

VOICES FOR CREATIVE NONVIOLENCE

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January, 2012

Dear Friends,

I'm writing from Kabul, Afghanistan where three Voices companions and I are living in an apartment that Voices is renting. Five of the Afghan Youth Peace Volunteers are spending winter months living here, determined to improve language skills and form a small delegation to meet with young people in other parts of Afghanistan.

I've often described Afghan Youth Peace Volunteers as having come from different ethnic backgrounds who nevertheless aim to live without wars. It's quite impressive, during this trip, to learn from them about how close they came to becoming armed fighters.

One young friend recalls having spent three weeks, at age 12, as part of a Taliban group. He had no choice but to go with the Taliban as a conscript. He was given a rifle, as well as adequate food, and assigned to be a sentry. "I loaded the weapon and I fired warning shots," said our young friend, who is now 21 years of age, "but I didn't feel good about it." A village elder intervened, saying the new recruits were too young, and the Taliban released them.

We watched a film together in which another of the Afghan Youth Peace Volunteers acted as the leader of a group of children who pretend to be Talib fighters. He was about eight years old when the film was made. Carrying sticks, the young actors harass a little girl who is determined that she will learn to read. We asked the young man, himself a Hazara, how he felt about playing the role of a vicious Taliban child. He acknowledged having grown up believing that anyone living among an ethnicity that had persecuted his people could never be trusted. But now he wants to be friends with people from these groups.

Sitting in our circle is also a youngster whose father was killed by the Taliban. And another watched in horror as Hazara fighters killed his brother.

Yesterday, the AYPVs welcomed a new friend who

lives in a neighboring province and speaks a different language. This friend will live with us for several weeks. He is helping the group with language. Asked about NATO/ISAF night raids and other attacks that have occurred in his area, the new friend said families that have been attacked feel intense anger, but even more so people say they want peace. "However, international forces have made people feel less secure," he added, "It's unfortunate that internationals hear stories about Afghans being wild people and think that more civilized outsiders are trying to build the country. People here are suffering because of destruction caused by outsiders."

The threat of civil war is real for our hosts here. But the young people we're living with have developed strong friendships during the past five years. Over time it has become entirely normal for them to share living quarters, prepare meals together, welcome guests, plan various events, study languages and occasionally take small trips within Afghanistan.

In coming months, Voices will continue to form delegations to visit Kabul. We'll also raise our voices in courtrooms where judges have been hearing testimony about our responsibility to protest drone warfare.

Buddy Bell will join us, on Argyle, to explore possibilities of planning a walk from Madison to Chicago, timed to arrive on the eve of the NATO-G8 summit.

This newsletter includes reports from Kurdistan, Damascus and Afghanistan written by Voices activists who would be pleased to visit with your communities as we work together to Occupy Everywhere with messages of peace, equality and freedom from war. Without your support, our efforts couldn't continue. Please be assured of our abiding gratitude.

Sincerely,

Kathy Kelly, with Mary Dean, Gerald Paoli, Brian Terrell, Sallamah Alia, Buddy Bell, and Joshua Brollier

Whatever Happened to Women and Children First?

October 17, 2011

by Johnny Barber

"All wars, whether just or unjust, disastrous or victorious, are waged against the child." Eglantyne Jebb, founder of Save the Children, 1919.

In Kabul, the children are everywhere. You see them scrounging through trash. You see them doing manual labor in the auto body shops, the butchers, and the construction sites. They carry teapots and glasses from shop to shop. You see them moving through the snarled traffic swirling small pots of pungent incense, warding off evil spirits and trying to collect small change. They can be found sleeping in doorways or in the rubble of destroyed buildings. It is estimated that 70,000 children live on the streets of Kabul.

The big news story on CNN this morning is the excitement generated as hundreds of people line up to buy the newest iPhone. I can't stop thinking of the children sitting in the dirt of the refugee camp, or running down the path pushing old bicycle tires, or the young boy sitting next to his overflowing sacks of collected detritus. He has a deep infection on the corner of his mouth that looks terribly infected. These images contrast with an image of an old grandfather, dressed in a spotless all white shalwar kameez squatting on the sidewalk outside a huge iron gate, embracing his beautiful young grand daughter in a huge hug, each smiling broadly, one of the few moments of joy I have witnessed on the streets of Kabul.

In Afghanistan, one in five children die before their 5th birthday, (41% of the deaths occur in the first month of life). For the children who make it past the first month, many perish due to preventable and highly treatable conditions including diarrhea and pneumonia. Malnourishment affects 39% of the children, compared to 25% at the start of the U.S. invasion. 52% don't have access to clean water. 94% of births are not registered. The children are afforded very little legal protection, especially girls, who are still banned from schools in many regions, used as collateral to settle debts, and married through arranged marriages as young as 10 years old. Though not currently an issue, HIV/AIDS looms as a catastrophic possibility as drug addiction increases significantly, even among women and children. Only 16% of women use modern contraception, and children on the streets are vulnerable to sexual exploitation. This is why the "State of the World's Mothers" report issued in May 2011 by Save the Children ranked Afghanistan last, with only Somalia providing worse outcomes for their children.

Retired Army Col. John Agolia said, "A key to America's long-term national security and one of the

best ways for our nation to make friends around the world is by promoting the health of women and children in fragile and emerging nations"—in Afghanistan, this strategy is failing. Not a single public hospital has been built since the invasion. It is not an impossibility; it is a matter of will. Emergency, an Italian NGO, runs 3 hospitals and 30 clinics throughout Afghanistan on a budget of 7 million dollars per year. This is ISAF's (NATO's International Security Assistance Force) monthly budget for air-conditioning. Polls have consistently shown that over 90 percent of Americans believe saving children should be a national priority. Children comprise 65% of the Afghan population. Afghanistan was named the worst place on earth to be a child. In Afghanistan children have been sacrificed by the United States, collateral damage in our "war on terror".

The mothers of these at risk children are not faring any better. Most are illiterate. Most are chronically malnourished. 1 woman in 11 dies in pregnancy or childbirth, this compares to 1 in 2,100 in the US (the highest of any industrialized nation). In Italy and Ireland, the risk of maternal death is less than 1 in 15,000 and in Greece it's 1 in 31,800. Skilled health professionals attend only 14% of childbirths. A woman's life expectancy is barely 45 years of age.

Women are still viewed as property. A law has been passed by the Karzai regime that legalizes marital rape, and requires a woman to get the permission of her husband to leave the house. Domestic violence is a chronic problem. A woman who runs away from home (even if escaping violence) is imprisoned. Upon completion of her sentence she is returned to the husband. Self-immolation is still common as desperate women try to get out of impossible situations.

Shortly after the U.S. invasion, Laura Bush said, "The plight of women and children in Afghanistan is a matter of deliberate human cruelty, carried out by those who seek to intimidate and control." President Bush said, "Our coalition has liberated Afghanistan and restored fundamental human rights and freedoms to Afghan women, and all the people of Afghanistan." Actually, the former warlords responsible for the destruction, pillage, and rape of Afghanistan were ushered back into power by the United States. In 2007, these very same warlords, now Parliamentarians, passed a bill that granted amnesty for any killings during the civil war. A local journalist said, "The killers are the ones holding the pens, writing the law and continuing their crimes."

When Malalai Joya addressed the Peace Loya Jirga convened in December, 2003, she boldly asked, "Why are we allowing criminals to be present here?" She was thrown out of the assembly. Undeterred, she ran for Parliament, winning in a landslide. She began her maiden speech in Parliament by saying, "My condolences to the people of Afghanistan..." As she continued speaking, the warlord sitting behind her

threatened to rape and kill her. The MP's voted her out of Parliament and Karzai upheld her ouster. In hiding, she continues to champion women's rights. She has stated that the only people who can liberate Afghan women are the women themselves. When we spoke briefly to her by phone, she stated that she was surprised to still be alive, and needed to cancel our meeting, as it was too dangerous in the current security situation. The Red Cross states that the security situation is the worst it has been in 30 years.

In America, as our total defense budget balloons to 667 billion dollars per year, women and children are faring worse as well. In the "State of the World's Mothers" report, America has dropped from 11th in 2003 to 31st of the developed countries today. We currently rank behind such luminaries as Estonia, Croatia, and Slovakia. We fall even farther in regards to our children, going from the 4th ranked country to the 34th. Poverty is on the increase with an estimated 1 child in 5 living in poverty. More than 20 million children rely on school lunch programs to keep from going hungry. The number of people living in poverty in America has grown by 2.6 million in just the last 12 months.

Dear reader, I hesitate to bother you with so many statistics, I eliminated the pie charts and graphs, and this report is still dull. After all, the new iPhone has Siri, a personal assistant that understands you when you speak. You can verbally instruct it to send a text message, and it does! Now that's excitement! CNN states there is no need to panic; the Atlanta store has plenty of phones to fill the demand.

Looking only at numbers it is easy to avoid the truth of the enormous amount of human suffering they envelop. Drive through the streets of any American city and these statistics come alive in the swollen ranks of the homeless. Drive through the streets of Kabul and these statistics come alive in the forms of hungry children begging for change.

It is difficult to ascertain what benefit America is deriving from our continued military presence in Afghanistan, though exploitation of natural resources certainly plays a role. Hundreds of billions of dollars are being spent in a military strategy that is failing by all indicators. Yet the politicians in this country continue to back this strategy. Arms dealers and contractors, like G.E. and Boeing, all with lobbyists on Capitol Hill, continue to reap big financial rewards and in turn reward politicians with financial support. Our politicians claim to be "tough on terror" and profess we are "winning". But by what measure do they ascertain this? The only Afghan people benefiting from our presence are the people supporting the occupation forces, the warlords, and the drug lords. As the poppy fields produce record yields "poppy palaces" are springing up all over Kabul, ostentatious signs that someone is benefiting from our interference.

One measure to judge the success of a nation is its ability to protect its most vulnerable populations. America is not succeeding. The plight of women and children in Afghanistan is still a matter of deliberate human cruelty, carried out by those who seek to intimidate and control. When will our politicians hear the desperate cry of the street children of Afghanistan, who, with all the incense in the world, simply can't ward off the evil of our occupation?



Cathy Breen Writing From Damascus Syria December 6, 2011

Dear Friends,

The lights keep going out. The sun sets by 5pm, so the nights are very long...and cold. I find it disconcerting as it happens without warning. While in the street, in the kitchen, visiting with a family, suddenly everything is pitch black. The blackouts are happening more frequently now in the old city of Damascus. It is worse, however, in the outlying areas of Damascus. In one area where we were the other day, they are without electricity five to six hours a day. It always reminds me of Baghdad, a city that has learned to live with darkness for years now. How much we take for granted until it is taken away from us.

For many Christians the world over, the time of Advent has begun. It is a symbolic time of waiting, a time of hopeful expectation. Waiting for the Light of the world to come. Iraqi people here in Syria know something about waiting....and the waiting seems endless. For some it has become intolerable. Added to this is the stress of the volatile political situation.

Last night I was with a family about ½ hour outside of Damascus proper. We were in the dark except for the light from a single candle. This family has been waiting to travel to the States since their first interview with DHS in Nov. of 2008. "We are afraid," they said in a low voice to me. "We don't know what will happen. It gets worse day by day." The wife has three brothers, one sister and her mother in San Diego, all US citizens. The father has a brother in Long Island, NY.

The father worked as a civil engineer for over four years with the US military in Baghdad, first directly with them, and later with subcontractors at one of their military bases. He had to flee with his family to Mosel because of death threats. Over fifty engineers were killed during that time period. His wife is also a civil engineer. They were doubly targeted as

Christians. They have an eleven year-old boy and a twenty year -old daughter. I did not need a translator, as their English was quite good. The father has a heart condition, and is need of an operation.

This family's first interview with Dept. of Homeland Security (DHS) was over three years ago. They have had their medical checks three times already (required every six months if someone doesn't travel). Now they are advised that they need a third interview. There is rather recent rule that if 15 months go by without traveling, the interview has to be repeated. And this in a country where approximately ten thousand are waiting to travel to the States, and another ten thousand are waiting for their "initial" interview with DHS. And the DHS team is not coming to do interviews, despite Syria granting them visas.

The security clearance regulations have become insurmountable hurdles. With four departments to contend with: DHS, FBI, Dept. of State and National Security Assoc., departments that do not coordinate well with one another, the situation can only be described as draconian. The IOM and UNHCR representatives I have spoken with in both Jordan and Syria, are understandably frustrated. I asked them what they tell Iraqis. "We have no answers for their questions regarding a time frame," one person told me. "They don't believe me that I have no clear answers." Another said, "We tell them that they must wait." Iraqis are understandably angry and desperate as this one final hope is extinguished.

In the past Voices has been able to address certain "cases" with UNHCR (the UN Refugee Agency) or the International Organization for Migration with the hope of speeding things up; give them information that would demonstrate the vulnerability of their situation. Now with so many new restrictions and regulations, it can take literally years for security clearance to come through.

The system has turned in on itself, has become a heartless bureaucratic legalistic machine that no longer sees the person. And we don't know how to address this or with whom to address this? It seems that we too have joined the chorus chanting, "You must wait."

There is so much more I could write you. I am sure there is much you want to know. What I can tell you is that the bonds of human friendship across the miles have not been broken. By the light of one small candle last night, one of your messages reached this little family: "I write to send love from the people of the United States, my friends and family, and from my heart. Your courage and your resilience is an example to the world of the indomitable spirit we all

have inside of us." Those words carry a special meaning for me as they say "the indomitable spirit WE all have inside of us."



Noam Chomsky: The U.S.- Afghanistan Strategic Partnership Agreement is 'part of a global program of world militarization'

by [Afghan Youth Peace Volunteers](#)
December 16, 2011

Hakim: We are speaking from the highlands of Bamiyan in central Afghanistan, and we wanted to start off by thanking you sincerely for the guidance and wisdom that you have consistently given through your teaching and speeches in many places. We want to start off with a question from Faiz.

Faiz: In an [article](#) by Ahmed Rashid in the *New York Times* recently, he said that "after 10 years, it should be clear that the war in this region cannot be won purely by military force.... Pakistanis desperately need a new narrative... but where is the leadership to tell this story as it should be told? The military gets away with its antiquated thinking because nobody is offering an alternative, and without an alternative, nothing will improve for a long time." Do you think there is any leadership in the world today that can propose an alternative non-military solution for Afghanistan, and if not, where or from whom would this leadership for an alternative non-military solution come from?

Noam Chomsky: I think it is well understood among the military leadership and also the political leadership in the United States and its allies, that they cannot achieve a military solution of the kind that they want. This is putting aside the question of whether that goal was ever justified; now, put that aside. Just in their terms, they know perfectly well they cannot achieve a military solution.

Is there an alternative political force that could work towards some sort of political settlement? Well, you know, that actually the major force that would be effective in bringing about that aim is popular opinion. The public is already very strongly opposed to the war and has been for a long time, but that has not translated itself into an active, committed, dedicated popular movement that is seeking to change policy. And that's what has to be done here.

My own feeling is that the most important consequence of the very significant peace efforts that are underway inside Afghanistan might well be to stimulate popular movements in the West through just people to people contact, which would help impose pressures on the United States, and particularly Britain, to end the military phase of this conflict and move towards what ought to be done: peaceful settlement and honest, realistic economic development.

Abdulai: Dr. Ramazon Bashardost told the Afghan Youth Peace Volunteers once that the people of Afghanistan have no choice because all available options in Afghanistan are bad. So, Afghans have no choice but to choose the least bad of the bad options. In this situation, some Afghans, and in particular many in Kabul, feel that the least bad option is to have the U.S. coalition forces remain in Afghanistan. Do you think that the continued presence of the U.S. forces in Afghanistan is the least bad option? If not, what are the possible truly good options for ordinary Afghans?

Noam Chomsky: I agree that there don't appear to be any good options, and that we therefore regrettably have to try to seek the least bad of the bad options. Now, that judgment has to be made by Afghans. You're on the scene. You're the people who live with the consequences. You are the people who have the right and responsibility to make these delicate and unfortunate choices. I have my own opinion, but it doesn't carry any weight. What matters are your opinions.

My opinion is that as long as the military forces are there, now, they will probably increase the tensions and undermine the possibilities for a longer term settlement. I think that's been the record of the past 10 years largely, and that's the record in other places as well—in Iraq, for example. So, my feeling is that a phased withdrawal of the kind that's actually contemplated may well be the least bad of the bad options, but combined with other efforts. It's not enough to just withdraw troops. There have to be alternatives put in place. One of them, for example, which has repeatedly been recommended, is regional cooperation among the regional powers. That would of course include Pakistan, Iran, India, the countries to the north, all of which, together with Afghan representatives among them, might be able to hammer out a development program that would be meaningful and cooperate in implementing it, shifting the focus of activities from killing to reconstructing and building. But the core of issues are going to have to be settled internal to Afghanistan.

Mohammad Hussein: It has been announced that the foreign forces would leave Afghanistan by 2014, and transfer responsibility for security to Afghans. However, what we have before us appears to be a very deceitful, corrupt situation of the U.S. government [signing a Strategic Partnership agreement](#) with the

Afghan government to place permanent joint military bases in Afghanistan beyond 2024. It feels as if, to the Afghan Youth Peace Volunteers, that the withdrawal by 2014 is therefore inconsequential in light of the larger long term plans to keep forces in Afghanistan. Could you comment on this?

Noam Chomsky: I'm quite sure that those expectations are correct. There is very little doubt that the U.S. government intends to maintain effective military control over Afghanistan by one means or another, either through a client state with military bases, and support for what they'll call Afghan troops. That's the pattern elsewhere as well. So, for example, after bombing Serbia in 1999, the United States maintains a huge military base in Kosovo, which was the goal of the bombing. In Iraq, they're still building military bases even though there is rhetoric about leaving the country. And I presume they will do the same in Afghanistan too, which is regarded by the U.S. as of strategic significance in the long term, within the plans of maintaining control of essentially the energy resources and other resources of the region, including western and Central Asia. So this is a piece of ongoing plans which in fact go back to the Second World War.

Right now, the United States is militarily engaged in one form or another in almost a hundred countries, including bases, special forces operations, support for domestic military and security forces. This is a global program of world militarization, essentially tracing back to headquarters in Washington, and Afghanistan is a part of it. It will be up to Afghans to see if, first of all, if they want this; secondly, if they can act in ways which will exclude it. That's pretty much what's happening in Iraq. As late as early 2008, the United States was officially insisting that it maintain military bases and be able to carry out combat operations in Iraq, and that the Iraqi government must privilege U.S. investors for the oil and energy system. Well, Iraqi resistance has compelled the United States to withdraw somewhat from that, substantially, in fact. But the efforts will still continue. These are ongoing conflicts based on long standing principles. Any real success in moving towards demilitarization and reconstruction of relations will have to require primarily the commitment of Afghans, but, as well, the cooperative efforts of popular groups of the Western powers to pressure their own governments.

Faiz: After three decades of war and being at the raw end of regional and global military interference in Afghanistan, the people are feeling lost and without hope. People are even losing hope and not confident that the United Nations, whose charter is to remove the scourge of war from all generations, would be able to offer an alternative solution. We have talked with peace groups about the possibility of a blue ribbon or blue scarf team of individuals, perhaps including Nobel Laureates, who could speak out and make a statement about the dire humanitarian situation in Afghanistan, and perhaps throw open a debate to the world about

alternatives for ordinary Afghans who are losing all hope. Do you think that there is any possibility of the United Nations stepping in to offer a different narrative in these dire straits? And is there any possibility of an independent peacemaking blue ribbon team of peace builders who can offer a way out?

Noam Chomsky: One has to bear in mind that the United Nations cannot act independently. It can only act as far as the great powers will permit—that means primarily the United States, also Britain, and France, essentially, the Permanent Members of the Security Council—which limit what the United Nations can do. It can act within the constraints that they impose, and the United States is by far the most influential. So, just to give one indication of that, take a look at the record of vetoes at the Security Council. In the early days of the United Nations, beginning in the late 1940s, U.S. power was so overwhelming in the world that the United Nations was basically an instrument of the United States. As other industrial powers recovered from the war and decolonization began, the United Nations became somewhat more representative of the people of the world. It became less controlled by the United States and the U.S. began vetoing resolutions. The first U.S. veto was in 1965, and since then, the United States is far in the lead vetoing Security Council resolutions, which blocks action. Now, Britain is second, and no one else is even close. And that continues now. There will probably be another U.S. veto next week. That's in general the case. If the United States refuses to allow something to happen, the United Nations can't do anything. Other great powers have also some influence, but less. So, the real question is, will the United States and Britain agree to permit actions of the kind that are outlined in the question. And I think that can come about, but again, we're back to where we were before.

Abdulai: On behalf of the Afghan youth in Bamiyan, as well as those listening in from Kabul, we thank you for your time with us. We wish you well, and the best of health.

Noam Chomsky: Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to talk to you briefly. It's a real privilege, and I greatly admire the wonderful work that you're doing.

[Editor's note: This is a transcript of a conversation between members of the Afghan Youth Peace Volunteers and Noam Chomsky, which took place on September 21, 2011. Each question was asked in Dari and translated by Hakim.]

The Afghan Youth Peace Volunteers is an Afghan youth group committed to building non-violent, non-military and egalitarian ways of life for Afghanistan. They can be found at <http://ourjourneytosmile.com/blog/>



Can We Learn the Simple Art to Live Like Brothers and Sisters?

by Gerald Paoli
December 18, 2011

This year I was unable to attend the annual protest and vigil at the School of the Americas, having just returned from leading a delegation with Christian Peacemaker Teams, first to Southeastern Turkey and then to the *Semi-autonomous Region of Kurdistan* in Northern Iraq.

The School of the Americas, rebranded in 2001 as the "Western Hemispheric Institute for Security Cooperation", is a school for Latin American militaries, long implicated in the teaching of torture and democracy suppression to some of the region's worst dictators and human rights abusers. Since 1946 SOA/WHINSEC has forged strong links with troops from our client states while training them in psychological warfare, interrogation tactics and counterinsurgency techniques before sending them out into the world to practice what they have learned on our behalf.

I go to the protest nearly every year, and this year I missed being able to stand alongside the thousands of people who gather at SOA/WHINSEC in order to remember victims of the horrors which that school exports. I especially value the times that I have been honored to accompany vigilers who had themselves been victims of torture. They had overcome terrors I can hardly imagine in order to present themselves and confront the evil that had affected them so profoundly.

But I had yet to accompany someone to the actual site of their torture. While in Iraqi Kurdistan, something unexpected had happened. In the regional capital, Selamani, we visited the Hussein regime's former Red Security Prison, and met a man who had been tortured there and was returning to the prison for the first time since his captivity. I'll call him Karwan.

The prison, Amna Suraka, is now the city's National Genocide Museum. Hussein had operated Amna Suraka as a secret prison, where the Baath regime interrogated, tortured and killed Kurdish prisoners or anyone else critical of its policies.

Karwan said that he had never been politically active but that he had expressed opinions critical of Hussein. Because of this, he was taken to the Red Security Prison, and interrogated and tortured for all of two years. He said that he had never given any information to his tormenters because his father told him, "If one man talks, many others may die."

Some of the methods of torture practiced at the Red Security Prison had been electric shock, beatings, sensory deprivation, sexual humiliation and rape. Karwan didn't describe his torture to me in detail, but he did recount an experience where he was forced to

watch another prisoner tortured, of course, a form of torture in itself:

Karwan described seeing a friend tied to a cross-like structure in the courtyard where he and other prisoners had been left to be exposed to the elements. Summer in Iraq is very hot, with temperatures of 115 degrees Fahrenheit not uncommon. They had already suffered severe sunburn and dehydration.

The guard officiating this torture session had given these prisoners an opportunity, saying, "If you want a cool drink of water, sing a song of praise to Saddam Hussein in Arabic. Then you may have it".

Karwan's friend, a native speaker of a Kurdish dialect, had chosen English and not Arabic as his second language at school. In the prison yard, unable to sing out in Arabic for the cool water, he was killed as Karwan watched with boiling water poured through a funnel into his throat. Now, fighting back tears, Karwan observed to me, "That was a very horrible way to die."

Even after the maltreatment he himself had received at the Red Security Prison, merely for expressing criticism of the Hussein regime, Karwan's trouble with them was far from over. At a later date Karwan was sentenced to 15 years in prison for getting a PhD without the Hussein regime's permission, and at the same time was charged for the capital crime of proving, in an academic thesis, that Hussein's economic plan had proved catastrophic for Iraq's citizens. Karwan laughed ironically and said, "I wondered which sentence they would carry out first.

Tom Head writes, "The worst human rights abuses of Hussein's tenure took place during the genocidal al-Anfal Campaign (1986-1989), in which Hussein's administration called for the extermination of every living thing--human or animal--in certain regions of the Kurdish North. All told, some 182,000 people--men, women, and children--were slaughtered, many through use of chemical weapons. The Halabja poison gas massacre of 1988 alone killed over 5,000 people. Hussein later blamed the attacks on the Iranians, and the Reagan administration, which supported Iraq in the Iran-Iraq War, helped promote this cover story."

It is important for us to listen to Karwan's story because it should remind us that if we look away when our government acts, we as US citizens can find ourselves responsible for crimes such as those committed against Karwan and hundreds of thousands of other Kurds and against people anywhere in the world where our government perceives an economic or a security interest to be advanced with support for torture. The coup that had put in Hussein's Baathist regime was fully supported by the US Government, as with many antidemocratic coups we have supported all over the world, continuing through all modern Presidential administrations.

We give despots gifts of weapons, intelligence and training in return for the spoils of war. Arming a dictator is in the end much cheaper than paying the dictator's people a fair price for their labor or natural resources. All too often, we turn a blind eye when gross human rights abuses and even genocide are being committed, as we are meant to do, so that we can more comfortably reap the profit.

I am just as culpable as any United States citizen, but I am honored when offered some chance to make good, and as with the people I have walked with at the vigil to close SOA/WHINSEC, it was an honor to accompany Karwan as he confronted the evil that had so profoundly affected his life.

Karwan is a victim of our greed and selfishness, yet he isn't a bitter man and he is wise. Karwan told us that he doesn't believe a person should be proud of their national heritage, because one cannot choose where they are born or what culture they are raised in. But rather they should be proud of their accomplishments.

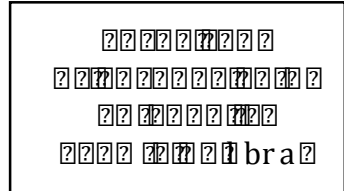
He left us with these words from Martin Luther King, "We have learned to fly the air like birds and swim the sea like fish, but we have not yet learned the simple art of living together as sisters and brothers." He said that he hoped someday we could.



See more of Johnny Barber's photographs at his blog, www.onebrightpearl.com.

VOICES FOR CREATIVE NONVIOLENCE

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

JANUARY, 2012 NEWSLETTER

Printed on recycled paper with vegetable ink

WOMEN'S MOVEMENT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL
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THE BOOK IS A MUST-READ FOR ANYONE WHO
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January, 2012 National Days of Action Against Guantánamo Washington DC and Chicago – Join Us!

In Washington, D.C.

Join us for the 2012 National Days of Action Against Guantánamo in Washington, D.C. and Chicago. We will be holding a series of events including a march, a rally, and a prayer service. The events will be held on January 13th and 14th. We will be starting in Washington, D.C. and then heading to Chicago. We will be holding a march from the White House to the Supreme Court. We will also be holding a rally at the Supreme Court. We will be holding a prayer service at the Supreme Court. We will be holding a march from the White House to the Supreme Court. We will also be holding a rally at the Supreme Court. We will be holding a prayer service at the Supreme Court.

For more information, please contact us at info@voicesforcreative.org or call us at 773-326-1111.

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In Chicago

Join us for the 2012 National Days of Action Against Guantánamo in Chicago. We will be holding a series of events including a march, a rally, and a prayer service. The events will be held on January 13th and 14th. We will be starting in Chicago and then heading to Washington, D.C. We will be holding a march from the White House to the Supreme Court. We will also be holding a rally at the Supreme Court. We will be holding a prayer service at the Supreme Court. We will be holding a march from the White House to the Supreme Court. We will also be holding a rally at the Supreme Court. We will be holding a prayer service at the Supreme Court.

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