

# VOICES

# FOR CREATIVE NONVIOLENCE

1249 W Argyle St; Chicago, IL 60640

Email: [info@vcnv.org](mailto:info@vcnv.org) Phone: 773-878-3815 website: [www.vcnv.org](http://www.vcnv.org)

DECEMBER 2009

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Dear Friends,

When Secretary of State Hillary Clinton visited with women students at a Pakistani University, in October, 2009, one of the students summed up frustration voiced by several of her colleagues, saying: "We don't need America, things were better before they came here."

The students were mourning loss of life at their University where, a week earlier, two suicide bombers walked into the campus and blew themselves up. Stories of carnage and horror fill the daily reports from Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Ten years ago, each of these countries faced severely repressive governance and terrible impoverishment. In the case of Iraq, U.S. economic sanctions greatly exacerbated civilian suffering by punishing innocent people who could not control the dictatorship in Iraq. But, before 2001, there were few accounts of suicide bombings in the lands where the U.S. is now at war. Kidnapping industries had not developed. Entire economies had not been disrupted by corruption.

What has U.S. military invasion, occupation and war making unleashed in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan? And how are these wars protecting security of U.S. people?

Through the Peaceable Assembly Campaign, we'll persistently ask elected representatives to answer these and other questions. Please visit our website, [www.vcnv.org](http://www.vcnv.org) to learn more about ways to become involved, both locally through this coming summer and in Washington, D.C. during the Days of Resistance which we'll host from January 19th – February 2nd.

Through the generosity of supporters, Joshua Brollier who works with Voices and also helps staff Francis of Assisi Catholic Worker House, will participate in the Gaza Freedom March. His reports will be available on our website. We're also planning for a return delegation to Pakistan during the spring of 2010.

As the economic depression continues, we are seeking ways to make ends meet even as our supporters struggle to make ends meet. We are reproducing this newsletter in-house and hoping that our 15 year old copy machine is up to the task—and that the print quality isn't too diminished.

As we look at our income and expenses, we realize that without your continued generosity we couldn't sustain the projects to which we've committed ourselves. We pledge to live simply, share resources, and dedicate time toward peacemaking efforts while getting by on the proverbial shoestring. We recognize that everyone is struggling in these difficult economic times and trust that your generosity will continue in your support of various works of social justice—be it Voices or another organization's. Your checks will be greatly appreciated as we try very hard to meet expenses and, most importantly, to end the cost of war.

In Solidarity,

Kathy Kelly, Jerica Arents, Joshua Brollier, Dan Pearson, Gerald Paoli, Jeff Leys

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**PEACEABLE ASSEMBLY CAMPAIGN:  
JOIN VOICES AT THE WHITE HOUSE  
JANUARY 19 TO FEBRUARY 2**

Please join Voices in Washington, D.C. this January as we engage in a two week long legal vigil accompanied by regular nonviolent civil disobedience / civil resistance.

We are calling for:

- The end to the wars and occupations in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

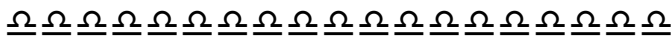
- The redirection of funding away from military spending and towards the rebuilding of Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Palestine and to the rebuilding of and provision for the Common Good in the U.S.
- The development of truly green, environmentally friendly alternative energy sources accompanied by a decrease in policies that drive consumption of fossil fuels.

If you are not able to join us in D.C. in January, we ask that, during these two weeks, you set up vigils, educational events, and other public events in your home community. Please let Voices know what you are organizing so that we can publicize it as a component of the Peaceable Assembly Campaign.

After February 2, the Peaceable Assembly Campaign will be focused upon lobbying—both legal and extralegal (i.e., civil disobedience)—at the home offices of Representatives and Senators across the U.S.

More information, including a growing supply of resources, is available at the campaign's website:

[www.peaceableassemblycampaign.org](http://www.peaceableassemblycampaign.org) or call us at 773-878-3815.



## The Gaza Freedom March and HR 867 By Joshua Brollier

At a time when the United States House of Representatives has just voted to deny the existence of the well documented Israeli war crimes committed against the people of Gaza during Operation Cast Lead, The International Coalition to End the Illegal Siege on Gaza is planning a non-violent demonstration and march from Gaza to Israel's border demanding that Israel lift the brutal blockade that has crippled nearly every sector of Palestinian life.

Despite the overwhelming international consensus on the fairness and viability of the UN Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict, the United States rejected the 452 pages of evidence given by the UN Mission led by Justice Richard Goldstone, a Jewish South African. The United States refuses to admit that the three billion dollars it sends to Israel in military aid each year might be used for anything other than most exemplary behavior in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Of course, with the United States engaged in two occupations and wars that have given rise to over one million casualties, it is

understandable that the United States would not blink an eye at the 1,400 Palestinian lives lost during Operation Cast Lead.

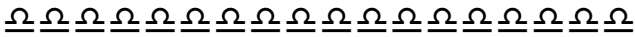
Though denial is typical in the United States when it comes to the pattern of Israel's war crimes, I was again shocked, dismayed and angered to see the pervasive lack of courage, integrity and compassion in the United States House of Representatives as they sweepingly passed the House Resolution 867 to condemn the UN Mission's Report on Operation Cast Lead. (The report was accepted in the UN General Assembly by a vote of 114-18.) The vote in the House of Representatives was a strong reminder that we can in no way rely on this unresponsive and calloused Congress to shape our vision for justice and a more humane society.

We are talking about a Congress of career oriented and business minded bureaucrats, Republicans and Democrats alike, who cannot see the moral ills of exporting Boeing Apache helicopters and F16 Eagle fighter planes, Lockheed Martin F-16 jets, CAT bulldozers, Hellfire missiles, Raytheon Bunker Buster missiles, indiscriminate DIME munitions, US Air Force cluster bombs and three billion dollars of military aid a year to Israel so that it can maintain apartheid and likely commit further egregious war crimes in Palestine.

This is a governmental body that has forfeited any supposed right to make decisions on my behalf. Waiting for Congress or President Obama to make a real move towards a just resolution between the nation of Israel and the people of Palestine is completely illogical based on their own resolutions, statements (or lack thereof), arms shipments and the United States' historical reputation of being a dishonest broker in previous peace talks.

That is why I am joining the Gaza Freedom March on December 27th. I can no longer sit by and watch as this country supports the military siege and economic strangulation of our sisters and brothers in Palestine through a blockade that does nothing to further long-term security for our Israeli sisters and brothers or to defend people here in the United States. Over 500 internationals (many Israelis included) and as many as 50,000 Palestinians are expected to take part in the Gaza Freedom March. Through direct action of common people united across borders, we will stand in solidarity with Palestinians and hope to help move towards a just, sustainable peace. With conditions deteriorating in Gaza, there is no time to trust in politicians or distant elections. It's time that the people determine the policies.

Free Gaza. End the siege. End the occupation.



**IRAQ – AFGHANISTAN  
WAR SPENDING UPDATE:  
2010 MAY BE MOST EXPENSIVE EVER**  
By Jeff Leys

On November 4, Admiral Mullen (Chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff) announced that the Pentagon will be seeking additional funding for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. While he did not specify a dollar amount (and it is still early on in the budgeting process), the New York Times reports defense budget analysts as projecting the request to be in the range of \$50 billion (earlier on October 30, Jack Murtha, Chair of the Defense Subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee, indicated he expected the supplemental spending request for 2010 to be in the range of \$40 billion). President Obama will likely submit the final supplemental funding request to Congress around February 2.

War spending in 2010 will exceed \$190 billion if indeed the Pentagon seeks—and Congress approves—\$50 billion in additional “emergency” funding this coming spring. That’s more than the \$179 billion spent under President Bush in 2008, the previous high water mark for war spending. War spending in 2010 will also far exceed spending in 2009 (which is about \$145 billion).

Let’s compare the numbers from 2009 to 2010 for three key areas of spending: Personnel costs; Operation and Maintenance costs; and Procurement costs.

Funding levels in 2009 were: Personnel - \$19.9 billion; Operation and Maintenance - \$80.4 billion; and Procurement - \$31.9 billion.

Current funding levels in 2010 are: Personnel - \$14.1 billion; Operation and Maintenance - \$80.3 billion; and Procurement - \$22.2 billion. (With all the talk about building Afghanistan’s army and police forces, it is worth noting that spending on the Afghanistan Security Forces Fund increases from \$5.6 billion in 2009 to \$6.6 billion in 2010, so it’s not likely that the “emergency” supplemental will include significantly more funds for this category).

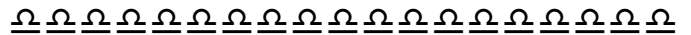
Total funding levels in these three main areas are approximately \$15.6 billion less in 2010 than in 2009. While currently appropriated Procurement funding declines in 2010 compared to 2009, this decline is most likely the result of returning to a more normative definition of what constitutes “emergency” war

spending than the very expansive definition that was implemented under President Bush and that resulted in the explosion of Procurement spending to approximately \$45 billion in both 2007 and 2008 (Procurement spending in 2005 was \$18 billion and in 2006 it was \$22.9 billion before this expanded definition).

The Congressional Research Service notes in a September 2009 report that the President’s budget for 2010 includes both the increase in troop levels in Afghanistan to 69,000 ordered by President Obama earlier this year and the anticipated reduction in U.S. troop levels in Iraq through August 2010.

All of which begs the two key questions:

- To what degree will the U.S. expand its military operations in Afghanistan?
- Will the U.S. remain committed to withdrawing all Brigade Combat Teams from Iraq and reducing overall troop levels in Iraq to 50,000 by August 2010?

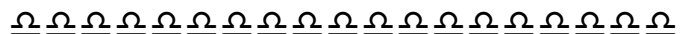


**FORT McCOY RESISTANCE UPDATES**

Fort McCoy is used for the predeployment training and mobilization of Army National Guard and Reserve members being deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan.

In August, nine social justice advocates were arrested at Fort McCoy seeking to enter the base to talk with Guard and Reserve members about the wars and their rights as military service members. Five were ticketed and released at the site, while four who had previously been arrested at the base were transported to Madison and held overnight. To date no charges have been officially filed against the nine. Gerald Paoli from our Chicago office and Brian Terrell, also of Voices, were among those arrested.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Attorney’s office in Madison filed a “Motion for Resentencing” with Judge Crocker, seeking a 30 day jail sentence for those who did not pay a fine previously imposed for the August 2008 act of civil disobedience at Fort McCoy. More than likely, a sentence will be imposed by the time you receive this newsletter. Those awaiting resentencing include: Kathy, Joshua and Jeff from our Chicago office; Brian Terrell and Renee Espeland from Iowa Catholic Worker communities; and Eileen Hanson from the Winona, MN Catholic Worker.



## The Price of Peace by Jerica Arents

While waiting to be processed at the Anacostia Park Police Station, I was drawn to a mounted post-9/11, Bush-era FBI reward poster. "The Cost of Freedom is Eternal Vigilance", propagated the sign. The unrestrained madness is as prevalent today as it was eight years ago: Obama is continuing Bush's war folly.

On October 5th, 2009, sixty-one anti-war activists were arrested in front of the White House, calling on President Obama to end the war in Iraq, end the occupation of Afghanistan, and end the drone bombings in Pakistan and Afghanistan. We also called for swift closure of Guantánamo and Bagram military prisons.

An estimated 500 protesters watched as some of us, clad in orange jumpsuits and black hoods, chained ourselves to the fence, while others carried coffins, participated in a die-in, and wore shrouds bearing the faces of Iraqi and Afghan war victims. "Mourn the dead," the crowd chanted. "Heal the wounded. End the wars."

Entering our ninth year of occupation, numerous Americans oppose the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan; 58% of the public is now against these U.S.-led wars, while legislators across the House and Senate, from Rep. Barbara Lee to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, are calling Gen. McChrystal's request for escalation in Afghanistan into question.

As empty political rhetoric circulates endlessly through the halls of Congress, I try not to become desensitized by daily news about deaths of U.S. soldiers and deaths of militants. Other tragic stories tell about the torture and detention of prisoners without due process in the expanding prison at the U.S. base in Bagram. I hear about weapon proliferation and seemingly endless war making, and I can't help but think of impoverished people, vulnerable and voiceless, treated as though they are worth less than the dust under our feet.

The cost of my freedom, I am told, is eternal vigilance. I live in the richest country in the world, the nation which monopolizes over a fourth of the earth's resources, and am still imprisoned when exercising my so-called freedom of speech. I'm to believe, instead, that our freedom depends on using the U.S. military and contracted mercenaries as super-Vigilantes in Afghanistan's impoverished provinces,

targeting the loosely connected, oftentimes illiterate and highly unskilled network of the Taliban.

U.S. military strategy commands soldiers to enter villages, raid homes, take prisoners, maim, wound and kill targeted "bad guys", possibly along with their families, and destroy all opportunity for a collective livelihood and security in Afghanistan. What's more, thousands of people are stranded in IDP camps, homeless and barefoot and uncertain as to why the U.S. ever invaded their land in the first place. Is this the price of my freedom?

The U.S. has been at war in Iraq and Afghanistan for over one third of my life, a time fraught with unfulfilled promises to people in both of those lands. U.S. war and occupation has shattered the hopes and dreams of millions. I believe, deeply, that I am implicated in the crimes my country is committing against our innocent sisters and brothers. My daily complicity only reinforces Obama's – and before, Bush's – paradigm of occupation and militarism. Both presidents have established patterns that are culturally insensitive, increasingly expensive and massively destructive.

Fifty one percent of my taxes (and yours) are spent on our country's military machine. In Afghanistan, over 90 percent of the current administration's spending is on military operations – leaving a miniscule amount to rebuild bombed schools, reconstruct neighborhoods of decimated houses, provide even excruciatingly low levels of medical care, or attend generally to the common stories of desperation.

So I did the only thing I could.

Remembering the name and family of a Guantánamo detainee cleared for release under the Bush administration and still being indefinitely detained today, I secured a chain around my wrist and then locked it to the White House fence. Like those who have been held for eight long years, like the Pakistani women mourning their dead children after an unmanned aerial drone attack, like the Afghan villagers wanting desperately to return to their fields, I am locked to the actions the United States makes on my behalf. We have the obligation to unchain ourselves from these unjust and immoral wars.