

CONTENTS EMBARGOED UNTIL 7:00 P.M. SEPTEMBER 24, 2008

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**Statements, Concerns and Questions of the US Peace Movement
Submitted by Participants in the Conversation from with President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad,
Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki and Ambassador Mohammad Khazaei
September 24, 2008, Grand Hyatt Hotel, New York City**

We invited participants to briefly tell the story of how their organization has come into being and how it works to advance its agenda in practice, asking particularly that such stories be tied to an example of particular success.

We also invited participants to shape one or more statements of concern, as a question or as an observation, about the current relationship between the United States and Iran, which would elicit a response from President Ahmadinejad or the Foreign Minister Mottaki or U.N. Ambassador Khazaei, adding clarity or nuance to issues which are present in this relationship between the United States and Iran.

The 43 statements in this packet are arranged alphabetically by the last name of the individual most directly identified with the draft submitted. Affiliations of each individual, to the extent they are clear, follow the individual's name. They are numbered serially and an index of the order is appended at the end of the document. Where contact information is not included it is available on the contact sheet for participants, a separate document. We have edited out perfunctory introductory remarks, put all documents into a single font, and removed some blank lines. Nothing else has been edited.

We are deeply grateful and appreciative of the thoughtful and responsible way in which invite participants responded.

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1. Doris Abdullah – On Earth Peace

On Earth Peace have two projects which at first glance appears to be in contradictions to each other, but in essence befits their Church family and beyond by it's ministries to young people to keep out of the military in the Counter-Recruitment Projects and caring for the returning Veterans in the Welcome Home Project. The Counter Recruitment Programs seek to give our young people a passion for services through another means other than the military. The Welcome Home Project offers the returning Veterans loving care for his spiritual well being to deter him/her from the destitute life of abuse, suicide and decay.

Iranian and American goals also seem to be in contradiction to each other at first glance, but we can only believe that each nation want the best for their people as well as the world at large and will try to use means to secure the safety and well being of each Nation. It is not in the interest of either Nation or the World for the current stalemate that affects the global energy crisis, global financial stability, global nuclear

proliferation and current global arms conflicts. Since trust appears to be an issue for both, where do we go to find a mutual starting ground where that trust can build on? Can the two overcome their mutual distrust enough to start not with something easy, but Iraq and bring stability there since it would be to both of their advantages to have it demilitarized and stable? Iraq has been Iran's enemy for centuries and now is the chance to change thousands of years of history with one leap of faith.

Fruitful Peace,
Doris Abdullah

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2. Allan Affeldt -- International Peace Walk

My name is Allan Affeldt, and I am the president of International Peace Walk.

All of us here recognize that there are real and significant ideological and political differences between the USA and Iran, and that we share a troubled history. Nonetheless, we all share a common goal of secure international borders and peaceful resolution of conflict. We do not need to agree on all matters to be partners for peace; indeed, finding and working on common causes is sure to increase mutual confidence and respect, which will in turn lead to ever great opportunities for cooperation and peace-making. Working together on common initiatives must be our primary goal at present if we wish to avoid escalation of conflict and pre-emptive war in Iran or elsewhere in the Middle East.

We faced a similar dilemma in the 1980's between the USA and USSR. Our President Ronald Reagan joked about bombing Russia, doubled the US military budget and undertook a massive buildup of nuclear weapons. The Russians were vilified through a persistent propaganda campaign. This created a context in which preemptive strike would be acceptable, even welcomed, in the USA.

We see the same situation today between the USA and Iran: military escalation, belligerent rhetoric and significantly increased tensions.

We were able to end the cold war with the USSR. We can do the same with Iran, but we need your help.

In the mid 1980's the American Peace Movement produced hundreds of joint projects with American and Soviet organizations. IPW and our associates produced the International Peace Walks, the first joint stadium concert, the first joint TV and radio programs, legislative exchanges and many other initiatives. Through these projects tens of millions of American and Soviet citizens were able to see each other as much like ourselves: decent, religious, generous, hopeful. The context of the international relationship changed, and peace became possible. President Gorbachev stopped the rhetoric and military confrontation. American/Soviet joint projects proliferated. The cold war ended without a shot being fired.

We can do the same with Iran. My colleagues in the American Peace Movement and we at International Peace Walk are prepared to work with you to make peace possible. We have the experience and the institutional capacity.

And this brings me to our question and request:

What we lack, and what we urgently need to be effective in helping create positive relations between the USA and Iran, is an Iranian Partner.

I am not talking about an Iranian tour coordinator. This is NOT about money or tourism. Tourism will have little or no effect on international relations.

What we need is projects of sufficient scale and courage to capture the public imagination, and in particular to gather major media attention. In the Soviet Union we had the Soviet Peace Committee and Soviet Peace Fund. In Iran, we have no one. Today all we can do is make a request to the Interests Section or UN Mission and wait, not knowing who it goes to, or how to follow-up, or if it goes anywhere at all. There is no Iranian person or organization for us to talk with who has the resources and political support to help develop and implement a large scale campaign of waging peace. This is what we most urgently need Mr. President, and what we most respectfully ask you to put in place so that we can help create a new era of peace and mutual respect between our two nations.

My question to you is: who do we talk with in Iran, how do we meet with them, and can you or your government give them the political support and resources and courage to work with us to make peace between the USA and Iran possible?

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3. Leslie Angeline -- Code Pink

I visited Iran in May, 2007, as a member of: *CodePink: Women for Peace* and the *Gandhi Peace Brigade - A Journey for Peace and Freedom* and fell in love with the Iranian people. They are so warm, welcoming and generous. A simple "Salam" on our part would lead to smiles, lively conversations and their heartfelt wish that we enjoy their country.

Soon after my return, I heard Senator Joseph Lieberman on *Face the Nation* encouraging the Bush administration to use military force against Iran. I was so appalled that I traveled from California to Washington, DC in hopes of gaining a meeting with the Senator to discuss the use of diplomacy. My second day in D.C. I began a hunger strike in his office. On the 16th day of my strike I collapsed and was hospitalized. On the 22nd day I was arrested. On the 24th day, I was finally granted a meeting. Ali Nasri, a young Iranian cyclist with *Miles for Peace*, joined us in this meeting. Senator Lieberman listened to our concerns and as a condition of our meeting we broke bread together to end my fast.

A year later, Congressman Gary Ackerman sponsored H. Con Res. 362, which would restrict the movement of Iranian officials and incur a naval blockade of all petroleum refined products to that country. After a two day sit-in and four days of fasting the congressman agreed to talk with me. In that meeting, he told me that if I could show him proof that Iran is in compliance with the IAEA he would withdraw his resolution.

I believe Iran is in compliance with both the IAEA and the NIE. What else can Iran do to comply with the IAEA inspections? More importantly, what can we do in the US to move our government towards a nuclear free world, so that together, we can stop a violent confrontation between our nations, and build lasting peace in our world?

I hope to visit Iran again this December with a *CodePink: Women for Peace* Delegation.

Peace,

Leslie Angeline

PEACE WITH IRAN Slideshow:

<http://flickr.com/photos/codepinkalert/sets/72157607234561885/show/>

4. Rev. John F. Backe – Lutheran Peace Fellowship

The Lutheran Peace Fellowship (LPF) was formed in during the Second World War to provide support for men from the Lutheran church who were conscientious objectors and would not participate in war. In the years since, the LPF continued that work as well as attempting to influence church and government policy in opposing nuclear weapons, apartheid in S. Africa and military intervention. We also offer programs in nonviolence training, with an emphasis on youth.

My question would be something like:

In light of the important initiatives taken by agencies of the Iranian government to foster interfaith dialogue, what are the prospects for increased acceptance or protection for religious groups which are not related to the officially recognized minority religions (Anglican, other Christian, Baha'i, Buddhists, etc)?

John

5. Judy Bello -- FOR Iran Delegate – Rochester, New York

Here is my statement of purpose, and my question.

1- We have a busy and diverse anti-war movement in Rochester comprised of many groups. I am a member of several of these organizations, but I would like to talk about an event that has evolved over the last few years. It was originally devised by a Street Theater Group of which I am a member, but is now sponsored by Declaration of Peace and several Veterans Groups including Iraq Veterans Against War, Vietnam Veterans Against War and Veterans Against War.

The event is a Veteran's day event that does not celebrate war, but rather focuses on the responsibility that a society has to bear for engaging in war; on healing the soldiers, and also the society, so that war will cease to be perceived as a solution for our problems. We publicize this event widely and invite the public to participate.

We started with a candlelight vigil for the dead soldiers years ago, but now we read both the names of soldiers and of their adversaries and victims as well. We then invite Veterans and soldiers who wish to do so, to come forward and share the pain that war has brought to them and those around them. Afterwards, they give up a symbol of war, an article of military clothing or equipment, or perhaps a toy soldier in exchange for a flower of peace. We then have a ceremony where everyone present is invited to release their pain and anger as they toss a pinch of healing herbs into a fire. The ceremony is very moving, and when grown men cry as they tell their stories, the rest of us cry with them. Finally, we all gather for a community feast provided by Food Not Bombs.

We do this because we believe that it is necessary to face our responsibility as members of society to accept responsibility for the pain and destruction that making war causes. We feel that by reminding ourselves of the consequences of our choices, we can prepare ourselves and our society to make better choices in the future, and we find that the veterans who open themselves to this process become flag bearers for peace.

2. President Ahmadinejad, you may be aware that there was a violent crackdown on some members of the press and on student protesters here in the US at the recent conventions. I thought, at the time, that it is very sad that thoughtful, engaged young people were walled out and excluded from playing their chosen part in this important process. People often complain bitterly about similar situations in Iran. I would like to ask you, do you think that this is an effective way to engage the youth of your country (or ours) in the

affairs of society? Also, can you tell us something about the ways in which young people are engaged to participate in the democratic process of your government?

6. Medea Benjamin -- A Global Exchange and Code Pink – Co-Founder

Dear President Ahmadinejad,

Thank you so much for giving the U.S. peace movement the opportunity to meet with you. I represent Global Exchange, a group founded 20 years ago to build people-to-people ties, especially with countries that our government calls “the enemy.” We don’t believe that any country, or any people, are our enemy.

We are one of U.S. groups that have been sending peace delegations to Iran. Our first delegation was in the year 2000 and in recent years we have been sponsoring about four delegations a year. These trips are an important way for ordinary Americans to meet with ordinary Iranians, and to appreciate the beauty of Iranian culture and society. Many of our trip participants return with a burning desire to share their newfound love of the Iranian people with other Americans. They become “citizen diplomats”, traveling around the country giving talks, educating their friends, relatives, coworkers. One young couple dropped their work as lawyers to build a huge exhibit, encased in a magnificent tent, with photos of Iranians from all walks of life and voices of Iranians talking to the American people. In August they took the exhibit to the Democratic National Convention, and people would walk through it in awe, tears streaming down their faces as they felt a deep connection to their sisters and brothers in Iran.

Other returned participants have worked with us to get their local mayors to sign a resolution calling for diplomacy with Iran. So far, 45 mayors, from small towns to major cities, have signed [See below following the submission by Jodie Evans of CodePink which follows]. We are working to get 100 mayors, and then take a group of them to Washington DC to lobby for peace.

We would like to step up our efforts at “citizen diplomacy” but need help in overcoming several obstacles.

1. The process of getting visas is very cumbersome. It takes us 2-3 months, and often we don’t know until the very last minute if we are going to get them. Also, several members of the delegation are often denied the visas, with no explanation and no process to appeal the decision.
2. We are obliged to get tourist visas, and then we are very limited in what we are allowed to do. In addition to tourist activities, we would like to be able to meet with government officials and non-governmental organizations, and organize joint activities. For example, we would like to send a group of U.S. muralists/artists to work with their Iranian counterparts to set up a U.S/Iran Peace Park. (Some have even suggested the old U.S. Embassy as the site for such a park.) Right now, we don’t even have a way to propose such ideas. Perhaps there could be a special section of the Foreign Ministry that would be empowered to vet such proposals.

President Ahmadinejad, we would be most grateful for any help in facilitating more exchanges between our people. For us, this is one of the best ways to build a stronger U.S. movement for peace with Iran. Thank you for this meeting and your support.

Sincerely,
Medea Benjamin, cofounder, Global Exchange

7. Jodie Evans – Co-Founder, CodePink: Women for Peace

Remember ... Inside we are all PINK.

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Cofounder, CODEPINK: Women for Peace
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CODEPINK is a women initiated grassroots peace and social justice movement that seeks positive social change through proactive, creative protest and non-violent direct action.

www.codepinkalert.org

When we at CODEPINK heard the first rumblings of a US attack on Iran, we reflected on why we hadn't been able to stop the invasion on Iraq and began work on our book, *Stop the Next War Now: Effective Responses to Violence and Terrorism*. A month before the book was to be released, I took a trip to Iran so I could bring stories back to the US—stories which would humanize the people of Iran and spread the word of the beauty of the country and what *they* thought about the US ideas to invade. Every time I met someone, I asked them "I am from the United States, what do you think about the talk of us bombing Iran?"

The answers were unanimous—we don't love our domestic policy, but we are Persian and will stand with whomever is in power in Iran; better the devil you know than the devil you don't; it will be WWII, etc. I felt the pride of the people and their utter disregard for the possibility of a US attack because the idea was so preposterous. I brought all these stories home and did a 100-city book tour, sharing the thoughts and ideas of the people of Iran with Americans from every walk of life.

Additionally, I co-wrote an article for *alnet* (<http://www.alnet.org/story/33062/>) with Tad Daley and Mimi Kennedy entitled *The Peace Movement's Plan for Iran*.

CODEPINK has been instrumental in raising awareness in the US for the possibility of US attack on Iran.

Our most recent action was outside the houseboat of Congressman Gary Ackerman, the author of H. Con Res 362 which called for stricter sanctions on Iran. This is a link to the story about the action which ran on Fox News:

<http://griffsnotesdc.blogspot.com/2008/07/code-pink-armada-by-land-and-by-sea.html>

Additionally, we organized a campaign to introduce a resolution to be voted on by the Mayors of America's towns at the National Mayors' Conference. This resolution, which asked that Mayors declare their preemptive opposition to escalating tensions with Iran, was introduced by Mayor Bob Kiss of Vermont.

Ordinary American citizens from all over the country brought the resolution to their Mayors to get them to sign on—voicing their opposition to any moves toward war with Iran and supporting efforts toward peace. This grassroots effort eventually led to us winning the support of 45 mayors from across the US. I've attached the final list of those who voiced their support. [See below.]

We believe that it is incredibly important to educate the American public about legislation such as Ackerman's which—while not an outright declaration of war—is the type of offense that leads to increased hostility. Because of the way our government works, many citizens aren't aware of these small details in bills which aren't sensational, but have truly huge consequences. Please see our webpage dedicated to our campaign to "Prevent War With Iran." It can be found at:

<http://www.codepink4peace.org/section.php?id=135> We keep track of major candidates' positions on Iran and provide that information to our members so that they can stay well-informed. By giving activists the tools they need to plan activities and get smart about the issue, we increase the visibility of Iran in neighborhoods, cities, and towns all over America. Fortunately, for the time being, H. Con Res 362—which Nancy Pelosi's office said would "pass like a hot knife through butter" has stalled and languished on a Congressional table.

We reach out to our neighbors and friends—many of whom are fearful and support military action—in order to get them to see the crucial value of peaceful talks. We are beseeching our government to use diplomacy to build a peaceful, respectful relationship with Iran. Our primary question for you, President Ahmadijad, is what would you do model diplomacy for the United States?

National Mayors' Resolution for Diplomacy with Iran

1. WHEREAS, the President and members of his Administration have alleged that Iran poses an imminent threat to the United States, U.S. troops in the Middle East and U.S. allies; and
2. WHEREAS, these allegations are similar to the lead-up to the Iraq War and U.S. occupation, with the selective use of information and unsubstantiated accusations about Iran's nuclear program and its

supply of weapons to Iraqi forces as centerpieces of a case to the American people for aggression against Iran; and

3. WHEREAS, Iran has not threatened to attack the United States, and no compelling evidence has been presented to document that Iran poses a real and imminent threat to the security and safety of the United States that would justify an unprovoked unilateral pre-emptive military attack; and

4. WHEREAS, we support the people of Iran who are struggling for freedom and democracy, and nothing herein should be misconstrued as support for the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, but it should be understood that a unilateral, pre-emptive U.S. military attack on Iran could well prove counterproductive to the cause of promoting freedom and democracy there; and

5. WHEREAS, a 2007 National Intelligence Estimate (NIE), representing the consensus view all 16 U.S. intelligence agencies, concluded that Iran froze its nuclear weapons program in 2003, and an earlier NIE concluded that Iran's involvement in Iraq "is not likely to be a major driver of violence" there; and

6. WHEREAS, an attack on Iran is likely to cause untold thousands of American and Iranian casualties, lead to major economic dislocations, and threaten even greater destabilization in the Middle East; and

7. WHEREAS, a pre-emptive U.S. military attack on Iran would violate international law and our commitments under the U.N. Charter and further isolate the U.S. from the rest of the world; and

8. WHEREAS, an attack on Iran is likely to inflame hatred for the U.S. in the Middle East and elsewhere, inspire terrorism, and lessen the security of Americans; and

9. WHEREAS, the Iraq war and occupation has already cost the lives of over 4,000 American soldiers, the maiming and wounding of over 38,000 American soldiers, the death and maiming of over one million Iraqi civilians; and

10. WHEREAS, the Iraq War and occupation has cost U.S. taxpayers more than \$500 billion, depriving our cities of much-need funds for services and infrastructure; and

11. WHEREAS, except at our peril, we cannot ignore the history of U.S. government misinformation used to inspire U.S. aggression in Vietnam and again in Iraq, as embodied in the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution and more recently in the what we know now as false claims of weapons of mass destruction; and

12. WHEREAS, any conflict with Iran is likely to incur far greater costs and divert more precious national resources away from critical human needs,

13. NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that we, the undersigned mayors, hereby urge the Bush Administration to pursue diplomatic engagement with Iran on nuclear issues and ending the violence in Iraq; and

14. BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we, the undersigned mayors, urge Congress to prohibit the use of funds to carry out any military action against Iran without explicit Congressional authorization; and

15. BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that suitable copies of the resolution be forwarded to President George W. Bush and all members of Congress.

- * Bob Kiss, Burlington, VT
- * Ron Dellums, Oakland, CA
- * Bill Baarsma, Tacoma, WA
- * Mary Clare Higgins, Northhampton, MA
- * Joy Cooper, Hallandale Beach, FL
- * Marty Blum, Santa Barbara, CA

- * Dan Coody, Fayetteville, AR
- * Kevin Foy, Chapel Hill, NC
- * Gayle McLaughlin, Richmond, CA
- * Kitty Piercy, Eugene, OR
- * Elaine Walker, Bowling Green, KY
- * Jeff Prang, West Hollywood, CA
- * Rhine McLin, Dayton, OH
- * Jennifer Hosterman, Pleasanton, CA
- * Laurel Lunt Prussing, Urbana, IL
- * Anthony B Santos, San Leandro, CA
- * J. Christian Bollwage, Elizabeth, NJ
- * Scott J. Brook, Coral Springs, FL
- * Bruce R. Williams, Takoma Park, MD
- * William D. 'Bill' Euille, Alexandria, VA
- * R.T. Rybak, Minneapolis, MN
- * Dave Norris, Charlottesville, VA
- * James M. Baker, Wilmington, DE
- * Carolyn K. Peterson, Ithaca, NY
- * Craig Covey, Ferndale, MI
- * E. Denise Simmons, Cambridge, MA
- * N. Dale Thompson, Condon, OR
- * Sue Greenwald, Davis, CA
- * Tom Potter, Portland, OR
- * David Coss, Santa Fe, NM
- * Lois Frankel, West Palm Beach, FL
- * Matthew T. Ryan, Binghamton, NY
- * Bruce Botelho, Juneau, AK
- * Thomas Dias, Town Supervisor, Ancram, NY
- * Don Ness, Duluth, MN
- * Jean M. de Smet, First Selectwoman, Williamtic, CT
- * Andrew Adil, Wethersfield, CT
- * Frank Cownie, Des Moines, IA
- * Shaena Peterson, Bay City, OR
- * David J. Cieslewicz, Madison, WI
- * John Hieftje, Ann Arbor, MI
- * Craig Litwin, Sebastopol, CA
- * Dan Pike, Bellingham, WA
- * Albert C. Jones, Dania Beach, FL
- * Pat Cluff, Springdale, UT

8 Daryl Byler -- Mennonite Central Committee (MCC)

Mennonites in North America formed a "Central Committee" in 1920 to respond to people in Ukraine who were suffering from famine. In the early years, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) -- which is supported by churches in Canada and the United States -- focused its efforts on *emergency relief*. This continues to be one of three priorities for MCC's work. Today, MCC also focuses on *community development* and *peace building projects* and works in some 55 countries.

MCC's style is to work through local partners rather than implementing its own projects. Building mutually respectful relationships in host countries is at the core of MCC's work around the world.

In 1990, the Iranian government invited MCC to help respond to a severe earthquake in the northwestern Iranian provinces of Gilan and Zanjan. Thus began what has become a rich and rewarding relationship between MCC and the Iranian people.

In the Islamic Republic of Iran, MCC initially worked through the Iranian Red Crescent Society and the Housing Ministry to respond to the earthquake's devastation. At the time, Mr. Sadreddin Sadr, son of the late Imam Mousa Sadr, was the Director General for International Affairs at the Iranian Red Crescent. Sadr's Muslim faith motivated him to find ways for the Red Crescent to partner with a Christian humanitarian organization from North America – believing that this provided a powerful and hopeful symbol of collaboration.

This collaboration and friendship has continued for 20 years and has blossomed into a rich network of relationships, including:

- A student exchange program between Iranian and American scholars;
- Academic conferences that explore issues of mutual interest between Muslims and Christians;
- Learning tours that create opportunities for face-to-face conversations between Iranians and North Americans; and
- Meetings with Iranian religious and government leaders to discuss how to build bridges of understanding between our countries.

Building mutual and trusting relationships has required listening, humility, patience and persistence -- from all sides. It has not been easy but has been worth the effort!

The tension between the United States and the Islamic Republic of Iran continues to be a concern for the peace community. The rhetoric from both sides is often harsh, and talk of U.S. military strikes is never far from the surface. What are the three most practical steps that the United States could take to help build a mutually respectful relationship with Iran? What next steps is Iran ready to take to strengthen this relationship?

9 Jackie Cabasso -- Western States Legal Foundation

I am the executive director of Western States Legal Foundation in Oakland, CA, a 26 year old nuclear disarmament advocacy organization; I serve on the Steering Committee of United for Peace and Justice and convene its Nuclear Disarmament/Redefining Security working group. Over the past two years, I have been centrally involved in UFPJ's work to avert a US military attack on Iran, and have worked with Leila Zand and Robert Naiman toward this end. I have worked closely with Dave Robinson of Pax Christi USA for many years. Also relevant, I met with Ambassador Sultani, the head of the Iranian delegation to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Preparatory Committee meetings in 2007 and 2008. As it happens, I will be coming to New York next week for the UFPJ Steering Committee meeting.

Western States Legal Foundation (WSLF), a small nonprofit organization founded in 1982 and based in Oakland, California, seeks to abolish nuclear weapons as an essential step in making possible a more secure, just, and environmentally sustainable world. Originally founded to provide legal assistance to nonviolent activists protesting the construction of a nuclear power plant on the central coast of California, WSLF's program has evolved to encompass a broad range of research, advocacy and organizing. With a continuing focus on the U.S. nuclear weapons laboratories, WSLF provides independent information and analysis for a wide range of audiences ranging from local church groups to United Nations conferences. Grounded in commitments to nonviolence and international law, WSLF has increasingly sought to link nuclear disarmament with global and domestic issues of peace, justice and sustainability.

In the mid 1980s WSLF worked with a broad coalition of anti-nuclear, peace and environmental organizations to successfully block the proposed basing of a nuclear-weapons capable Battleship and its support fleet in San Francisco Bay. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, with the apparent possibility of nuclear disarmament, WSLF moved into international work, participating in the 1990 International Citizens Congress for a Nuclear Test Ban in Kazakhstan, and co-founding the Abolition 2000 Global Network to Eliminate Nuclear Weapons during the 1995 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review and Extension Conference. With more than 2,000 member groups in over 90 countries, Abolition 2000 has grown to be the largest civil society anti-nuclear network in the world. In recent years WSLF has sought to educate the broader peace movement about nuclear weapons and nuclear power, and has worked within that movement to oppose U.S. military interventions. WSLF serves on the national Steering Committee of

United for Peace and Justice, the largest anti-war coalition in the United States, and is the North American Coordinator of Mayors for Peace, an international association of more than 2,400 Mayors in 131 countries, lead by the Mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

WSLF advocates diplomacy and non-military means of conflict resolution, in conformity with the United Nations Charter. We believe that the concept of “national security” based on military might is obsolete and unsustainable; the concept of security should be reframed at every level of society and government, with a premium on universal human and ecological security, a return to multilateralism, and a commitment to cooperative, nonviolent means of conflict resolution. We believe that nuclear abolition should serve as the leading edge of a global trend towards demilitarization and redirection of military expenditures to meet human and environmental needs.

Our question: In its existing and foreseeable forms, nuclear electrical generation requires huge investments, and requires the commitment of enormous amounts of resources to a single technology for long periods of time. No country has entirely solved the problem of making nuclear power safe from catastrophic accidents, and no country has come up with a long term solution for disposing of long-lived radioactive waste. Renewable forms of energy-- solar, wind, hydro, and waste biomass carefully selected so as not to interfere with the production of food crops-- offer the possibility of more sustainable long term solutions, and can be deployed in far smaller increments-- even a village or a town at a time-- as the technologies are improved. They also can be deployed more easily in areas that are not well served by already-developed national power grids. Given the great costs and risks of nuclear energy generation, why does Iran choose to invest its resources and skilled people in this path, rather than seeking to become a leader in renewable energy development?

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Web: wslfweb.org • Book: WMDreport.org • Blog: disarmamentactivist.org

Iran Daily Opinion Service: sputnik99.wordpress.com

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10 Leslie Cagan -- United for Peace and Justice (UFPJ)

September 24, 2008

STATEMENT FROM UNITED FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE

United for Peace and Justice, the largest grassroots antiwar coalition in the United States, is committed to doing all we can to prevent any assault on Iran by our government. We believe direct and comprehensive dialogue and negotiations are the only way to pursue the resolution of whatever differences might exist between our two governments.

For five and a half years the Bush Administration and the U.S. Congress have maintained a war and occupation in Iraq. The vast majority of the people of our country, as well as the world, know this war was based on lies. We also know it has taken a horrendous toll in both human and economic terms. Our work has primarily been focused on trying to end the U.S. war and occupation in Iraq and bring all of the troops home.

At the same time, we know that U.S. policy in Iraq does not taken place in a vacuum nor is it isolated from other foreign relations issues. In fact, we believe the belligerent and saber rattling stance that Washington has toward your nation, Iran, is directly related to what the U.S. government has been doing in Iraq. And this has been the foundation for our work to help prevent a new U.S. initiated war in the Middle East.

We know that as horrible as the war and occupation of Iraq has been that a U.S. attack on Iran could lead to an even worse scenario, a scenario that might mean regional war with wide spread death and destruction. We believe it is in everyone’s interest to do everything possible to make sure this does not happen. Of course, as people who live here in the United States, we understand and accept our special responsibility in this effort. We must not let our government use our tax dollars to engage in military action that we are

confident could be avoided.

There have been many lessons from the experience with the war in Iraq. One, of course, is that the oil and energy companies, and those who serve them in Washington, are simply ruthless. They have tremendous power and wealth, and they will do everything they can to expand that. Those of us in the antiwar movement in this country have more work to do to help people understand how the oil and energy industries control so much of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East as well as other parts of the world.

Another lesson we have learned is that having majority opinion on our side is not enough. One might expect, or hope, that in a nation that claims to be a great democracy, those who represent us in the federal government would act on the mandate they have been given. But time and again, the people of this country have expressed their opposition to the war and occupation in Iraq and it seems that beyond a few members of Congress this mostly is ignored in Washington. In other words, changing U.S. foreign policy is never simple or quick, and when powerful interests such as the oil companies are involved that task is even greater.

If we are to play a role in changing U.S. policy toward Iran, then we need to find new ways to activate people just as we need to be more strategic in what we ask people to do. United for Peace and Justice does not pretend to have all of the answers or a formula for how we can meet the challenges. But there are some things we know we must do to move our own efforts forward:

- We will continue to help people see how ending the war in Iraq and preventing a new war against Iran are linked, and must be taken up together. This means building on the educational work that has already been done in communities around the U.S., as well as continuing to make these connections in the public protests and other activities of the antiwar movement.
- We will continue to put pressure on the media, most especially the mainstream media, to tell the real story. That is the real story about life in Iran and who the Iranian people are, the real story about what drives U.S. policy toward Iran (and in the region more generally), the real story about what a war against Iran will mean, as well as the real story in terms of alternative approaches to resolving any differences.
- We will continue to pressure Congress to use its power to prevent a new war, instead of encouraging more aggressive actions against Iran. This sometimes feels like an uphill battle, but Congress must remain one of the arenas of our struggle.
- And we will continue to be involved in and help support people-to-people exchanges and interactions between our two nations. It is critically important that our work in the U.S. include breaking through the stereotyping and de-humanizing messages that people get every single day. The voices of the people of Iran must be heard by people here and there is no better way to do that than direct discussion and exchanges.

Finally, to re-iterate a point we hope we made clear already – we are committed to do what we can to stop the U.S. from initiating any assault against the people of Iran.

United for Peace and Justice (UFPJ) is the largest U.S. peace and justice coalition with more than 1,400 member groups under its umbrella. Since our founding in October 2002, UFPJ has spurred hundreds of protests and rallies around the country, including the largest marches against the Iraq war. We have a nationwide network of activists who pressure Congress on critical issues, and we are presently working on our Voter Engagement project to help ensure the voice of the antiwar movement is not lost during this election year. Much of our work has been devoted to nurturing community-based groups and building coalitions with broader forces in the progressive movement.

September 24, 2008

11 Shahid Comrade -- Pakistan -- USA Freedom Forum

Free Kashmir

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*End the Raids and
Deportations*

No Indian Army

*Stop Dividing
Families*

On behalf of the Pakistan USA Freedom Forum (PUFF), I wish to thank FOR for its efforts in organizing a special meeting with Dr. Mahmud Ahmadinejad, the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran. We are proud to be a participant at this gathering.

Pakistan USA Freedom Forum has been working in the U.S. peace movement, particularly with members of the Pakistani community, but our concern is for all persons and groups whose civil and human rights are being violated. After 2001, many Pakistani immigrants became the victims of the Bush Administration's racial and ethnic profiling as we witnessed many of our brothers and sisters being discriminated against, often for no more reason than being a member of a Muslim group. Friends, neighbors and fellow workers were arrested, jailed and deported under Bush's so-called 'war on terror,' using the "Patriot Act" and "national security". This was a deep pain for us, but then we saw that other members of the American family were also under attacks, such as immigrants from Latin America, Asia, Africa and elsewhere, so we began to work with the May 1st Coalition to defend immigrants of all nations. At the same time, our people inside Pakistan were calling for a more democratic society and were opposed to the Musharoff dictatorship. Our struggle continues. Our goal is to stand up for the common man, "defend the defenseless," support the Constitutional and human rights, and work for peace and social justice. We are against imperialism and war.

Questions for the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Dr. Mahmud Ahmadinejad:

Your Excellency, President Ahmadinejad!

Welcome to the United States. I would appreciate if you would speak about just two issues: 1) What do you have in mind or plan to do to better the conditions of the Iranian people, especially women, minorities and youth? What is your thinking for monetary policies, economic planning and other social programs? How will these groups benefit?

2) What do you have in mind to improve Iran's relationship with the United States and the West? Pakistan and Iran are brotherly countries – we are like brothers and sisters. Dr. Ahmadinejad, are you making any special efforts with regards to relations between Pakistan and Iran and other countries in the region? Please share your thoughts with us.

Before closing, I would also like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation and admiration to the American Iranian Friendship Committee, and especially to thank Mr. Ardeshir Ommani, the founder of this committee, who has acted as such a good brother to us in the Pakistan USA Freedom Forum. Mr. Ommani is a dedicated scholar and the AIFC members have always extended their hand of friendship to us and I sometimes feel like we are one people. Thank you very much.

Yours truly, Shahid Comrade
Shahid Comrade
Secretary General
(917) 280-0840

Dr. Mohammed Shafique
President

12 Andrew Courtney

On behalf of my justice and Peace foundation, a 30 year old center in New York, I would like to welcome you to our city.

President Ahmadinejad, a school age child looking at the geo-political map of the wider middle east would clearly see that your country Iran is surrounded by the U.S. military.

That child would see that on the east American military bases are in Afghanistan. To the north American bases are in Turkey and now in Georgia. To the south, The United State Navy is in the Persian Gulf and to the west there is of course Israel and the 140, 000 US troops in Iraq. Iran provocatively surrounded.

One of the costs of the brutal war in Iraq has been the sectarian violence that has left so many Iraqi lives broken and destroyed. There are an estimated 4.5 million Iraqi refugees who have been displaced or have fled that country as a direct result of the fallout of the American war and occupation.

My question to you is this. In light of this volatile condition and to counter the American and Israeli military threats, what kinds of regional activity has Iran initiated to foster stability and peace in Iraq in particular?

Thank you,
Andrew Courtney

13 David Drake

David E. Drake, D.O.
Family Psychiatrist
1221 Center Street
Suite 3
Des Moines, Iowa 50309-1014
USA

September 18th, 2008

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad
President of Iran

Dear President Ahmadinejad,

Welcome to the United States. I was a member of a tour of your country with the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) in December of 2007. During that time I was impressed with the genuine warmth of your people towards us as Americans. Our group very much enjoyed our stay and tour throughout Iran.

As a physician and citizen of the United States, I want peace and goodwill between our two countries. And while also working on greater freedoms for our own country, I am concerned about the lack of freedoms in Iran. Our group met with people who spoke of the lack of basic freedoms – we learned that satellite dishes for television reception are banned – I am unable to send attached videos to friends in Iran. One member of our group learned of the difficulty that women have to express their desire for greater equality– and in fact two members of their group had been imprisoned for passing out leaflets to that effect at a subway stop. I was also made aware of public hangings and students who have been met with violent responses by police as they protest on college campuses.

Concerns have also been expressed for the safety and rights of Iranians who are gay, lesbian, or bisexual. As a physician, I am well aware that persons of different sexual orientations live in all of our societies and deserve protection and respect.

And very importantly I am concerned about statements made that fly in the face of security for Israel. And while I hold the importance of a Palestinian state with the same importance as the security of Israel, I believe that rhetoric that attacks Israel's existence can very well lead to a move towards war, both by Israel and by our current President.

Below are some comments by friends of mine in Iowa and in another state. I hope that you will take them to heart.

I would welcome a letter from you and hope that your stay in the United States can bring our countries closer to peace and further exchanges between our citizens.

Sincerely,
David E. Drake, D.O.
Family Psychiatrist
Des Moines, Iowa
USA

President Ahmadinejad; as the president of a country with a deep history and many resources, I hope you will take a leadership role in making peace.

Deana Schuplin, LMHC Clive, Iowa

I continue to think of the takeover of the US Embassy in Tehran as a critical element in our relationship with that country; an act in which he was allegedly involved. Whether or not he was -- and I understand that some who were have since come to see it as a bad idea -- his thinking about whether or not that was justified would say something about the likelihood of our ever achieving a viable rapprochement with that country under his leadership.

Ken Bradt, PhD, retired psychologist
Des Moines, Iowa

If I had two cents to add, I would want to listen to President Ahmadinejad and make him feel that his nation's concerns are really HEARD by Americans. I would also want to know how well he represents (and believes he represents) the concerns of the people of Iran. What does he hope and dream for them? And does he feel he truly understands what they want for their future on this planet?

Carol Spaulding-Kruse
Professor of English
Drake University, Des Moines, Iowa

I think, David, that your experience (and mine) will be your best guide, in explaining, if you get the chance, how - as a US citizen - your visit with the people of Palestine, Israel, and Iran, has made you keenly aware of the wish of ordinary people, innocent people, everywhere to live in peace and harmony with one another, and the wish that their governments would work together to make this possible for them. Thanks for doing this, David.

Peace,
Charlie Day, PhD, retired psychologist and current teacher of meditation
Des Moines, Iowa

For President Ahmadinejad:

Plainly, relations between Iran and the US have been weighed down by a heavy burden of mutual mistrust. What steps -- what concessions -- would Iran be willing to make in order to begin to rebuild the confidence that once existed between the two nations? What similar concrete steps would you like to see a new American president take towards Iran?

Israel fears that your government is intent on attacking it and driving Jews into the sea. If this is not an accurate description of Iranian policy, how would you describe Iran's policy towards Israel? If the Palestinian people were to reach a peace agreement with Israel that allowed the two peoples to live side by side without violence, would Iran accept and respect that agreement?

Henry Precht, Des Moines, Iowa, He was with the US embassy in Iran during the Shah's regime.

14 Ana Edwards (CASMII) and Phil Wilayto – Defenders for Freedom, Justice & Equality

The Defenders for Freedom, Justice & Equality is a community organization in Richmond, Virginia. Founded in 2002, we work for the survival of our community through education and social justice projects. Our primary base is the working poor of the African-American community. Our work has included exposing inhumane conditions at the Richmond City Jail; pressuring the city government to agree to a ban on winter cutoffs of low-income residents unable to pay their city home heating gas bills; and establishing a state highway marker to honor the great leader Gabriel, who in 1800 attempted to lead a massive slave rebellion in Virginia. We are currently working to reclaim the historic but long-abandoned cemetery where Gabriel was executed.

To publicize our work, the Defenders sponsor DefendersLIVE! a weekly radio program, and The Richmond Defender, a bimonthly newspaper with a circulation of 16,000. We also have a Web site at www.DefendersFJE.org.

The Defenders believe that it is the responsibility of community activists in the United States to also oppose U.S. wars of aggression. Our "community" is worldwide and includes all oppressed peoples. In 2004, the organization played a leading role in the formation of the Virginia Anti-War Network (VAWN), an alliance of two dozen peace, labor and community organizations that works to promote respect for the right to self-determination of countries targeted by the U.S. government and its international allies.

In line with this commitment, the Defenders organized a five-member People's Peace Delegation to Iran, which in July 2007 toured Tehran, Shiraz, Yazd, Esfahan and Qom. During that journey, we were able to meet with veterans of the eight-year war with Iraq; a family member of one of the 290 people killed in the 1988 downing of Iran Air Flight 655; students, working people, clerical leaders and Vice President S. Rahim Mashaee, a meeting that was covered by Press TV.

Delegation organizer Phil Wilayto is now writing a book based on that 11-day journey, titled "In Defense of Iran: Notes from a U.S. Peace Delegation's Journey Behind the Lies and Propaganda." The book is scheduled for release in December 2008.

Since that very inspirational journey, the Defenders have worked to help educate the U.S. public about the lies that Washington is spreading about Iran and why we need to oppose any war, sanctions or interference in Iran's internal affairs. Among other activities, we developed a slide show about the delegation's experiences that we have presented in the U.S. states of Virginia, North Carolina, Georgia, Pennsylvania and Utah.

In this work, we have collaborated closely with the Campaign Against Sanctions & Military Intervention in Iran (CASMII), which originally suggested the delegation to Iran. This past summer, Rostam Pourzal of CASMII and Phil Wilayto of the Defenders attended a national gathering of peace activists held in

Cleveland, Ohio, and successfully introduced a resolution calling for no war, sanctions or interference in the internal affairs of Iran.

On July 3, 2008, the Defenders held a public forum in Richmond to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the day the USS Vincennes warship shot down the civilian airliner Iran Air Flight 655. That meeting was covered and broadcast by Press TV. We also have produced a pamphlet about that criminal disaster.

We were also instrumental in arranging for U.S. peace activists to send a message of solidarity to the vigil for peace held Sept. 21 at the Tehran Peace Museum to mark the United Nations International Day of Peace.

Representing the Defenders and VAWN at the Sept. 24 New York meeting with President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad are Ana Edwards, host of DefendersLIVE! and Phil Wilayto, editor of the Richmond Defender. Edwards heads the Defenders' Sacred Ground Historical Reclamation Project. In 1979, Wilayto helped organize a demonstration in the U.S. Navy city of Norfolk, Virginia, to demand that the Shah of Iran be sent home from the U.S. to face trial for his criminal actions against the Iranian people. Edwards and Wilayto are also board members of CASMIL.

Our Question for President Ahmadinejad:

In light of the very serious military threats being leveled against Iran by both the United States and Israel, what do you think would be the most effective actions for U.S peace activists to take at this time? How can we most effectively help to defend Iran?

Defenders for Freedom, Justice & Equality
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E-mail: DefendersFJE@hotmail.com – Web Site: www.DefendersFJE.org

15 John Ericson

Reading the news stories in the past week or so, however, I hope that someone will ask a question that may be on many people's minds about the recent statements by Foreign Minister Mottaki, Pres. Ahmadinejad and Ayatollah Khamenei about policy toward Israel. I think the question could be phrased in a manner that invites a conciliatory statement, e.g.:

"Mr. President, you recently made statements supporting your foreign minister in his assertions that Iran has no quarrel with the Israeli people, although Iran continues to oppose the State of Israel. Last week, Ayatollah Khamenei suggested that Iran is not a friend of the Israeli people but indicated that he did not believe this was a topic for fruitful discussion. >From the reports we hear, we are a bit confused about the Iranian government's views on this issue. Many of us in the audience have had the privilege of visiting your country and have great affection for the Iranian people, regardless of the differences between our two governments. We know from our experience that it is always possible to build bridges between peoples even when governments disagree, and it is hard for us to understand why it would be difficult for an Iranian official to express goodwill toward the Israeli people, even if you question the State of Israel. In this city of New York, are you willing to reaffirm your positive statements regarding the people -- not the State -- of Israel?"

Regards,
John Ericson (member of the February 2008 delegation)

16 Priscilla Fairbank – Women Against War

Women Against War was established in the fall of 2002 to try and prevent the United States attack on Iraq. As women we have a special appreciation of the disproportionate effects of war, sanctions and occupation on the lives of women, children and other innocent civilians.

Here is a copy of our vision statement:

There is a core belief in our society that war is the answer to conflict. Women Against War is based on the belief that war is not the answer to conflict and that women can lead the way to developing alternatives to violence.

We seek to bring the voices of women, their collective energy, and their unique skills to bear on peace and social justice issues.

Equal rights and opportunities for women are an essential requirement for creating a peaceful world. We seek to make ending violence against women a central concern of the peace movement.

We seek to educate people about the special impact of war and violence on women and children.

We work to empower women with a commitment to peace to participate in foreign policy decisions so that the United States addresses conflict situations from a peacemaking perspective. This perspective must be in accord with international law and must respect human rights.

We recognize that peacemaking is hard work and requires great courage. We seek to find ways to honor peacemakers and join our voices and energies with theirs.

Since the spring of 2006 *Women Against War* and two of our sub-committees, *Grannies for Peace* and *The Iran Project*, have focused on preventing war with Iran, with the creation and display in our community of two billboards, public vigils, Legislative lobbying, creation of resource materials, and activities related to this message "*Iran Next? No War! No Way!*" One of our fact sheets, *Myths and Truths about Iran* has been nationally distributed as a resource material and is currently being updated.

In our public demonstrations we have used large banners and beautiful enlarged photos of Iranian people and families, taken by one of our members who visited Iran in 2005 with a delegation of Academics for Peace. Our first leafleting action involved Grannies for Peace on Mothers Day in 2006 when we passed out a message that said that as mothers, grandmothers, daughters, wives and sisters we did not want to see Iranians die in an unjust and unnecessary war.

Some of our most successful work so far has been our legislative lobbying. We have met several times with our two local Congressional Representatives and our two United States Senators, urging them to reject legislation that called for military intervention and other overt and covert hostilities with Iran and to sign on to legislation that called for increased high level diplomacy and negotiations.

There has been some positive response from one of our Representatives, Michael McNulty and one of our Senators, Hillary Clinton in terms of legislative co-sponsorship. Just this summer, we asked Representative McNulty to oppose the blockade legislation of one house resolution and to sign on to the regional diplomacy legislation of another resolution. After reading our material Representative McNulty actually co-sponsored House Resolution 321. Although he didn't remove his name from co-sponsorship of House Concurrent Resolution 362, he publicly agreed to question the blockade and anti-Iranian diplomat language and to refuse to vote for this resolution unless that part of the bill was removed. We are currently awaiting further information on the fate of clause #3.

We also try to speak for women working for freedom of expression in all countries of the world. For this reason we have signed on to and endorsed the Million Signatures campaign and the courageous women who have spoken out for women's rights in Iran.

Women Against War welcomes the chance to dialogue with President Ahmadinejad, Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki, and U.N. Ambassador Mohammad Khazaee, in the presence of many other peace and justice organizations. We hope that this dialogue will open a channel for the creation of greater peace and understanding between our two nations and of greater justice and freedom within each nation as well. To read more about our past and current work you can visit our website: <http://womenagainstar.org>

Here is our question for President Ahmadinejad:

As members of the New York Capital District communities, Women Against War is very aware of the graduate education of Kamiar Alaei at SUNYA School of Public health and his work with his brother, Arash Alaei, to treat and prevent HIV/AIDS. Dr. Kamiar Alaei was one of the people present at the send off for the FOR delegation that traveled to Iran in December of 2007 and spoke eloquently about the need for more peaceful dialogue between the people of our two countries.

So it was a great shock to learn that the Doctors Alaei were imprisoned in Iran during June of 2008. We have not heard that they have been charged with any crime, but rumors say that they are suspected of "fomenting a velvet revolution."

We would like to know where they are, what they are being charged with and whether they have access to their families and to legal counsel. We would also like to know why their vital medical and public health work has been interrupted.

The *larger question* that Women Against War is asking is this one:

How can the vital dialogue between Iranian citizens desiring peace and United States Citizens also desiring peace with each other continue if people who interact with or seek the support of U.S. citizens or U.S. non-governmental organizations are then accused of trying to bring about the overthrow of the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran.?

While we strongly oppose the covert efforts of the United States government to try to bring about the overthrow of the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, we consider very important the building of bridges between non-governmental groups like our own and Iranians also working for peace. How can your government support, not punish, Iranians working to build bridges with us?

We also question the treatment of Iranian citizens being held without charges, incommunicado and without access to legal counsel. Just as we question that behavior on the part of our government when it occurs. Will Iran demonstrate adherence to International Law in the case of Dr. Kamiar Alaei, Dr. Arash Alaei and other Iranians held in similar circumstances?

17 Jim Fine -- Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL)

We seek a world free of war and the threat of war

We seek a society with equity and justice for all

We seek a community where every person's potential may be fulfilled

We seek an earth restored.

The Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) was established in 1943 by members of the Religious Society of Friends, better known as the Quakers. FCNL's purpose is to lobby the U.S. Congress and Administration on issues of social and economic justice, peace, and good government.

The Quaker belief that animates FCNL was expressed well by the 17th Century English Quaker and founder of the state of Pennsylvania, William Penn. Penn said, "True godliness does not turn men out of the world, but enables them to live better in it and excites their endeavors to mend it."

FCNL endeavors to mend the world by building a network in the United States of tens of thousands of people from many different races, religions, and cultures who urge their elected representatives to make laws and support policies contributing to a more just and peaceful world.

FCNL staff visit congressional offices on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC every weekday, meeting with aides and members and urging them to support, oppose, or introduce specific legislation. FCNL sends email action alerts and other information to its supporters around the United States every week, asking that they contact their senators and representatives and urge them to take action on legislation before Congress.

Over the years, FCNL provided key support for the creation of the Peace Corps, was instrumental in lobbying for the creation of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, helped lobby for the Civil Rights Act, and led efforts in Washington to oppose both the first (1991) and second (2003) Iraq wars.

After the September 11 attacks, FCNL adopted the slogan "War Is Not the Answer" and launched a campaign to spread this statement of our deepest conviction all over the United States. We have so far

distributed nearly 1 million “War Is Not the Answer” yard signs and bumper stickers. We understand that some of these have made their way to other countries, including Iran.

Recently, FCNL has played a leading role in efforts to block the development of a new generation of U.S. nuclear weapons, lobbied to ban cluster bombs (so far, winning a one-year moratorium on U.S. export of cluster bombs), and pressed Congress to act to end the Iraq war and support comprehensive diplomatic negotiations with Iran without preconditions. We believe that our statement, “War Is Not the Answer,” is not simply an expression of Quaker pacifist conviction, but an assertion of the practical reality of international relations in the highly interdependent 21st Century.

Question One

We understand that you have recently reiterated (in July at the D8 summit in Kuala Lumpur) that the Islamic Republic of Iran has never initiated war against any nation and does not intend to do so, and does not intend to attack Israel. Yet many Americans and Israelis are still terrified by remarks that press reports attributed to you some months ago, saying that Israel should be “wiped off the map.” These reports raise the horrifying specter of a nuclear holocaust in the minds of many people in the United States and create animosity toward Iran.

Can you clarify Iran’s position on Israel?

Question Two

The former U.S. ambassador to the Afghan anti-Taliban coalition, James Dobbins, has publically credited Iran’s deputy foreign minister in 2001, Javad Zarif, with persuading Afghan’s Northern Alliance to accept the agreement that permitted establishment of the post-Taliban government in Afghanistan, greatly assisting the United States.

We have also seen press reports indicating that five years ago back channel contacts between Iranian and U.S. officials nearly led to agreement to pursue comprehensive negotiations to resolve all outstanding issues between Iran and the U.S., including sanctions, regime change, access to technology, support for organizations carrying out acts of violence, the Arab League initiative on Israel, and the nuclear question.

This suggests to us the real possibility of future cooperation between Iran and the United States, even the kind of “grand bargain” that former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger has spoken of to insure regional stability and peace.

What in your view are the chances for such negotiation and cooperation?

18 Sara Flounders -- Stop the War on Iran --

As the Coordinator of the Campaign I would like the opportunity to be the voice of this story.

Greetings to President Ahmadinejad!

Greetings to the representatives of many peace organizations gathered here today.

More than three-quarters of the population in the U.S. today is opposed to the disastrous and criminal war in Iraq. They fear the threat of another war. But the media doesn't reflect these views. Nor does Congress value them.

We formed the Stop War On Iran Campaign two years ago with a goal: to show mass opposition to sanctions and growing U.S. military threats against Iran. We also had a goal for the peace movement here. That goal was to focus attention on the need for solidarity with the Iranian people, people who were targets of media hostility and demonization.

We had to find ways to speak out and mobilize mass pressure from below. This is especially true in times when the government here has targeted a whole nation for destruction.

So a small committee set up a web site: www.StopWarOnIran.org. We then circulated a simple statement entitled, "Stop the War on Iran Before It Starts!"

Many thousands signed the petition on line. These were individual signers. They included hundreds of organizations, including Fellowship of Reconciliation and many other peace groups.

Such collective actions, even small actions, empower people. They encourage wider resistance. Petitioning and picketing and connecting with local grass roots organizers helped establish a wide network.

The Campaign grew and mobilized to participate in all the major anti-war demonstrations and many hundreds of local actions. Our emails Alerts on U.S. war threats were posted widely.

This summer a new danger arose. Half the U.S. Navy moved off the coast of Iran. A Congressional Resolution called for a Blockade. And the media was reporting threats of a military strike via Israel. Many in our whole network felt that it was urgent to mobilize immediately.

There was a problem. There was no national anti-war demonstration on the agenda. Schools were out in July and August. Congress was closed down. And many people were on vacation.

We called for locally coordinated actions. We hoped to hold protests in 10 to 15 cities. The response was overwhelming. On August 2 there were rallies, picket lines and meetings in over 100 cities internationally, primarily in the U.S.

Based on widespread internet responses over 1 million 'Stop War on Iran' messages flooded the White House, members of Congress, the UN and the media. The opposition is deep. And this is a time when the cost of endless war is felt by millions here. Wall Street is in a meltdown. The government has billions available for corporate bailouts and military contracts but denies funds for healthcare, schools or infrastructure.

We can not be silent. Another day of Internationally Coordinated Actions is set for September 27 with a major demonstration in Times Square at noon this Saturday.

We want to encourage all the wonderful peace and justice organizations gathered here today to do what they can in the next few days to see how you can participate in actions large and small across the country this Saturday, September 27.

Together our voice is powerful and our solidarity builds bridges.

Stop War On Iran!

If there is also time for a question then we could raise the question to President Ahmadinejad:

Are efforts of the movement in the U.S. and actions of those who oppose war known with in Iran? Are there steps we should take here to make people to people contact stronger?

19. Mahmood Hakak -- BENEDICTUS/BLESSING

Peace Building Through International Collaboration in The Arts

Human history documents tribes, clans, and peoples engaged in violent conflict as they seek dominion one over the other - fighting for land, resources, money and respect. Today we are still locked inside our territorial boundaries, philosophical constructs, and personal fears of those different from ourselves. Is this

the tragic inevitability for our planet or is there the collective will of today's political leaders to wisely guide our increasingly interconnected humanity towards peaceful relations amongst peoples? The evidence today is that political leadership across the globe too often lacks the imagination to envision a world of peaceful coexistence, and lacking that imagination these leaders cannot offer pathways to peace. This is our proposal - that the leadership for peace must come from the people themselves, and the guidance must come from a very surprising source - from artists rather than administrators, from artists rather than businessmen, and from artists rather than political leaders. And we propose that for Iran, in particular, cultural workers can contribute profoundly in humanizing Iranians and former adversaries, demonstrating the beauty of unique cultures, providing deep and life-changing insight into the lives of different peoples. What is the role of Cultural Diplomacy and/or Cultural Exchange in a context of political conflict?

One inspirational example: Iranian cinema before but especially after the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran has not only made an enormous contribution to world culture. It has welcomed the world into the culture and humanity of Iranian people.

Benedictus (Blessing) was born in the footsteps of this example - an original play created by an international team of professionals from three countries: Iran, Israel and the United States. What if artists could meet, learn from each other about each other's traditions/values/histories? Could these artists create something that would fairly illuminate and express the soulful cry of each of these peoples? Can artists represent harms done to each side? Can artists represent the other not as a demonized caricature, but as a living breathing feeling human being - someone worthy of respect, dignity and compassion? This was the goal of a singularly unique theatre project.

Given the impossibility of meeting in Iran and the complexities of meeting in Israel, these artists are worked in the US to create collaborative theatre in the midst of escalating political conflict, particularly around Iran's presumed nuclear ambitions. *Benedictus* imagines two men, childhood friends, born in the same town in Iran. One studies Islamic law and philosophy, entering the clergy and eventually rising to leadership in the new Islamic Republic. The other, Jewish, emigrates with his family to Israel, and eventually becomes Israel's leading arms dealer. In the center of the play, these childhood friends, irrevocably connected but long estranged, agree to a secret meeting in a designated Benedictine monastery in Rome. The central premise of *Benedictus* was inspired by an actual event. In 2005, President Mohammad Khatami (1943-) of Iran and President Moshe Katsav (1945-) of Israel were seated alphabetically at the service for the funeral of Pope John Paul II. Although the two countries had broken off diplomatic relations in 1979 with the fall of the Shah and the installation of the revolutionary government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the two presidents apparently shook hands and exchanged a few words in Farsi, since they both had been born some 50 years earlier in the Iranian province of Yazd. The supposed handshake story was later widely published in the Israeli and American press but adamantly denied in the Iranian press. A Syrian government official claimed to have witnessed a handshake between the two men, but stated that it had no meaning, since it was a "human gesture" and therefore of "no political importance".

The work *Benedictus* began in the summer of 2005 as the Iran/Israel/US Project, with a two-week residency at Siena College in upstate New York. In 2007, the work was performed at Siena College, at Golden Thread Productions in San Francisco and at the Los Angeles Theatre Center. Around the performances scholars and artists spoke regularly with the audience in moderated discussions that allowed for the open airing of the tremendous amounts of ignorance, fear and misunderstanding that are pervasive amongst people from all represented heritages. Dr. Cynthia Cohen and the Coexistence International program at Brandeis University supported the project at various moments, including during an October 2007 gathering at Brandeis in Waltham, Massachusetts entitled ACTING TOGETHER ON THE WORLD STAGE.

On September 23rd, *Benedictus* receives its first public reading in New York City, at the Lark Theatre's Playwrights Festival. The international team of artists includes:

- Ralph Blasting, producer and playwright: Mr. Blasting is currently the Dean of Liberal Arts at Siena College. Prior to that he was a Professor of theater and dramaturge in Baltimore, Maryland.

- Motti Lerner, playwright: Mr. Lerner is one of Israel's most provocative contemporary playwrights and Professor at Tel Aviv University. His plays have been performed professionally in Israel, the U.S. and Europe.
- Roberta Levitow, dramaturge and playwright: a theater director, teacher and Fulbright Senior Specialist based in Los Angeles, Ms. Levitow is a co-founder of Theatre Without Borders www.theatrewithoutborders.com <<http://www.theatrewithoutborders.com/>>.
- Mahmood Karimi-Hakak, director and playwright: Mr. Karimi-Hakak has written and directed plays and films in his native Iran, in the U.S., and in Europe. He is on the faculty at Siena College.
- Danny Michaelson, scenic designer and playwright: In addition to his long experience on the theatre faculty of Bennington College, Mr. Michaelson is a trained mediation specialist.
- Torange Yeghiazarian, producer and playwright: Founder and Artistic Director of Golden Thread Productions in San Francisco, Ms. Yeghiazarian has devoted her professional career to using theater to create greater understanding of Middle Eastern cultures.

Given the extraordinary power of works like *Benedictus* to provide a safe place for artists and audiences to "practice peace" through the power of the imagination, we, the artists of *Benedictus*, would like to pose the following question to President Ahmadinejad:

WHAT IS PRESIDENT AHMADINEJAD WILLING TO DO TO ALLOW FOR THE PROMOTING OF PEACE THROUGH THE ARTS, AND SPECIFICALLY THROUGH COLLABORATIONS BETWEEN IRANIAN, ISRAELI AND AMERICAN ARTISTS?

20 Karla Hansen and Ismael Hossein-zadeh -- Iowa Task Force for Diplomacy with Iran

Salaam Aleikum President Ahmadinejad and distinguished guests.

My name is Karla Hansen. My Iranian husband, Ismael Hossein-zadeh and I have come from Iowa to greet you in peace on behalf of the "Iowa Task Force for Diplomacy with Iran," sponsored by the American Friends Service Committee(AFSC) in Des Moines, Iowa.

Our recent endeavors through the Iowa Task Force and AFSC have included meeting with our U.S. congressional representatives to halt legislation that would effectively constitute an act of war against Iran by imposing a near total blockade around Iranian coasts. I am happy to report that our efforts have born some small fruits: in our congressional district in central Iowa the House Representative and the two Senators committed that they will not sign or cosponsor the proposed legislation.

On a personal level, we try to shed light on the shamefully distorted picture of Iran and the obfuscated relationship between our two countries portrayed by American mainstream media and our administration. We write letters and opinion pieces for print and on line media that have been shared locally, nationally and internationally. In an effort to understand the forces behind the US drive to war and militarism in the Middle East (and elsewhere), Ismael recently published a book, titled *The Political Economy of U.S. Militarism*, which clearly shows that war profiteering plays a major role in US military adventures abroad, and that war profiteers, do not hesitate to invent new enemies, including demonizing Iran and/or Islam. This demonization provides justification for their wars of choice and the subsequent looting of the lion's share of our tax dollars.

In the near future Ismael and I will visit Iran, so I may meet his family for the first time. I became a dual citizen of Iran and the U.S. last year. In preparation for our visit I plan to film a documentary of American peacemakers and what they would like to say to Iranians and then film Iranians' reaction to return and show to a wide audience here in the U.S. My wish is to portray the humanity in all of us. In addition, Ismael has obtained a Drake University grant to investigate the effects of U.S. sponsored economic sanctions on Iran.

Mr. President, would you please comment on the impact of economic sanctions on the Iranian economy and the Iranian people? Is it true that significant parts of inflation and unemployment in Iran are due to economic

sanctions? This question is important because the most reliable estimate holds that 237,000 Iraqi children under five died as a result of sanctions, with other estimates going as high as one million.

I am sure you have heard of the dubious theory of the “clash of civilizations,” which attributes the conflicts between the Muslim world and the Western powers to cultural and/or civilizational factors that are rooted in the alleged incompatibility of Islam with modernization. What is your view of this argument?

Mr. President, you must be some what frustrated because my husband, who is fluent in Farsi, tells me that you have often been misquoted and your words are distorted. This seems to be especially true in the case of your famous 2005 comments on Israel and the Holocaust. Would you please explain, once again, what you really said in those statements?

Finally, it is now common knowledge that in 2003 Iran made a serious overture (through the Swiss ambassador) to the United State in an effort to have a direct dialogue toward and eventual political rapprochement. But that overture was ignored. Has Iran made, or are you willing to make, a similar effort again?

Thanks (Mamnoon).

21 Martha Hennessy – Catholic Worker Perspective

My grandmother Dorothy Day inspired me to want to travel, to be open to the "enemy", and to see God and beauty in ordinary life. In my travels to Iran I felt all of these influences at work in terms of what I saw and experienced. I would like to pose the question of how do we remind ourselves, on a daily basis, to follow the true teachings of our religious beliefs and not become caught up in the corruption of personal power? I admired what Iran has accomplished in terms of taking care of the people's basic needs, and honoring an amazing culture, but under the current President, the cost of food has gone up greatly, causing economic hardship for the people. How can Iran avoid falling into the same trap that the West has in terms of not having the majority of citizens voting in the elections, and looking to war and aggression as the answer while abandoning our religious teachings of caring for one another as God intended?

Motashakkeram, thank you, Martha

22 Nick Jehlen – Enough Fear

Here's the story of our organization:

The Enough Fear campaign was created by Americans in collaboration with Iranian bloggers working on ways to foster solidarity and communication between the people of our two countries. Our campaign's goal is to promote bilateral, comprehensive talks between the US and Iran without preconditions. We support this goal by creating opportunities for average Americans and average Iranians to talk directly to each other.

We promote dialogue between our countries in the most direct way we can - by facilitating phone conversations between Americans and Iranians. To do this, we set up phone banks in public places in the US. Each US phone is connected to a volunteer in Iran, and Americans are invited to pick up one of the phones in the US and talk directly to our volunteers in Iran about any topic they choose. We put no pre-conditions on these conversations; we only ask that both sides be respectful. We have found that Americans and Iranians are eager to talk and get to know each other.

So far, we have held four events where these direct phone links have been set up for a period of 2-3 hours at a time. We use these events to show that Americans and Iranians can talk, and that there is more that unites our two countries than divides us.

Our question:

We would like to ask permission of President Ahmadinejad to travel to Iran to set up a public phone bank like those that we have set up in the US in the past. Currently, when we set up our phone banks in the US in public places, they are connected to private citizens in their homes in Iran. We would like to set up our phone bank in a public space in Iran and connect it to a similar phone bank in the US. We would then invite members of the public in Iran to talk directly to members of the public in the US. We believe this will be an important step in fostering open communication between Iranians and Americans and will lead to better understanding and mutual respect between our two countries.

If you have questions about how this would work, or need any other clarification, please feel free to call me at 617-504-7601.

A short documentary of a recent US/Iran hotline is available at <http://www.linktv.org/programs/talktoiran>

Thanks,
Nick Jehlen
Lead Organizer
EnoughFear.org

23 Mahdis Keshavarz – Founder, The Make Agency



Contact: Mahdis Keshavarz
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Company Background

- *The Make Agency is a public relations and strategic communications firm with a decade of experience representing some of the most important public interest organizations, businesses and opinion makers in the world*
- *We specialize in approaching serious political, cultural and economic issues in a creative, and accessible manner which attracts the uninitiated and reinforces the commitment of existing constituencies*

Management

- *Mahdis Keshavarz, Founder*

Ms. Keshavarz founded The Make Agency after nearly eight years as Vice President of Riptide Communications, Inc. While at Riptide, her concentration was primarily on international and domestic campaigns. Since 2001 she has focused extensively on addressing the post-9/11 backlash against the South Asian, Arab, and Muslim communities in the United States, Europe, and other parts of the world. Her groundbreaking work as primary press adviser for the Guantánamo Global Justice Initiative at the Center

for Constitutional Rights is largely credited with bringing the issue of indefinite detention at Guantánamo to the public arena.

Her extensive background also includes serving as publicist for numerous arts and culture initiatives across the Arab and Muslim world.

Ms. Keshavarz has placed hundreds of news stories and op-eds with various media outlets – including The New York Times, The Washington Post, CNN, BBC, and Al Jazeera – for her clients. She has also written for Slate and appeared as a commentator on Democracy Now! She serves on the advisory board for the Center for Social Inclusion and the Alston Bannerman Fellowship Program.

STATEMENT OF CONCERN

Both the United States and especially Iran have disproportionately young populations. How do you envision the youth of these countries building a better future of respect and understanding between the two countries and cultures?

What is your hope for helping people in countries like the United States better understand Islam and Muslim people?

As a former university professor and academic, what do you imagine the role of Universities and academic leaders could be in building better relationships between Iran and the United States?

24 Nada Khader -- WESPAC

WESPAC is a peace and justice organization that started in 1974 in response to the Vietnam War and nuclear proliferation. We organize forums, film screenings, speakers, and meetings with elected representatives on a wide range of social and economic justice issues both at home and abroad.

I have been working for WESPAC for seven years and our biggest success was the Palestinian Art Exhibit at the County Center. A NY State Assemblyman tried to pressure our county officials to cancel the art exhibit because he said the art work "glorified terrorism". This story received worldwide attention including the Guardian of London, Ha'aretz paper in Israel and the International Herald Tribune.

We had a signed contract with the County Center but there was significant political pressure to cancel the event. WESPAC started an immense people's campaign where we asked hundreds and hundreds of people to call our County officials asking them to let this cultural exhibit proceed as planned. People wrote letters to the local paper and were interviewed on the radio.

The County Executive made the decision not to cancel the event, citing our First Amendment rights to free speech. In the meantime, the extensive media coverage meant that we had hundreds and hundreds of people lining up to come and see the Palestinian Art! It was a victory for us - the tactic of the NYS politician failed.

Question: We have read accounts that part of the logic for the US invasion of Iraq was that Saddam Hussein had decided to no longer accept US dollars in exchange for Iraqi oil. We are also reading that Iran may no longer accept US dollars in exchange for Iranian oil. Is this indeed so, and do you feel that the move towards no longer accept dollars for petroleum is a significant reason for US posturing with regards to Iran?

PS. I really hope that there will be questions on Palestine, women and labor rights (I have been receiving very negative reports about these human rights conditions); also apparently President Ahmadinejad's response to homosexuality in Iran was allegedly "mistranslated" when he was at Columbia University last year. Do you want to give him the chance to clarify what he meant about it? Is it true that they are stoned to death?

I would also love to hear them discuss how the presence of US troops in both Iraq and Afghanistan has affected Iran's relationship with these two countries.

Nada Khader
Executive Director
WESPAC Foundation
www.wespac.org

25 Ed Kinane –Syracuse Peace Council

Thank you very much for the privilege of meeting and dialoging with you. I visited Iran in March 2007 with a Fellowship of Reconciliation “citizen diplomacy” delegation. Given our warm welcome throughout Iran and given how fascinating Iran is, I was most reluctant to leave.

Since the seventies I’ve worked closely with the Syracuse Peace Council [www.peacecouncil.org]. The Peace Council is the oldest local, independent, non-sectarian peace and justice organization in the United States. SPC is independent of any government. It is committed to nonviolence.

For years the Peace Council toiled to prevent more nuclear power plants being built in the region. Our campaign was part of a national movement seeking to educate U.S. Americans and our leaders about the pitfalls of nuclear power and to inform them about healthy alternatives. Among nuclear energy’s numerous problems, we were particularly concerned with the disposal of its very long-lasting toxic and radioactive waste products.

We believe that nuclear energy is a costly and dangerous investment. We believe that there are far safer and more economical approaches to diversifying energy sources and that nations must reduce dependence on non-renewable energy.

The Syracuse Peace Council believes that the U.S. addiction to oil underlies much of its addiction to war – especially to war in the Middle East. We believe that demonizing and invading foreign lands in order to control their oil reserves ultimately undermines our national security. The Peace Council believes the U.S. must become energy-independent and not see bombing and mass killing as a solution to our energy problems.

The grassroots anti-nuclear campaign in the U.S. eventually succeeded in preventing the further construction of domestic nuclear power plants. The campaign generated huge numbers of speeches, leaflets, letters to the editor, articles and books. It employed a wide array of nonviolent tactics: marches, street theater, local, regional and national gatherings. In the tradition of Henry David Thoreau, Mohandas Gandhi, and Martin Luther King, our tactics also included civil disobedience.

Eventually the combination of all these tactics worked. Citizens learned about the multi-faceted perils of nuclear energy; we in turn made it clear to our political leaders that nuclear energy wasn’t acceptable. The greedy corporations driving the development of nuclear energy saw their federal subsidies drying up and found that increasingly more stringent licensing requirements made construction of nuclear plants impractical. For the past two decades no new commercial nuclear plants have been built in the U.S.

Unfortunately our success in retarding that industry in the civilian sector has not been matched by success in abolishing *military* nuclear power. Nor have we made sufficient progress in achieving energy-independence or in replacing risky, vulnerable, centralized, capital-intensive, carcinogenic, non-renewable energy sources -- oil, coal and nuclear -- with such renewable and more democratic energy sources like wind and solar power.

Last year our delegation met with faculty and students in Qom and Tehran. These Iranians well know that the U.S. used to urge the Shah to “go nuclear” and that currently some U.S. capitalists are eager to revive

domestic nuclear power. These Iranian scholars helped us understand why Iran, like many other nations, is now also seeking to develop nuclear power

Understandably, in Iran, nuclear development has become a matter of sovereignty and national pride. But some Iranians also look to nuclear energy as a way of avoiding the error of having their energy production “all in one basket.” Knowing that even its vast supplies of oil and natural gas will run out within a few decades, Iran realizes it would be irresponsible to future generations if it didn’t now begin to diversify its power sources.

So, friends, our question for you is this: *In its quest to diversify and to achieve long-term energy independence, what efforts is Iran making to develop such clean, renewable alternative options as solar and wind power?*

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26 Iara Lee – Caipirinha Foundation

Caipirinha Foundation was created in order to promote peace through justice, rejecting violence as a political instrument and favoring alternative methods of dialogue. We believe that art is the most direct expression of human empathy. Thus, through the exchange of art, music, and film, we strive to create a new diplomatic language which encourages understanding between the diverse cultures of the world. To this end, Caipirinha has been involved in all manner of peace-building initiatives from supporting The Campaign for New American Policy on Iran, to producing war/peace short films. A signature accomplishment of Caipirinha was our role in helping coordinate and support the New York Philharmonic orchestra's landmark concert in Pyongyang, North Korea, last February- the first ever such performance in North Korea; and providing critical support for PUST- the Pyongyang University of Science and Technology, the first-ever such University in North Korea, where North Korean students are given the opportunity to learn from an international faculty.

Question:

Since the end of World War II the world has been a place of interwoven dependencies and alliances. Central to the discord between our two nations is the security of the Israeli state. As the president of Iran, how do you envision, in specific detail, the ideal relationship between your nation and Israel, and what steps have you taken in pursuit of this vision?

Best,
For Iara,
Claude

27 Joe Lombardo -- Bethlehem Neighbors for Peace –

My organization, Bethlehem Neighbors for Peace, was organized in the small town of Bethlehem, NY, right before the US invasion of Iraq. Twenty-five neighbors met at one family’s home and decided that we needed to do whatever we can to oppose the US aggression towards Iraq. Our first activity was a vigil in the center of our town; around 100 people attended. Since that first vigil, we have vigiled every Monday for the past 5 ½ years. We started holding meetings at our local Town Hall and having monthly programs at our local library. One of the first meetings that we held was with Scott Ritter, who also lives in the town of Bethlehem. The meeting was held at our Town Hall and 500 people attended.

We reached out to other towns in our area and now there are Neighbors for Peace groups in several of the surrounding towns. Our anti-war struggle brought us to confront other issues such as civil liberties, the cost of war and US aggression towards other countries in the world, including Iran.

In our region, we helped organize the Northeast Peace and Justice Action Coalition and the Upstate Anti-War network to help coordinate with other regional groups and we joined United for Peace and Justice to help coordinate activity on a national level. We also have been active with the National Assembly to End the War in Iraq and Afghanistan, a network that is attempting to bring together the diverse sections of the national anti-war movement.

The concern that I have about relations between the United States and Iran is that the US will attack Iran or give the green light to Israel to do so. This concern is increase with the recent gift of Bunker Buster bombs to Israel.

I am also angered by the reception that President Ahmadinejad received during his last visit at Columbia University and in the US press. The hypocrisy of the Columbia University President condemning Iran's role in Iraq when the US has invaded and occupies that country is beyond stupidity. I am sure that if Bush visited Iran, he would have been received cordially despite the destruction he has caused throughout the world.

Joe Lombardo
Bethlehem Neighbors for Peace (BethlehemForPeace.org)
Coordinator Northeast Peace and Justice Action Coalitions (NEPAJAC.org)

28 Valerie Lucznikowska -- September 11 Families for Peaceful Tomorrows

September 11 Families for Peaceful Tomorrows got its start when family members of 9/11 victims opposed the bombing of Afghanistan in response to their loved ones' deaths, and subsequently opposed the invasion of Iraq. Following 9/11 many people were afraid to criticize US military actions for fear of being labeled unpatriotic or uncaring about the victims of 9/11. Peaceful Tomorrows members provided a much needed rejection of the message of revenge that was publicly promoted in response to 9/11, and instead vowed to turn the force of their grief into positive actions for peace and justice.

We are committed to identifying the root causes of violence, learning how terrorism is fostered and funded, demanding adherence to international legal institutions that reinforce the rule of law, and supporting organizations that expand the capacity for settling grievances nonviolently.

A chief concern of the group is civilian "collateral damage". Peaceful Tomorrows members traveled to Afghanistan in early 2002 and members then raised funds in the US to be distributed to Afghan families affected by the U.S. military campaign, advocated for an Afghan victims' fund with the government, and co-authored and publicized a report called "Afghan Portraits of Grief." Soon after that, Peaceful Tomorrows helped form the peace coalition United for Peace and Justice (UFPJ).

As the war and occupation continued, Peaceful Tomorrows focused on raising the issue of Iraqi civilian casualties. Among the milestones of this campaign were:

- January 2003: sent members to Iraq to bring American attention to the incipient suffering of the Iraqi civilians from the impending U.S. bombing. Members undertook the trip as an act of civil disobedience as travel to Iraq was forbidden by the government at that time.
- March 2003: members of Peaceful Tomorrows were arrested for acts of nonviolent civil disobedience on the west lawn of the U.S. Capitol to protest the war in Iraq.
- 2004: Peaceful Tomorrows organized a "Stonewalk Tour". The members physically pulled a two-ton granite tombstone on a cart, inscribed "'Unknown Civilians Killed in War" from the Democratic National Convention in Boston to the Republican National Convention in New York. Covered by the media, it brought attention to the civilian victims of US and others' military actions.
- 2005 and 2006, Peaceful Tomorrows collaborated with the American Friends Service Committee on the

traveling exhibit "Eyes Wide Open." The traveling exhibit, viewed widely across the country, graphically demonstrated the human cost of war through the display of thousands of combat boots and shoes representing those killed.

- In 2006 Peaceful Tomorrows held an international conference titled "Civilian Casualties, Civilian Solutions", bringing together representatives of organizations formed by family members of victims and survivors of war and violence who are now working for peace and nonviolence. This spurred the growth of the International Network for Peace, a network of family-based organizations that works for nonviolence domestically and abroad.

Members have been active in lobbying the US Congress on restoration of civil rights (e.g. habeas corpus), calling for the closing of Guantanamo, and other humanitarian issues.

Currently, we are working to further the aims of La Onf (literally, "against violence"), a coalition of Iraqi peace organizations and individuals working for a democratic society in Iraq through non-violent methods, opposition to corruption and occupation and the strengthening civil society through law.

Valerie Lucznikowska
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29 David MacMichael – Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity

I will be present at the subject meeting representing Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS). I want it made clear that I, and my organization, are very strongly opposed to any US military action against Iran, finding the rationales put forward by those elements in the US Government who favor such action to be seriously lacking in validity and unsupported by convincing evidence.

In particular, the charges that Iran is covertly pursuing a nuclear weapons development program are highly suspect and bring to mind the similarly unsupported and false charges raised about Iraq's supposed "weapons of mass destruction" during the run-up to the US/UK aggression against Iraq in 2003. VIPS was prominent in its public opposition to that invasion, using its credibility as an organization of former US intelligence officers to denounce the validity of the so-called evidence employed by the US/UK governments to justify the invasion.

Based on my close reading of the reports on Iran's adherence to the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) by the UN's International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) head Mohammad al-Baradei over the past several years I am convinced that the Government of Iran, in denying it has, or even had, a nuclear weapons program, is telling the truth.

Unfortunately, based on many years experience in the US national security system, I am equally convinced that the United States government is not telling the truth on this matter. I am pleased that the National Intelligence Estimate issued by the US intelligence system earlier this year concluded that Iran had had no nuclear weapons program since 2003.

This, of course, if accurate, would mean that at least in 2003 Iran did have some sort of nuclear weapons program. My educated guess is that Iran's military forces, like those of every country of any size, have from time to time independently conducted staff studies relating to nuclear warfare, including whether it would be in Iran's interest to withdraw from the NPT and develop a nuclear weapons capability. This should not be surprising since Iran's near neighbors, India and Pakistan--both Muslim countries--are non-NPT members and have a substantial nuclear military capability. Needless to say, the fact that during the 1980s when Iraq invaded Iran, Iraq had an active nuclear weapons program, although it had not actually developed a weapon. Of course, the pre-eminent nuclear weapons power in the Middle East region is Israel which has made no secret of its intention to attack Iran preemptively should it feel the need to do so. Finally, the United States, which also openly threatens Iran with military attack ("the military option

remains on the table") as well as increasing economic sanctions, maintains untold numbers of nuclear weapons in the region aboard its warships and at various bases. Hence, it would be surprising to me if Iran's armed forces do not, as a matter of course, conduct studies and/or have war plans relating to nuclear war, particularly how best to defend the country against nuclear attack.

I plan, therefore, to suggest to the president and foreign minister that, in the interest of clarifying the situation and without accepting that they are under any obligation to do so that they present publicly to the United Nations General Assembly (not to the Security Council) Iran's military files dealing with such plans and studies. (I should mention here that the new president of the General Assembly, Father Miguel d'Escoto Brockman of Nicaragua is a longtime friend of mine, and I would be happy to take this proposal up with him personally).

Secondly, I want the president and foreign minister to consider another matter which I think is very relevant to the relationship between Iran and the United States. This relates to the 1979-1980 hostage crisis following the overthrow of the Shah's regime in which revolutionary students took over the US embassy in Tehran and for over 400 days held captive most of the embassy employees. Frankly, I believe that it is US popular resentment over both the hostage matter and the overthrow of a US client--the Shah--which has fueled the continuing hostility of the US toward Iran, including the direct US military support for Iraq during its invasion of Iran during the 1980s, culminating in the shooting down by the USS Vincennes of an Iranian civil airliner in 1988.

One much debated result of the hostage crisis was the effect that it had on the 1980 presidential election in the United States. The inability of President James Carter either to negotiate the return of the hostages or to rescue them by military attack was a significant factor in Carter's defeat by the Republican candidate Ronald Reagan.

This led to widely circulated rumors in the US that the Republicans were fearful of an "October Surprise", a negotiated release of the hostages in October, just prior to the election which would tip the scales and ensure Carter's re-election. Both before and after the election there were suspicions that the Republican presidential campaign, headed by later CIA Director William Casey, had made contacts with the Iranian government, promising various types of assistance, particularly access to US military equipment to be covertly shipped through Israel, if the hostages were not released prior to the election. Of course, the hostages were not released and Reagan won the election. However, the fact that the hostages were freed on the very day of Reagan's inauguration fanned the flames of suspicion.

There were stories of secret meetings in Paris and Madrid, supposedly attended by Casey or the new vice-president, George H.W. Bush, and it is clear that despite the official US embargo to arms sales to Iran, weapons were delivered and the profits from their sale were diverted to illegal funding of the US-backed "contra" forces in Nicaragua, hence
The Iran-contra scandal

Nothing was ever proven, and a congressional hearing on the October Surprise matter, while leaving more questions unanswered than resolved, cleared the by then President Bush of charges of attending the supposed meetings.

In any event, since the hostage matter, in my belief is important, perhaps crucial, to US-Iranian relations, I want to appeal to Iran's president and foreign minister to open for public inspection all their files on the alleged Paris and Madrid meetings and on any of the alleged approaches from the Reagan campaign.

I firmly believe in openness and truth in the conduct of policy, whether foreign or domestic, by all nations, my own included. I think that in the nuclear weapons matter Iran has been truthful and that my own country, the US, has not. However, I do think Iran can, as I have suggested above, be more open without doing itself any harm, indeed, helping its cause. On the October Surprise affair, I think that Iran, perhaps at some risk, but I do not think at any real danger, could help clarify the historical record and very likely put to rest one of the continuing causes of popular US hostility toward Iran.

30 Jonathan McBride - Beyond War

Our Story

Beyond War is a renewal of an organization of the same name in the mid-1980s that had over 24,000 members. At the height of the Cold War, Beyond War took a leading role in civilian diplomacy, bringing Soviet and American scientists, leaders and citizens together through innovative "space bridge" satellite links and face-to-face meetings, travel and conventions. Now it is time for Iranians and Americans to share the same experience of building peace through relationships of good will.

Our Question

Will the political and religious leaders in Iran give their blessing and support to Iranian and American citizens and groups who want to meet and work with each other to build peace through relationships of good will? Specifically, how will the government of Iran support this?

31 Bob Naiman -- Just Foreign Policy

How we came into being, how we work, examples of success:

Just Foreign Policy was created in the summer of 2006. We work to reform U.S. foreign policy so that it reflects the values and interests of the majority of Americans. Our first major action, in concert with Jewish Voice for Peace, was to support Congressional efforts to advocate for a cease-fire to end the 2006 Israeli invasion of Lebanon. Since our founding our top priority has been to prevent military conflict between the United States and Iran and press the U.S. government to engage in serious, direct, and sustained negotiations with Iran over the nuclear question and all other issues in dispute, as advocated by Ambassador Pickering. We organized a 22-city tour with author Stephen Kinzer reminding Americans of how the U.S. - backed coup in Iran in the 1950s has poisoned relations between our countries to underscore the far-reaching negative consequences of a military confrontation. A video we made based on the tour has been viewed a quarter of a million times on YouTube. Together with many other organizations here, we have helped to block a resolution in Congress urging the President to try to cut off Iran's gas imports.

Question/Statement of concern:

We were very pleased to see that in its May letter to the United Nations, Iran indicated its willingness to negotiate on a proposal for multilateral enrichment of uranium in Iran, which could safeguard the interests of Iran in protecting its right to enrich uranium while also satisfying the concerns of the United States that there be no diversion into a weapons program. As you know, Ambassador Pickering and other American experts have endorsed this idea. Our concern is that this proposal has been barely reported in major media in the United States, so that most Americans don't realize that the Iranian government has made a proposal that could be the basis of a sustainable solution which could safeguard the interests of all countries. And Americans can't pressure their government to consider something that they don't even know about. So my question is, how can we work together to put this proposal repeatedly in the court of American public opinion, so that it can no longer be ignored?

32 Eleanor Ommani, American Iranian Friendship Committee (AIFC)

Dear President Ahmadinejad:

On behalf of the American Iranian Friendship Committee (AIFC), we welcome you to the sixty-third opening of the United Nations General Assembly and are honored by your presence, and appreciative of your invitation to the members of the U.S. Peace movement. Our common goal is above all the relaxation of tension which, hopefully, may give rise to greater cooperation.

With this in mind, AIFC, founded in 2004 to prevent any attack on Iran, would like to express its point of view and experience on Iran-U.S. relations. Here, respectfully, we declare that:

1. Development of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes is Iran's inalienable right.

2. Iran has the right, like all other nations signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), to enrichment of uranium for peaceful purposes, under the safeguard of the IAEA.
3. Iran's broad cooperation with other countries through trade and socio-cultural exchanges is a strong proof that the U.S. has failed in its attempt to isolate Iran. In this light, we advocate and pledge to work for wider relations between the U.S. and Iran in the cultural, scientific and economic arenas.
4. Iran's participation in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is a vital step towards regional development and building a multi-polar world. Iran's strong friendly relations with the Middle Eastern countries, including Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Afghanistan, and the people of Palestine and also with the countries of Latin America, struggling for their own independent path, are progressive and commendable. AIFC highly values Iran's support for the struggle of the people of Palestine. The peace movement in the United States condemns the killing, starving and oppression brought by the State of Israel with its Apartheid policies, against the Palestinian people. Furthermore, AIFC believes that the countries of the Middle East can solve their problems on their own, without foreign interference, and should work together to form a commercial, economic and security alliance, similar to that of the European Union.
5. AIFC supports Iran's policy of dialogue and peaceful resolution of all differences with Europe and the U.S.
6. Under the UN Charter, we defend and support Iran's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. We oppose the threats of war and sanctions devised by the United States, and its attempts by force to change the domestic policies of the Islamic Republic. The 1979 Revolution radically transformed the Iranian society in all spheres, and is in an unfolding process of a greater democratization of social life.
7. We recognize and commend the role of Iran's government in defending the rights of developing nations, and we applaud the tireless efforts of Iran's representatives at the United Nations, to help democratize this international organization. We have learned from the unity of the Iranian people and their leadership that it is through their collective stance that the country has been able to safeguard its independence and proceed with its development.
8. We in AIFC believe that the West must stop imposing its own concept of individual and social freedoms in the name of democracy on the developing countries, and concretely on the Muslim world.
9. At the same time that the U.S. economy is facing the biggest financial debacle of the past 50 years, Washington has the arrogance of power to wish to dictate, restrict, and curtail the development of Iran through punitive sanctions, whose purpose is designed to worsen the conditions of the Iranian people and by force separate the leaders of the Islamic Republic of Iran from the people of the nation.

Two Questions for President Ahmadinejad:

1. What is the economic plan that your administration has presented to the Iranian Parliament, and describe some of its features?
2. Is Iran holding meetings with the representatives of the U.S. with regards to Iraq or otherwise?

Respectfully Submitted by the Executive Board of the American Iranian Friendship Committee (AIFC).
9/24/08

33 Jill Parillo - Physicians for Social Responsibility

President Ahmadinejad,

September 24, 2008

Thank you very much for taking time to hear from me and other peace groups. My name is Jill Parillo. I work for Physicians for Social Responsibility. I am working with Iranian and US doctors to create a medical exchange and bring better medical care to Iranian chemical weapon victims.

I am writing analyses for our webpage and our Physicians are giving talks that communicate Physicians for Social Responsibility's position that war with Iran would be devastating. We communicate that war is the

real threat to human life and health and that new policies of diplomacy must be created to ease tensions and bring peace.

I am sure you know of the grave statistics: Saddam Hussein's use of chemical weapons during the Iran-Iraq War led to the exposure of one million Iranian combatants and civilians to chemical agents from 1983 to 1988. Today, there are still 100,000 chemical weapon victims in Iran and Iraq. Symptoms of these Iranian and Iraqi survivors include; chronic bronchitis, blockage of 75% of breathing airways, corneal eye damage, scars on face and body, and psychological disorders.

This year, my organization, Physicians for Social Responsibility, brought two incredible Iranian doctors and two chemical weapon victims from the Society for Chemical Weapon Victims Support (Anjomane Hemayat az Ghorbaniane Selahhaye Shimiaye) in Tehran to the United States to talk about their medical research. The doctors did several medical talks, including talks at George Washington University Hospital and Harvard University. At George Washington University Hospital in Washington DC, US doctors of otolaryngology (of the throat) performed examinations of the visiting Iranian patients and worked with the experienced Iranian visiting doctors to find a potential surgical treatment for the Iranian patients.

In the end, the American and Iranian doctors came up with a plan for an unprecedented surgery for the Iranian patients. It was a very tearful moment Mr. President when the doctors came out of their last closed meeting to announce to myself and the visiting Iranian patients that there was likely a cure for the daily suffering that these two patients had experienced for the last 20 years.

I want to create an international academic and research consortium which would bring doctors and international experts together to find ways to bring effective treatment to chemical weapon victims in Iran and Iraq.

I hope to travel to Iran next month with two US doctors to see the work of the Society for Chemical Weapon Victims Support (Anjomane Hemayat az Ghorbaniane Selahhaye Shimiaye) and find ways to research together to bring better care to these patients. We are still waiting for the Iranian Foreign Ministry to give us a positive response to our visa applications for Dr. Evan Kanter, Dr. Ira Helfand, Dr. Paul Walker, and myself, Jill Marie Parillo. I hope your Foreign Ministry will accept our application and the invitation letters sent from Society for Chemical Weapon Victims Support positively.

We cannot forget these victims of Saddam's chemical attacks, and we should not let politics get in the way of a needed scientific exchange that can benefit these patients. We need to combine the expertise of these Iranian doctors with specialists in the United States and elsewhere to succeed in bringing needed help to these victims.

Your approval of this project would be greatly appreciated.

May God bring peace and justice and redeem all things that are preventing these patients from receiving the help that they need.

Thank you very much for your time.

Sincerely,
Jill Marie Parillo
Deputy Director for Security Programs, Physicians for Social Responsibility

34 Rudy Perkins -- Swing the Vote

The peace organization I am on the steering committee of is *Swing the Vote* (www.swingthevote.us), which is active primarily in the electoral swing state of New Hampshire. We are an independent political action committee, founded in 2004, that has worked to defeat pro-war candidates for the White House and Congress, and has done voter education on war & peace issues.

Alongside other peace and progressive organizations in New Hampshire, and including Democratic Party organizations there, we were successful in making New Hampshire the one state in the nation that had voted for Bush in 2000 turn around and vote against Bush for president in 2004. Similarly, in 2006, we helped defeat pro-war Republican Congressman Charlie Bass in the Second Congressional District of New Hampshire. We are currently campaigning against John McCain and NH Senator John Sununu, against any U.S. attack on Iran, and for an end to the Iraq war, among other things.

Questions:

1) What steps can the U.S. and Israel take to reduce tensions with Iran and what steps can Iran take to reduce tensions with the U.S. and Israel? How can Americans encourage these steps?

2) Media reports here suggest that in 2003 members of the Iranian government proposed to the U.S. government comprehensive peace discussions, to include:

- * Possible Iranian support for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict,
 - * possible Iranian support for the demilitarization of Hamas and Hezbollah,
 - * Iranian - U.S. cooperation on security and stability in Iraq, and
 - * Nuclear weapons issues concerning the region,
- and that the U.S. government ignored the proposal.

Are these reports correct? If so, is the Iranian offer for such comprehensive peace discussions still on the table, including possible Iranian support for a two-state solution for Israel/Palestine? How can American peace organizations help make these comprehensive peace discussions occur?

3) Could you explain the remaining outstanding issues for the IAEA regarding Iran's nuclear program, and how Iran proposes to resolve these?

4) Some media reports in the U.S. suggest that Iran has played a role influencing militia groups in Iraq to reduce or refrain from violent acts, in order to help stabilize and bring peace to Iraq. Are these reports correct? If so, what additional steps will Iran be taking to help bring peace to Iraq? Will these steps involve cooperation with the U.S. on such peace initiatives?

5) Certain U.S. military and governmental authorities have accused Iran of arming groups that are attacking U.S. soldiers in Iraq. Has Iran armed any such groups? How would you answer such charges?

6) Iran's suppression of the Bahai religion, and certain Christian groups, and the vetting and rejection of political candidates in Iran by a small governmental committee, are sometimes given as evidence by certain commentators in the U.S. that Iran is not a democratic country. How would you respond to such charges? Does Iran have plans to extend full religious freedom in the country, including to groups such as the Bahai, and to allow more, or all, candidates run for office in the future?

7) What do you see as the possible consequences or repercussions of any U.S. attack on Iran?

8) In your view, what are the key steps that need to be taken by the U.S. and others to help bring peace to Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq?

9) Many of us have travelled to Iran with delegations and have spoken to American groups and given media interviews about our good experiences in Iran and with the Iranian people. This has often helped other Americans have a better understanding of, and a more positive view towards, Iran.

Are there steps the Iranian government can take to make it easier for individual Americans to visit Iran? Last minute granting of visas, and the difficulty of obtaining individual visas, are complaints we have heard from Americans interested in traveling to Iran.

10) What future do you see for greater economic and business ties between Iran and the U.S.?

11) What is Iran's role in Lebanon? Are there steps Iran has taken or can take to reduce the armed conflict in that country?

12) Many Americans have heard that Iran wants to "wipe Israel off the face of the map" and are concerned about Israel's future security. This is one of the causes of a lot of hostility towards Iran amongst politicians and others in the U.S.

First, was such a "wipe off the map" statement ever made by any Iranian official? Second, what assurances can you now offer that Iran has no intention to attack Israel or sponsor attacks by proxy forces against Israel? Under what conditions would Iran recognize Israel and its right to exist?

Well, there are other questions I have been asked during my talks about Iran, or that I can think of, but let me stop with those above. Many thanks. -- Rudy Perkins

35 Danny Postal

Madden Bagher shares our commitment to the cause of peace. Yet he has spent much of the last several years in prison. He is currently serving a sentence for articles he wrote opposing the death penalty in Iran. Bagher suffers from severe heart and kidney ailments. On August 7, 2008, a prison doctor recommended strongly that he be taken to a hospital to receive treatment for his illnesses. On the same day, the authorities transferred Bagher to solitary confinement in Section 209 of Evin Prison, where intelligence agents interrogated him for three weeks. As Baghi's health deteriorated considerably, on September 16, the authorities released him for medical treatment. It is not clear if he will be returned to prison again. Please know that as advocates of peace, it dismays us deeply that a fellow peace advocate such as Baghi has had to endure this ordeal. Many voices for peace and human rights across the world have called for his freedom. Would you please, in the spirit of peace, consider allowing Baghi to remain free rather than returning him to prison?

36 Rostam Pourzal -- CASMII

- "Given the very serious tensions that now exist now between the United States and Iran, and given that the fundamental reason for these tensions are the aggressive aims of the U.S. government, what actions do you think would be most helpful for American peace activists to take at this time?"

- "Your government seems to feel that the existing world order is undemocratic and international security arrangements must become transparent and inclusive. My group believes this is the reason that Iran's self-confidence alarms world powers. Do you agree?"

.....

37 Dave Robinson -- Pax Christi

Pax Christi, an international Catholic peace movement, was founded in Europe 63 years ago to promote reconciliation between the French and the Germans after World War II. Today, we are active in more than 60 countries on five continents, with a very strong presence in the U.S. As a faith-based network, we seek to transform a world shaken by violence, terrorism, deepening inequalities and global insecurity. We are committed to non-violence - and to demilitarization and disarmament, human security, human rights and the rule of law as the basis of peaceful societies. As a movement and a global network, Pax Christi International brings together people from many different backgrounds and cultures as they shape and act upon their shared vision of peace, reconciliation and justice for all.

Pax Christi responds to requests for help from local peace groups in regions around the world, including in the U.S., experiencing different kinds of conflict. For example, Pax Christi USA supported the Immokalee Farmworkers in their ultimately successful struggle against a major U.S. food service corporation to increase their income by a few pennies per pound of tomatoes picked. On the other side of the world, Pax

Christi Netherlands helped broker the early stages of the peace process between the Lord's resistance Army and the Government of Uganda.

Pax Christi also supports international coalitions that focus on timely issues like banning landmines, curbing the trade and proliferation of small arms, establishing an International Criminal Court, and abolishing nuclear weapons. We played a significant role in recent efforts to ban the production and use of cluster munitions.

For more than 25 years, Pax Christi has held consultative status with the United Nations in New York, Geneva and Vienna, as well as with the U.N. Human Rights Commission and, more recently, UNESCO and UNICEF. It is also officially represented at the Council of Europe and enjoys, along with its member organizations, access to the European Parliament and the European Commission.

Questions from Pax Christi:

Clearly Iran has an interest in regional stability and a stable Iraq at peace with Iran. What would you see as the key issues that Iran would identify in a regional approach to bring peace and stability to Iraq? What would you identify as Iran's hopes for the role that the United States would play in a regional approach to ending the violence and bringing stability and peace to Iraq?

Dave Robinson, Executive Director of Pax Christi USA, traveled to Iraq with FOR in 2006, participated in the Quaker/Mennonite Emergency Delegation to Tehran last year and participated in last year's meeting with President Ahmadinejad. Dave has also worked with the Iranian Foreign Ministry over the past year in an attempt to initiate a dialogue between Iran and the US Bishops Conference.

38 Ann and Ahmad Shirazi -- The Critical Voice & The Granny Brigade

It is a privilege to be invited to attend this meeting and to have the opportunity to exchange ideas with the President of Iran, especially in these precarious times when the United States is directly threatening Iran and its citizens. We are affiliated with two groups dedicated to stopping the occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq and the prevention of United States attacks on Iran and other targeted countries.

The Critical Voice is a direct action artists group who created the We Will Not Be Silent Campaign in 2006. We have distributed over 20,000 shirts world-wide with the We Will Not Be Silent message in English, Farsi, Arabic, and other languages in hopes that this statement will inspire acts of resistance and dissent against a government that abuses its power and abandons the rule of law. Our slogan came from the White Rose, a group of University of Munich students who, in 1942 and 1943, clandestinely distributed anti-Nazi literature throughout Germany to motivate the German people to stand up against the Nazi regime.

In Washington DC, our group has organized demonstrations against the policies of the United States, and read the names of the dead in Congressional buildings. When a young woman wearing the shirt with We Will Not Be Silent was harassed and threatened by Homeland Security on a New York ferry taking her home from school, we mobilized over 100 people in two days, including the elderly, students, and young children with their parents to converge at the ferry in protest. Twice we have hung 30x22 foot banners in Congressional buildings, with the Articles of Impeachment and with the words WAR TORTURE LIES: WE WILL NOT BE SILENT.

The Granny Peace Brigade originated in 2005 when 18 women from 60 to 90 years of age were arrested for attempting to enlist at a Recruiting Station in New York City, in the effort to substitute for the young men and women being sent to kill innocent people in Iraq and Afghanistan and to die in the service of the lies and greed of the United States government. The "grannies", as we are called, have spoken in several states and were invited to Germany by the peace community there to speak during protests against Bush when he met with Angela Merkel.

We also work with other peace groups on campaigns to educate the American people, many of whom are ignorant of other countries and cultures, by holding vigils, encouraging people to contact their representatives about the false statements and threats against Iran, and through slide show presentations of the Iranian people, culture and the beautiful landscape. In this way, we work to counter the demonization of Iran by presenting its human face, thus encouraging dialogue and communication, and the opportunity to correct the distortions and lies spread by the government and media in this country.

39 Rev. Bill Sinkford -- Unitarian Universalist Association

Unitarian Universalism is rooted in the faith that every person has worth and dignity. We believe that individual differences are gifts from God. We work to protect religious freedoms and to extend rights to disenfranchised people, including oppressed racial and ethnic groups and gays and lesbians.

Unitarian Universalists were leaders in the struggle to abolish slavery in the United States and in the Civil Rights movement, and we played an instrumental role in gaining marriage equality for same-sex couples in Massachusetts and California. We supported Muslims in America who faced discrimination after the attacks on September 11, 2001, and we were vocal opponents of our government's decision to unilaterally invade Iraq. We have repeatedly urged our leaders to support the United Nations' work of diplomacy and peace-keeping.

Central to our religious heritage as Unitarian Universalists is the defense of religious and political freedoms and full equality for all people, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, race, or national origin.

The reports we receive about the treatment of women and political dissidents in Iran raise questions and concerns for us. Is Iran moving towards allowing its citizens more freedom of choice and affiliation? Is the government working towards equality for women in public life? Are protections being created for citizens who identify with different political parties, religious beliefs, and sexual orientations?

Our governments and our cultures are very different. Given those basic differences, I would like to hear from you how the US and Iran can best work together to find non-violent resolutions to our political conflicts.

40 Sarah Sloan -- A.N.S.W.E.R. Coalition

The A.N.S.W.E.R. Coalition formed on September 14, 2001. It is a coalition of hundreds of organizations and prominent individuals and scores of organizing centers in cities and towns across the country. Its national steering committee represents major national organizations that have campaigned against U.S. intervention in Latin America, the Caribbean, the Middle East and Asia, and organizations that have campaigned for civil rights and for social and economic justice for working and poor people inside the United States.

The Coalition has since then worked to build an anti-racist, peace and social justice movement. The A.N.S.W.E.R. Coalition, thus, had initiated the mass anti-war movement in the United States. A central characteristic of the A.N.S.W.E.R. Coalition's organizing strategy has been to work in partnership with the Arab American and Muslim community and other sectors in U.S. society who have been traditionally ignored. This has helped to create a truly multi-national anti-war movement.

The A.N.S.W.E.R. Coalition organized mass mobilizations on April 20, 2002 for a free Palestine and against a threatened war in Iraq. 100,000 people rallied at the White House and marched in Washington DC in the largest march in U.S. history in support of justice for Palestine

As the Congress illegally voted to give the Bush administration a blank check to wage a war of aggression against the people of Iraq, on October 26, 2002, A.N.S.W.E.R. organized the first major national demonstration in opposition to the war drive against Iraq. The A.N.S.W.E.R. Coalition's call for

demonstrations on October 26 drew more than 200,000 people in Washington DC and 100,000 in San Francisco.

On January 18, 2003, A.N.S.W.E.R. initiated the first internationally coordinated day of action against the war in Iraq. On that day, 500,000 people demonstrated in Washington DC, 200,000 in San Francisco. Millions more around the world took to the street in an unprecedented showing of solidarity that heralded the emergence of the global anti-war movement.

We continued organizing as part of the mass anti-war movement in February and March 2003, and following the “shock and awe” invasion of Iraq, as part of the movement against the colonial occupation of Iraq, with mass actions of hundreds of thousands of people continuing from 2003 to 2008.

The A.N.S.W.E.R. Coalition stands firmly against new wars of aggression threatened in Iran, North Korea, Pakistan and elsewhere. We oppose all methods and tactics employed by U.S. imperialism, including bombing campaigns, sanctions and covert actions. In the Middle East and everywhere, the A.N.S.W.E.R. Coalition supports the right of people to exercise real independence, self-determination and freedom from U.S. manipulation and aggression.

The U.S. is carrying out a multi-layered campaign against the Iranian government as part of a larger effort to reorganize the entire Middle East as a U.S. sphere of influence. It is the United States government that possesses nuclear weapons and has armed the Israeli garrison state to the teeth, including with nuclear weaponry. Today, the United States employs military threats, war games, economic sanctions and a propaganda war designed to demonize the Iranian government.

For our part, we believe that the people of Iran must have the exclusive right to determine their own destiny free from military and economic threats.

What concrete steps would be most helpful in terms of building a bridge of solidarity between the Iranian and the U.S. people from the point of view of the Iranian government?

Website: www.AnswerCoalition.org

Contact: Sarah Sloan

sarahsloan930@yahoo.org

202-904-7949

41 Rick Uffordchase -- Presbyterian Peace Fellowship

The Presbyterian Peace Fellowship has been in existence for 64 years. It is made up of Presbyterians who believe that Jesus was committed to nonviolence, and who are willing to follow Jesus' radical example of nonviolence even in the face of seemingly intractable conflict. We have been instrumental in developing the Christian Peace Witness for Iraq, a strong, unapologetically, Christian protest against the war in Iraq. We have also been a clear voice for diplomacy in our relationship with Iran. More than fifteen of our members have served time as prisoners of conscience for We also coordinate an all-volunteer, nonviolent, accompaniment program in Colombia, and are making inquiries about how a similar program might work with Presbyterians and other partner Christians in the Middle East.

Second: We invite you to shape one or more statements of concern, as a question or as an observation, about the current relationship between the United States and Iran, which would elicit a response from President Ahmadinejad or the Foreign Minister or U.N. Ambassador, adding clarity or nuance to issues which are present in this relationship between the United States and Iran.

If we are effective in creating strong Christian, Jewish and Muslim movements for diplomacy and peace between the United States and Iran, is there a real possibility for a similar movement among Muslims in your country?

42 Bruce Wallace -- 121 Contact

121Contact is dedicated to working through the walls of political separation that divide the peoples of the world. I founded 121Contact shortly after my nephew, Mitch Wallace, was killed on 9/11 while rescuing wounded civilians from The World Trade Center in NYC, and my partner is Ms. Aljubouri, a former Baghdad schoolteacher.

We actively encourage students on opposite sides of political divides to speak freely to each other and come to know each other as human beings; people who share the Earth together.

Our two main activities are now:

1) An email bridge between students in Iraq and students in the United States. Through this bridge we have found young people beginning to understand each other, and to have their viewpoints listened to by others of their own age. We call this the 121Contact Iraq Project.

This email bridge has enlightened students in both countries to the fact that their similarities are far more important than their differences, and it has shown them that most of the people in the program have no hatred of each other, especially after they get to know one another. This is the bridge for future peaceful relationships between our peoples.

And 2) we collect donations from Americans that are given to displaced families in Baghdad who are struggling to maintain themselves until the situation improves enough for them to become self-sufficient. We call this the Circle of Responsibility Project. Some of the families we helped are now able to care for themselves, but there are, of course, many others who still need support.

A question for the delegation:

I would like to include Iranian teenagers in a parallel program, between Iranian and American teenagers, called the 121Contact Iran Project. In this way our young people can come to know each other in peace. Who can I speak with in the educational/cultural administration who will help me begin 121Contact Iran?

43 Marion Ward -- Portland, Oregon American Iranian Friendship Council

*"Of one Essence is the human race,
thus has Creation put the Base;
One Limb impacted is sufficient,
For all Others to feel the Mace."
(Saadi, the Persian Poet 1184-1283)*

Mission:

We are a non-partisan network of peace and justice activists united to promote sustainable and humanizing dialogue between Americans and Iranians. We are members of a variety of organizations that share a vision of a world free from nuclear threat and military conflict. We stand in urgent opposition to a policy of preemption against Iran.

Our Goals:

- To create public education efforts to expose the deeper causes and civilian consequences of military conflicts in the Middle East.
- To create a forum for awareness, alliance, friendship and action to prevent a military conflict between the U.S. and Iran.
- To deepen knowledge and understanding of the culture and contributions of Iran and Iranian-Americans.

The American Iranian Friendship Council (AIFC) was founded in April 2006 in Portland, Oregon. Several members of the Council come from a rich tradition of American / Iranian friendship because they served as Peace Corps volunteers, as medical workers or as English teachers in Iran. We believe they have an important story to tell, which can offer a different view than the demonization of people from the Middle

East that dominates the current US political climate and media. As a non-partisan organization, we seek to establish human connections and to educate about the complexities of Iranian history and contemporary realities in order to avoid a military confrontation. In the past three years, nine American members of the AIFC board of directors have travelled to Iran in a citizen ambassador status, and another group of four Americans from Portland is travelling to Iran next month.

On March 21, 2007 the Portland City Council passed a resolution supporting friendship between the people of the United States and Iran and opposing war with Iran. The resolution was introduced by Commissioner Erik Sten and co-sponsored by Commissioner Randy Leonard at the initiative of AIFC.

Portland was the second city in the US (after Berkeley, CA) to pass such a resolution. The resolution asks "to foster better understanding between the two nations and to embrace a spirit of diplomacy". It states "that the City Council of Portland challenges the possibility of a new war in Iran, and urges the Congress of the United States to maintain pressure on the Administration against both an escalation of troops within Iraq and a geographic expansion into Iran while continuing to call for a complete and immediate end to the war in the region;" and further indicates "that the City Council of Portland urges support for the Iran Nuclear Non-Proliferation Act of 2007 (H. R. 770), prohibiting the use of funds for "any covert action for the purpose of causing regime change in Iran or to carry out any military action against Iran in the absence of an imminent threat, in accordance with international law."

The City Council of Portland further resolved that it will work with the local Iranian community to build people-to-people ties between Americans and Iranian citizens, to foster better understanding between the two nations and to embrace a spirit of diplomacy. It supports exploration of a Sister City initiative between the City of Portland and the City of Shiraz, Iran, in order to strengthen the friendship between the two cities that started more than forty years ago by the late Portland writer Terrence O'Donnell.

With its 4-0 vote, the City Council asked members of Congress to vote for the Iran Nuclear Non-Proliferation Act of 2007, an effort to block President Bush from spending taxpayer money for military action against Iran "in the absence of an imminent threat."

We continue to bring speakers on Iran to Portland. In collaboration with the US Congressman Blumenauer, AIFC organized the "American Iranian Peace Forum" on February of 2008. The New York Times veteran reporter and author of the "All the Shah's Men", Stephen Kinzer, was the keynote speaker of the Forum. In addition to a panel of the Portland American-Iranian community, Iranian arts, culture and cuisine were represented.

We regularly network with other organizations which do similar work in the United States and internationally and participate in local and regional peace mobilizations. Members of AIFC have been present in booths at events, have written Letters to the Editor, Op-Ed columns, and participated in Congressional visits to Washington, DC.

Conclusion:

We are cordially asking his Excellency the President and Foreign Minister Mottaki, and Ambassador Khazaee to support our effort in establishing a Sister City relationship with the City of Shiraz. Such a relationship means that both cities are connected by virtual blood and an attack on one can be interpreted as attacking them both.

Specifically we expect that Iranian Mission to the United Nation would help us contact the City Council and Mayor of Shiraz and to encourage them to accept the invitation as a Sister City with the City of Portland, Oregon. We believe that city governments are representatives of local communities and should be encouraged to engage in human to human connections without being threatened by the rhetoric that is expressed by central government and politicians. We would like to invite the Mayor of Shiraz and officials from the Shiraz University to visit our city and personally see the level of interest that AIFC represents.

Information on the late Terrence O'Donnell.

<http://www.america.gov/st/washfile-english/2007/April/200704301513112LJnosnomdE0.2278559.html>

American Iranian Friendship Council
Portland, Oregon
www.aifcpdx.org
info@aifcpdx.org
Ph.: (503) 523 7368

44 Mark Johnson – Fellowship of Reconciliation

FOR is the nation's oldest and largest interfaith peace and justice organization. Founded in 1915, we are part of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation (www.ifor.org), with chapters in over 40 countries worldwide. For many decades, FOR has worked to build a culture of nonviolence and to strengthen peaceful relationships between people in nations that are in political conflict or otherwise cast as enemies. We have sent delegations of U.S. citizens to numerous countries during our long history, including Vietnam, the former U.S.S.R., Nicaragua, Cuba, Colombia, Israel/Palestine, Iraq, the Philippines, and elsewhere. In 2005, FOR began an Iran initiative, working to build peaceful ties between people in the U.S. and Iran. We have sent seven civilian diplomacy delegations thus far to Iran.

The Fellowship of Reconciliation sees connection between people as a constructive way to address the conflict between our governments. While all have disagreements with President Ahmadinejad, we believe there is value in engaging him in dialog so that we all have the opportunity to better understand each other's perspectives. Public conversation between civil society and policy-makers is a goal we also seek here at home in the United States. We hope that meetings like this may serve as a model for diplomatic resolution of our problems, so that we can avoid military solutions. We are united in our desire to prevent a possible war with Iran.

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5. **Judy Bello -- FOR Iran Delegate – Rochester, New York**
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19. **Mahmood Hakak -- BENEDICTUS/BLESSING**
20. **Karla Hansen and Ismael Hossein-zadeh -- Iowa Task Force for Diplomacy with Iran**
21. **Martha Hennessy – Catholic Worker Perspective**
22. **Nick Jehlen – Enough Fear**
23. **Mahdis Keshavarz – Founder, The Make Agency**
24. **Nada Khader – WESPAC**
25. **Ed Kinane –Syracuse Peace Council**

26. Iara Lee – Caipirinha Foundation
27. Joe Lombardo -- Bethlehem Neighbors for Peace
28. Valerie Lucznikowska -- September 11 Families for Peaceful Tomorrows
29. David MacMichael – Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity
30. Jonathan McBride - Beyond War
31. Bob Naiman -- Just Foreign Policy
32. Eleanor Ommani, American Iranian Friendship Committee (AIFC)
33. Jill Parillo - Physicians for Social Responsibility
34. Rudy Perkins -- Swing the Vote
35. Danny Postal
36. Rostam Pourzal -- CASMII
37. Dave Robinson -- Pax Christi
38. Ann and Ahmad Shirazi -- The Critical Voice & The Granny Brigade
39. Rev. Bill Sinkford -- Unitarian Universalist Association
40. Sarah Sloan -- A.N.S.W.E.R. Coalition
41. Rick Uffordchase -- Presbyterian Peace Fellowship
42. Bruce Wallace -- 121 Contact
43. Marion Ward -- Portland, Oregon American Iranian Friendship Council
44. Mark C. Johnson – Fellowship of Reconciliation USA