors.

Australia was a founding donor of the Development Gateway and is the largest contributor to the foundation. This second round of funding will provide continued support for all programs,

including aid management tools, e-government programs, online communities of development learning, and support of country gateway portals providing web-related services for local development needs.

A portion of the funds (US\$0.5 million) will be directed towards the deployment of public procurement websites in the Asia-Pacific Region using the Development Gateway's dgMarket platform. dgMarket is a system for online publishing of government procurement information such as tender notices, contract awards and bidding documents. It enables major savings in government spending while giving companies greater access to tender opportunities at home and abroad.

For more information about the Development Gateway Foundation go to www.developmentgateway.org or contact: Allison Scuriatti ascuriatti@dgfoundation.org
+1.202.572.9232

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[13] Make Poverty History

The new Co-Chairs of the *Make Poverty History* coalition are Andrew Hewett, CEO Oxfam Australia, and Tim Costello, CEO World Vision Australia. They have taken over from Jack de Groot, CEO Caritas, who will continue to be associated with the MPH steering group.

Other appointments include John Connor of World Vision, as co-convenor, who will head up the Campaigns sub-group. He takes over from Grant Hill of World Vision. Ben Thurley of TEAR Australia will be convenor of the Policy group.

For more information, contact the coordinator, Sarah Gregory on **02 6281 9227** or at sgregory@acfid.asn.au website: www.makepovertyhistory.com.au

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[14] Virgin Blue policy on disabilities

Following successful discussions between Virgin Blue Airlines and the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, Virgin Blue has amended its policy in relation to people with mobility disabilities.

The policy had appeared to require many passengers with mobility disabilities to provide an assistance person to facilitate boarding. Virgin Blue has amended the policy to limit its effect to passengers weighing over 130 kilograms.

Graeme Innes, Commissioner Responsible for Disability Discrimination said media coverage of this issue "has been very concerning for many people who use wheelchairs and currently travel independently. We are very pleased that Virgin Blue has made this change. The policy as previously stated would have had a significant impact upon the ability of persons with mobility disabilities to travel independently.

"While this decision does not alter Virgin Blue's policies requiring certain passengers with disabilities to travel with a carer, a matter that remains of concern, this is an important step in resolving some of the issues that have been raised publicly."

For details of the regulations, call HREOC (02) 9284 9677 or access: <http://www.humanrights.gov.au/>

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[15] Survey of NGO/UN working relationships

The Survey of NGO/UN Working Relationships from the NGO Perspective is now live online. It takes about 10-15 minutes to complete. The information collected will be shared with the NGO/UN Department of Public Information Executive Committee and other representatives, and used to help to enhance the working relationship between NGOs and the UN to their mutual benefit. For more information, see <https://survey.sirota.com/NGO>

[16] Parliamentary reports on US, Iraq, trade

The following parliamentary reports by the **Joint Standing Committee of Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade** have been released:

Australia's Defence Relations with the United States:

<http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jfadt/usrelations/report.htm>

Visit to Australian Defence Forces deployed to support the rehabilitation of Iraq:

<http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jfadt/iraqdelegation/report.htm>

Expanding Australia's trade and investment relations with North Africa:

<http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jfadt/northafrica/report.htm>

Recent international publications

The Peacekeeping Best Practices Section (PBPS) of the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations has announced the publication of "**Economic Impact of Peacekeeping: Final Report**" by Michael Carnahan, William Durch and Scott Gilmore.

The report can be downloaded from the PBPS website at

<http://www.un.org/peacekeeping/bestpractices>

Through 400 interviews in the field and at headquarters, surveys of mission staff, and analysis of operational spending, staffing and macroeconomic data, the project has produced the first quantitative analysis of the economic impact of UN peace operations. The 37 recommendations made in the report were built upon the ideas of UN staff who have grappled with this issue and in some cases developed innovative mechanisms to enhance the economic legacy of a UN peace operation. These recommendations address three broad themes:

- The need for greater consciousness within missions of the potential economic impact of every policy decision and of the relationship between economic recovery and other mission objectives.
- The need to maximise local procurement, consistent with quality and the guiding principle of value for money.
- In order to avoid serious distortions in local labor markets, UN operating principles designed a half-century ago to help the organization compete for staff in well-developed economies, need to be adapted to the war-torn economies where UN peacekeeping missions deploy today.

For additional information on the project, including previous reports, visit the Peace Dividend Trust website: <http://www.peacedividendtrust.org>

Human Rights Watch report "*Tortured Beginnings: Police Violence and the Beginnings of Impunity in East Timor*" is based on dozens of interviews with witnesses and victims of police abuse in East Timor. A full text of the report (PDF format, 61 pages, 528 Kb) is at: <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2006/easttimor0406/>

Human Trafficking Report, UNODC Report is available at http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/trafficking_persons_report_2006-04.html

DESA Report "*Trends in sustainable development*" (33 pages in pdf) at http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/publications/trends2006/trends_rpt2006.pdf

International Tropical Timber Organisation issued a report: "*Status of Tropical Forest Management 2005*" a comprehensive analysis of the forest management situation in all 33 of ITTO's producer member countries. To download the full report, a summary document, or go to specific regions or countries use URL: <http://www.itto.or.jp/live/PageDisplayHandler?pageld=270>

Most recent ILO Report on child labor: "*The end of Child Labor*" (110 pages in pdf format) at http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/ipecc/about/globalreport/2006/download/2006_globalreport_en.pdf

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[17] The origins of UN peacekeeping

Kathryn White, executive director of the United Nations Association of Canada, comments on the United Nations declared International Peacekeepers Day.

She writes, "This year it is especially important for Canadians to mark, because peacekeeping is on our minds right now. It is also especially important because the ideal and idea of an international peacekeeping force is a Canadian innovation. This innovation was proposed by then secretary of state for external affairs, Lester B. Pearson. His proposal for the deployment of an international peacekeeping force to respond to the escalating violence in the Suez Canal has been universally acknowledged as a brilliant and necessary innovation. Pearson saw the Suez mission in particular, and the tool of UN peacekeeping more broadly, as a muscular aid to peace that should be a critical element of peacemaking. She calls for Canada to do more. For a text of her comments, e-mail "UNA-Canada" info@unac.org

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[18] UN and UNAA contacts

To access major United Nations websites, go to:

- [United Nations](#)
- [Secretary-General](#)
- [UN News Centre](#)
- [Key UN Bodies, Agencies, Funds and Programs](#)

If you want more information about the United Nations Association of Australia in your state or if you want to join UNAA, access www.unaa.org.au or contact:

UNAA ACT unaaact@cyberone.com.au ph 02 6247 4499
 UNAA NSW office@unaansw.org.au ph 02 9212 0998
 UNAA Qld unaabalmain@optusnet.com.au ph/Fax 07 3254 1096
 UNAA SA unaasa@picknowl.com.au ph 08 8226 4141
 UNAA Tas. secretary@UNAATasmania.org ph 03 6229 4269 www.UNAATasmania.org
 UNAA Vic info@unaavictoria.org.au Ph: (03) 9670 7878 Website: www.unaavictoria.org.au
 UNAA WA unaawa@tpg.com.au ph 08 9221 9455 www.unaa-wa.org.au

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