

SPEAKING UP

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As the Whistles Fall

By Daniel Mirmilshteyn

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Corruption. War. Destruction. A deadly war is happening in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and this war has no rules. Everyone is involved, whether they want to be or not. Even the youngest of children are given guns and forced to fight for warlords. Those children that are too small to even carry a gun - known as whistleblowers - are given a weapon to match their size: a whistle. They are sent to the front lines of battle. There, their sole duty is to make enough noise to scare the enemy and to receive the first round of bullets - with their bodies. Those who try to flee are "encouraged" by soldiers to stay; otherwise, they would be shot at from behind. The children have no choice but to face death.

However, hope is not lost for these children. In late 2007, **Sean Carasso** journeyed into the Democratic Republic of Congo on what was meant to be a short stop. There, he met with

five young boys who had escaped from rebel armies. Busco, Bahati, Serungendo, Claude, and Sadiki were found imprisoned in a filthy cell at T2, a military encampment. None had been over 15 years old, and had been forced to spend the entire night standing up straight. These children exchanged stories about their lives, telling Sean about the young whistleblowers and what they are forced to do. Inspired by these stories, the organization Falling Whistles was created.

As a non-profit organization, Falling Whistles works alongside Congolese community leaders to rehabilitate 267 war-affected children in northeast Congo. Rehabilitation is done through four stages: expression therapy, primary education, job training, and human rights education. Expression therapy encourages children to express themselves through sports, dance, art, music and

photography. Primary education allows ready and willing children to take classes at local schools, ensuring that they receive a basic Congolese education. Job training allows the children to learn mechanics, carpentry, or tailoring - giving them the skills needed to survive and create a living for themselves. Lastly, human rights education teaches the children the power of their individual voice, ultimately giving them the tools needed to allow them to stand up for peace.

These programs are expensive, and no one person can fund them alone. You can help by donating, or by purchasing a whistle. Falling Whistles ensures that 100% of sales from whistles goes to the rehabilitation programs in the DRC.

Be a whistleblower for peace.

Want to learn more?

Go to www.fallingwhistles.com to read first-hand accounts of the war in their Story and Blog sections.

Don't forget to check out the photo and video sections too—they give you a real sense of the conflict.



Egypt Highlights Western Hypocrisy

By Anne White



We have seen this blatant hypocrisy time and time again. The Taliban forces, that the US and other Western allies continue to fight against in Afghanistan in the name of freedom were in fact funded

Over an eighteen-day period, Egyptians took to the streets in protest against the Mubarak regime that had held autocratic power for nearly thirty years. Demanding democratic process and Mubarak's immediate resignation, a sea of people flooded Cairo's streets, defending attacks from the president's supporters and riot police.

And it worked. On Friday, February 11th, Mubarak announced that he was handing power over to the Egyptian military. Western analysts have, as usual, been quick to question this decision. Will the military actually facilitate the establishment of a democratic framework in Egypt? Or will they simply use their power to support another autocratic regime?

In fact, Western journalists and analysts have more or less questioned the meaning of "democracy" in Egypt from the outbreak of the protests. News stations consistently turn to Washington (the apparent cradle of democracy since 1787) to

answer: "What do the Egyptian people mean by democracy? How will a country that is so unaccustomed to democracy make this transition?"

Certainly not, I would argue, by looking to the West as an example. The supreme irony of these Western critiques comes from their failure (or perhaps refusal) to recognize the direct link between the power held by the Egyptian military and Mubarak, and the massive outpouring of aid from the US.

In fact, after Israel, Egypt receives the second-largest amount of US financial and military aid in the world. Since 1979, when the Egyptian government signed the Camp David Peace Accords with Israel, Egypt has received a yearly average of just over two billion dollars in US assistance. Mubarak came to power in 1981, and despite his leadership style, which has been declared completely undemocratic from the beginning, aid continued to be channeled into Egypt.

by the these same countries during the Cold War to fight against the Soviets. Saddam Hussein, a dictator accused of genocide and other human rights abuses was, up until relations shifted post-9/11, a recipient of aid and other support from the US.

Yet, for the most part, Western media coverage has continued to side-step these issues. Although there have been subtle hints that Mubarak was an "ally" to the US and other countries, the actual facts and figures of aid and other support have been largely ignored.

The Egyptian people, then, have not only fought against Mubarak, but have also had to fight the billions of dollars in aid that the US has fed to his regime for decades.

The incredible audacity and spirit of these people has been amazing to watch, and should be seen as a testament to their strong conviction in democracy and the fury towards their oppressors.

By Louis Train

2011 Middle East Uprisings

December 18, 2010



Tunisian president Ben Ali announces he won't run again. Protestors successfully demand disbanding of ruling party; prime minister Ghannouchi forms "Government of national unity" and releases some political prisoners.

King Abdullah II of **Jordan** sacks new government and prime minister in response to non-lethal protests, offering to "strengthen democracy" with a new cabinet.

January 14



January 17

Minor protests break out in Mauritania and Sudan, major protests in Oman lead to "cabinet shuffle".

Violence between government and civilians demanding government reform leads to approx. 30 protester deaths in **Yemen**.

January 18



January 25



An 18-day revolution in Cairo's Tahrir Square leads to approx. 6000 casualties, the deposition of dictator Hosni Mubarak after a 30-year reign, and the Egyptian military gaining control of the government. Mubarak has fled and his assets are frozen.

Major protests in Djibouti lead to rebel occupation of public spaces in capital.

January 28

February 14

Violent protests break out in Bahrain and Iran; occupation of public spaces in Bahrain leads to "national dialogue with all Bahrainis".

Increases in standards of living and levels of education in many Middle Eastern countries has led to an higher demand over the past few years for more responsible government, particularly in countries ruled by authoritarian and corrupt leaders. As these governments continue to operate and the costs of living expenses - particularly food and fuel - increase, unrest spreads among civilians demanding more rights and more democratic government. As of March 2011, many of the above protests are still going on in some shape or form, and the outcomes of these uprisings remain to be seen in the grand scope of the world.

Paying Children to go to School

By Sib Njemla



Should schools pay children to go to school? Toronto District School Board is thinking about possibly paying students from poor families for good grades; however the idea does not have the support of Ontario's education minister. When Minister Leona Dombrowsky heard about this issue Thursday in the provincial legislature, she stated that she did not believe "this is the way to go." As an alternative, the minister proposed spending money for more teachers, because there would be more academic success in children and schools. "We've made it very clear," said Dombrowsky. "We don't support that idea." The issue was first raised by the director of the Toronto District School Board Chris Spence when he sent out this question on Twitter: "Should we pay kids in our more disadvantaged communities to do well in school? Per-

haps as part of a poverty reduction scheme?"

The Toronto District School Board's new anti-poverty task-force is looking into the plan, which as been adopted by some



schools in the United States. In Texas for example, students may be rewarded with money for anything from attendance to good behaviour in school. In New York, some students are given \$50 for high test scores. The Toronto board would be the first board in Canada to implement financial rewards.

"I'm not happy that we have to pay kids to come to school," said Morrie Siegal, the school administrator behind the school program in Boston, U.S. "I'm not happy at all, but as a member of the school commission, I have an obligation to raise the academic level of our kids."

Lloyd McVell, a senior board adviser and head of the task force, said the method was only one of many the group was looking into and should be seen as something similar to a bursary and scholarship program.

"We are thinking about what we can provide to students to help them become more focused on learning instead of struggling with survival issues," he said. "It's about providing them with supports for their basic needs."

Should the TDSB provide financial incentives for students in disadvantaged communities to attend school?
Tell us what you think.

The Future of Sudan

By Louis Train

On February 7, 2011, the results were in: South Sudan is independent. The poll, which saw 98.83% of the country's enormous voter turnout in favour of separation, was conducted by the government in response to the growing divide between the North and the South the apparent impossibility of unity in the country. This is hardly a surprise, considering Sudan is home to dozens of distinct ethnic groups; many of which are in active conflict with each other. But, like so much of the world, they were arbitrarily grouped together by a series of colonial settlements – first by Islamic Caliphates, then the Ottoman Empire, then the British. (I've skimmed over some of the many less-substantial occupations, but you get the idea) And, like so many of those other victims of colonialism, independence (in 1956) was hardly the beginning – vast, rich expanses of natural resources including gold, iron, and petroleum made Sudan attractive to invasive Western corporations seeking to exploit political instability for inexpensive mining. Add thirty years of failed agricultural expansion resulting in massive desertification and unusable land, and you may understand a small fraction of the turmoil in this North African nation.

Despite all of this, Sudan stayed out of the limelight until the United States recognized in

2004 the abhorrent genocidal conditions that had arisen in the western Darfur province in the 1970's as peasant farmers began to revolt against the government they felt had neglected them (the ethnic group in power had an extensive violent history with many of the others.) As these farmers organized, the *Janjaweed* (a large militia led by the opposition party in service of a man claiming to be Islam's messianic saviour) began to rape and pillage their way through the west, claiming the lives of thousands. The government responded swiftly and brutally, and a war soon broke out between the government, the *Janjaweed*, and various smaller groups that have banded together – all of whom have been accused of contributing to the genocide and the hundreds of thousands of murders and refugees.

This conflict seems to be a mirror of one that repeats itself over and over in the Sudan; the fight between the North and South. Unwilling to make proper arrangements for independence of the Sudan following WWII, the British simply left it as one homogenously-governed nation. This proved to be a huge mistake: the more-Arab, Islamic North and African, Christian South have been in a tense struggle since. One major eruption of tensions between these groups was the Second



Sudanese Civil War, a conflict that left 2 million dead and 4 million refugees. The Sudanese President, Gaafar Nimeiry, (from the North) declared the entire nation an Islamic state, angering many in the South. The Sudanese People's Liberation Army formed in 1983 as a result, attacking all signs of Northern expansion in the South. The government responded swiftly and brutally, and the ensuing battles resulted in the ruination of many cities, farms, resources, and lives.

Now, as this conflict rages on, analysts suggest attempting to pre-empt another Darfur situation between the North and the South by realizing the value in separating these culturally, ideologically, and even geographically distinct groups. And it seems that 98.83% of the country agrees.

Threats to Ocean Life

By Alexandra Davis

Since the beginning of time, man has relied on the fish and plant life in our oceans as an important means of survival. For centuries, natives have fished from our oceans and used the plant life, while maintaining the delicate nature of the ocean's ecosystem. In today's society however, we have succeeded in disrupting the ocean's ecosystem resulting in ocean fish being in danger of being depleted. It is now known, without a doubt, that the fish in the ocean are a finite resource. Despite our recognition of the threat we are posing to ocean life, society has been extremely slow to respond by introducing measures to ensure the health of our ocean fish and plant life for future generations.

The greatest threats man poses to ocean life are overfishing, pollution (causing acidification) and global warming.

Many marine scientists now believe that overfishing is posing the greatest harm to the ocean environment. Overfishing occurs when fish and other marine species are caught at a rate faster than they can reproduce. There is a huge demand by people to eat fish, and large profits can be made from the fishing industry. With our current technology, such as trawling with huge nets, we have developed highly effective ways to catch significant quantities of fish at one time. We are taking far too many fish from the oceans, and as a result, not enough fish are being left to keep the fish population growing.

For example, the ocean fishing industry increased the total yield between 1950 and 1994 by 400% (Monterey Bay Aquarium Foundation). By 1997-1998, the total fish caught increased to an estimated 93 million tons. The total amount of fish caught has now been reduced. Part of this reduction is due to climactic changes. However, it is also believed that humans are now fishing more than the ocean can produce.

One of the best examples of the ecological and economical damage we are causing our oceans is found right here in Canada. In 1992 in Newfoundland, the once booming cod fishing industry came to an abrupt halt when at the beginning of the fishing season no cod appeared. This led to the loss of 40,000 needed jobs in the industry. Without the fish, the ecosystem also collapsed. Now nineteen years later, as a result of overfishing, many fishermen and their families do not have a means of living. The small communities in Newfoundland still have not recovered from the damage they caused to the ocean.

In addition to overfishing, we are polluting our oceans. For many centuries, we have been dumping harmful chemicals and different waste products from factories into

our waterways. In addition to directly killing the fish, these chemicals are gradually destroying the plant life which the fish depend on for food, protection and to maintain their environment.

Further, we are impacting the temperatures of the earth, known as global warming. This is also killing the fish and ocean plant life. The fish population and the plant life will struggle to survive as Global warming causes the ocean temperatures to be higher.

It is truly ironic that man, who is dependent upon the ocean for many things in life including the balance of the entire ecosystem, is the greatest threat to the supply of fish and plant life in our oceans. We are destroying ocean life by overfishing, polluting the ocean through the dumping chemicals in the water, and affecting the temperatures of the earth through global warming. We can only hope that people soon realize that the fish and plant life are in danger and that governments put the ocean's ecosystem ahead of the economics of the fishing industry.

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Pneumonia

By Vlad Malska

Pneumonia is a condition possessive of a plethora of causes and as many complications. There are a number of types of pneumonia: bacterial, atypical, aspiration, walking, viral, Klebsiella, community-acquired, lipid, bronchial, fungal, pneumocystis, nosocomial. Bacterial is caused by bacteria that typically reside harmlessly in the throat entering the lungs (atypical being caused by special types such as mycoplasma, chlamydomphila, legionella pneumoniae); aspiration is caused by breathing in foreign material (resulting in inflammation); walking refers to a mild infection caused by mycoplasma pneumonia; viral refers to an invasion of the lungs by different viruses (effects ranging from very mild to extreme);

Klebsiella is a type of pneumonia that can be a side-effect caused by K. pneumonia which are often present in hospital-acquired wound infections and urinary tract infections; community-acquired pneumonia is commonly caused by streptococcus and is most present in the young and the elderly; lipid is caused by the inhalation (or aspiration) of vegetable, animal, or mineral oils; bronchopneumonia regards the inflammation of the bronchial tubes; fungal pneumonia is caused by endemic or opportunistic fungi,

Pneumocystis carinii is an organism residing in the lungs of healthy persons that may

bring on pneumonia in people with compromised immunity systems or other conditions; nosocomial pneumonia can be caused by anaerobic bacteria, gram-negative bacteria, staphylococcal aureus, legionella and is commonly known as hospital-acquired pneumonia for it refers to pneumonia acquired in hospital while hospitalized for a discrete illness, condition.

With such a long list of effects and such a long list of side-effects, pneumonia is rather difficult to combat around the world, ever-evolving. Atypical pneumonia, for example, it resistant to many, many antibiotics and can be difficult to treat. Some such as fungal pneumonia are rare but nonetheless pose the thread of developing. Pneumonia itself rarely poses a danger to the healthy adult with access to medication and healthcare; however in other cases it may be

fatal. The immune systems of children are immature and often unable to cope with more serious conditions such as pneumonia, the immune systems of elderly individuals are debilitated.

As well as that, the elderly are quite likely already experiencing other conditions such as heart problems, lung problems, cancer, and perhaps undergoing treatment for the conditions which weakens their immune systems yet further. Some diseases such as HIV/AIDS set the stage for pneumonia.

In North America and Europe healthcare is, for the most part, easily available while in Asia, Africa, and South America the situation is not at all pleasant. The lack of food, shelter, and medicines combined with a high rate HIV/AIDS degenerate the existing population and prevent a new generation. In 2000 an estimated 826,000 children died worldwide, most in Asia and Africa. Doctors who see up to 20 cases per day are well aware that pneumonia is a leading cause of death in the world, however unsure that measures such as the breastfeeding children for their first six months, vaccinations of populations will be enough to combat the continuing rise of the disease.



30 Years after the Khmer Rouge, the Death Toll Still Rises in Cambodia

By Sivert Das



Each year in Cambodia hundreds of people are killed or maimed by landmines set by Cambodian dictator Pol Pot who was responsible for the deaths of over two million people during the rule of his Khmer rouge. Over the course of five years, from 1975-79, he murdered twenty-one percent of his own people, and, in a war with the Vietnamese, laid three to six million landmines.

His reign of terror began when his communist regime overthrew Lon Nol, the imperial ruler of Cambodia. After winning that

brutal war, he began *Year Zero*. The goal of Year Zero was to eliminate modern advancements in technology, industry and government. In the execution of his plan, he killed educated people and anyone whom he considered a threat. In particular, he sent people into work camps or into the forest to face disease and starvation.

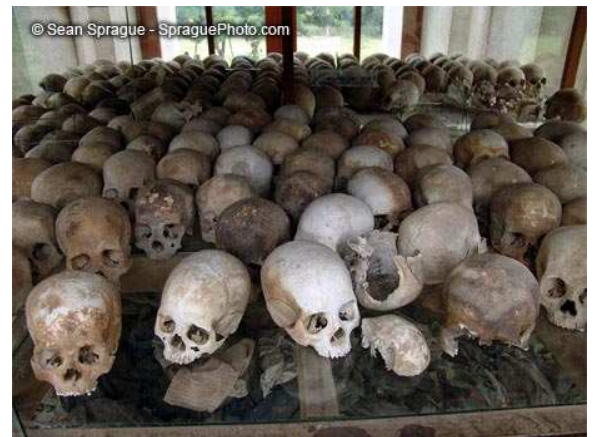
Following this, he went to war with the Vietnamese. As the war raged on, both armies laid three to six million landmines.

Today they are an incredible danger to the people of Cambodia. Many people who work in the countryside have to be careful to avoid landmines. Roughly 1,200 people get wounded or killed each year by landmines.

However, there is hope. Some people, such as Aki Ra, are trying to rid Cambodia of these landmines. Aki Ra is a former child soldier who, while being forced to work for the Khmer Rouge, laid thousands of landmines. Now he works as an activist removing them. He also teaches the local

people how to safely remove landmines and has taken in 29 children into his Cambodia Landmine Museum Relief Center. Most people who suffer disabilities from landmines in Cambodia end up as either homeless or dead. They are unable to find jobs and their only hope is get money thorough begging. Aki Ra represents a ray of hope to these people. Aki Ra is a shining example of how one person can make a difference.

In July of 2010 Aki Ra was chosen as one the year's Top 10 CNN Heroes.



His story can be seen at: <http://edition.cnn.com/SPECIALS/cnn.heroes/archive10/aki.ra.html>

In our Next Issue:

North York Harvest Update
Avondale After Dark
Conference News

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