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Booklet edited by Shell Balek, OSF

**Milwaukee's 3rd Annual
International Peace Day Vigil
September 21, 2004**



Let
Peace
Fill our hearts

The International Day of Peace

In 2001 the United Nations declared *September 21* as an annual International Day of Peace, a day of "*global ceasefire and nonviolence.*"

The "International Day of Peace Vigil" is an idea of a growing number of individuals and groups bound only by a common belief that the *power of prayer, meditation, or other sacred spiritual practice serves as a powerful means of promoting peace and promoting a global ceasefire.* Various religious and spiritually oriented groups, individuals and a wide segment of civil society throughout the world are represented in this movement supporting the objective of the International Day of Peace Vigil.

This is a global undertaking that requires the efforts of many people of all faiths and beliefs to be successful. Since spiritual observances of this important day are *particularly important in areas of conflict*, a committee of United Nations staff and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) has highlighted the importance of spiritual observances this year in:

Israel and Palestine;

Africa; (We've chosen the Dafur region of Sudan)

Colombia; and

Iraq.

While we cannot be physically present in these locales of conflict this day, our participation in Milwaukee's interfaith observance is a positive step toward greater understanding and nonviolence. It provides a way for us to learn a little more about some of the situations in these highlighted areas as well as what grassroots efforts are already underway to bring peace. We can then hold them all in prayer, and stand in solidarity with those who are suffering in these conflict areas as well as with those who courageously act to bring about nonviolent resolutions.

Included in this booklet are prayers, peace pledges, and brief synopses of the situations in the above-mentioned locations as well as examples of the people and groups working to bring peace there. We offer this information for your reflection and prayer. Feel free to take this booklet

RESOURCE LIST

For further information on the International Peace Day Vigil, peacemaking or some of the countries highlighted:

Peace Day Vigil:

International Peace Day Vigil: <http://www.idpvigil.com>

International Day of Peace (UN Website):

<http://www.un.org/events/peaceday/>

Peacemaking Programs, Resources and Organizations:

Peace Action Wisconsin: <http://www.peaceactionwi.org/>

Institute for Peace and Justice: <http://www.ipj-ppj.org/>

Hague Appeal for Peace: <http://www.haguepeace.org/>

Nonviolent Peaceforce: <http://www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org/>

Israel-Palestine:

MidEastWeb: <http://www.mideastweb.org>

Seeds of Peace: <http://www.seedsofpeace.org/>

Christian Peacemaker Teams: <http://www.cpt.org/>

Churches for Middle East Peace: <http://www.cmep.org/>

Africa:

Africa Action: <http://www.AfricaAction.org>

All Africa: <http://allafrica.com/>

New Yorker article, "Dying in Dafur" by Samantha Power

http://www.newyorker.com/fact/content/?040830fa_fact1

Colombia:

Latin America Working Group:

<http://www.lawg.org/pages/new%20pages/countries/Colombia/intro-Colombia.htm>

Washington Office on Latin America: <http://www.wola.org/>

Colombia Support Network: <http://www.colombiasupport.net/>

Iraq

CBC News "The Story of Iraq": <http://www.cbc.ca/news/indepth/iraq/>

Dominican Life Today: <http://www.domlife.org/topiciraq.html>

Iraq Body Count: <http://www.iraqbodycount.net/>

LITANY for PEACE 2

God, you call us to plant seeds of understanding and love in the world: **May all people of the world nurture these seeds of peace.**

God, you enter the human heart by your own ways...the wise through wisdom, the simple through simplicity: **May we use these seeds of wisdom and simplicity in developing peace.**

Lord God, you did not create rancor or vindictive hatred to dwell in the human heart: **May we empty our hearts of these negative attitudes, may cultivating love and understanding become blossoming seeds of peace.**

God, to know you is to experience the power of love that leads to commitment to duty, to home and to service in our world: **May each of us find ways to commit ourselves to plant seeds of peace.**

God, because it is your desire, may we who have abundance place ourselves by the side of the poor, of the outraged, of the rejected: **In their name, may we speak out and demand their rights, planting seeds of hope and of peace.**

The Spirit of God is free, and wants women, children and men to be free wherever they live: **May we enable each person to be a seed of peace that promotes freedom to all.**

God, when one looks at creation we see the maintenance of nature that is so balanced and so wonderful: **May all humankind unite to sustain this balance of God's order that will leads us to peace.**

Amen.

Take the Peace Pledge

I support
The International Day of Peace
September 21, each year

and pledge to do I all can to:

*Keep peace in my heart and

*Share the spirit of peace in my home and my community

on Peace Day
and every day
beginning today.

Name: _____

Date: _____

I will share the spirit of Peace Day throughout the year by:

*You can post the commitment of your family, community, school, organization or place of worship at:
<http://www.Peace-Day.com>*

Feel free to copy this page and share with others.

Kids Pledge of Nonviolence

Making peace must start with me. I commit myself as best I can to become a nonviolent and peaceable person.

To Respect Myself and Others

To respect myself and other people and to keep from saying or doing mean things to others.

To Communicate Better

To share my feelings honestly, to look for safe ways to talk and act when I'm angry, and to work at solving problems peacefully.

To Listen

To listen carefully to others, especially those who disagree with me, and to care about others' feelings and not always demand to have my own way.

To Forgive

To say I'm sorry and mean it when I have hurt another person, to forgive others when they have hurt me, and to keep from holding grudges.

To Respect Nature

To treat the environment and all living things, including my pets, with respect and care.

To Play Creatively

To play in fun ways and not means ways, and to keep from using toys, watching TV programs and playing games that make violence look exciting or funny.

To Be Courageous

To challenge violence in all its forms whenever I see it, whether at home, at school or in the community, and to stand with others who are treated unfairly.

"Eliminating violence, one person at a time, starting with me."

Institute for Peace and Justice (314) 533-4445/ppjn@aol.com/www.ipj-ppj.org

One should not wish for others that which one doth not wish for oneself, nor promise that which one doth not fulfill.

*Bahá'í,
"Gleanings"*

Native African Prayer for Peace

Almighty God, the Great Thumb we cannot evade to tie any knot;

The Roaring Thunder that splits mighty trees:
The all-seeing Lord up on high who sees even the footprints of an antelope on a rock mass here on Earth.
You are the one who does not hesitate to respond to our call.

You are the cornerstone of peace.



You, the one
From whom on different paths
All of us have come,

To whom on different paths
All of us are going,
Make strong in our hearts what unites us;

Build bridges across all that divides us;
United make us rejoice in our diversity,

At one in our witness to your peace,
A rainbow of your glory.
Amen.

*Br. David Steindl-Rast, O.S.B.
Mount Saviour Monastery, New York*

This is the sum of duty: do naught to others which if done to thee would cause thee pain.

*Hindu,
"The Mahabharata"*

Hindu Prayer for Peace

Oh God, lead us from the
unreal to the Real.
Oh God, lead us from darkness to light.
Oh God, lead us from death to immortality.
Shanti, Shanti, Shanti unto all.
Oh Lord God almighty, may there be peace in
celestial regions.
May there be peace on Earth.
May the waters be appeasing.
May herbs be wholesome, and may trees and
plants bring peace to all. May all beneficent
beings bring peace to us.
May thy Vedic Law propagate peace all
through the world.
May all things be a source of peace to us.
And may thy peace itself, bestow peace on all
and may that peace come to me also.



Ancient Tibetan Buddhist Blessing

May you be filled with loving-kindness.
May you be well.
May you be peaceful and at ease.
May you be happy.

Family Pledge of Nonviolence

Making peace must start within ourselves and in our family.
Each of us, members of the _____
family, commit ourselves as best we can to become nonviolent and
peaceable people:

To Respect Self and Others

To respect myself, to affirm others and to avoid uncaring criticism,
hateful words, physical attacks and self-destructive behavior.

To Communicate Better

To share my feelings honestly, to look for safe ways to express my anger,
and to work at solving problems peacefully.

To Listen

To listen carefully to one another, especially those who disagree with
me, and to consider others' feelings and needs rather than insist on having
my own way.

To Forgive

To apologize and make amends when I have hurt another,
to forgive others, and to keep from holding grudges.

To Respect Nature

To treat the environment and all living things,
including our pets, with respect and care.

To Play Creatively

To select entertainment and toys that support our family's values and to
avoid entertainment that makes violence look exciting, funny or acceptable.

To Be Courageous

To challenge violence in all its forms whenever I encounter it, whether
at home, at school, at work, or in the community, and to stand with others
who are treated unfairly.

This is our pledge. These are our goals. We will check ourselves on
what we have pledged once a month on _____ for the next
twelve months so that we can help each other become more peaceable
people.

Pledging family members sign.

- From Institute for Peace & Justice

Palestine—Israel Profile

History and Politics

Palestine was once a land stretching from the Mediterranean coast east across the Jordan River, and from the Gulf of Aqaba north beyond the Sea of Galilee. Today this geographical area is divided into the state of Israel (established in May 1948), the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, which Israel occupied in 1967.

For the Palestinians, the last 100 years have brought Zionist colonisation, expulsion and military occupation, followed by a long and difficult search for self-determination and coexistence with the nation they hold responsible for their suffering and loss. For the Jews of Israel, the return to the land they believe to be the land of their forefathers, after centuries of persecution around the world, has not brought peace or security.

Over half of the Palestinian population was expelled from their homes in the war which followed the creation of the state of Israel. A second wave of refugees was created after the 1967 war, when Israel occupied the remainder of Palestine. Today, two-thirds of the Palestinians are refugees who live in camps in the West Bank and Gaza and in neighboring countries such as Lebanon, Syria and Jordan.

The Palestinian intifada (uprising) against Israeli occupation exploded in December 1987. In the 1990s, the United States launched a more sustained peace process, culminating in the signature, in 1993, of the Israel-PLO Declaration of Principles (the Oslo Accords). Palestinian cities, villages, and most of the refugee camps in the West Bank and Gaza were transferred to the Palestinian National Authority (PNA). The area, however, remains under effective Israeli occupation with the bulk of the land under full Israeli military control.

The peace process collapsed following the failure of the Camp David talks and the outbreak of the second Palestinian intifada in September 2000. The current conflict, which is classified by Israel as a 'war on terror', resembles an uprising against a colonial occupation.

*Taken from the War On Want website:
<http://www.waronwant.org/?lid=1545>*

The Prayer of Saint Francis

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred ... let me sow love
Where there is injury ... pardon
Where there is doubt ... faith
Where there is despair ... hope
Where there is darkness ... light
Where there is sadness ... joy
Divine Master,
grant that I may not so much seek
To be consoled ... as to console
To be understood ... as to understand,
To be loved ... as to love
For it is in giving ... that we receive,
It is in pardoning ... that we are pardoned,
It is in dying ... that we are born to eternal life

Baha'i Prayer for Peace

Be generous in prosperity,
and thankful in adversity.
Be fair in judgement,
and guarded in thy speech,
Be a lamp unto those who walk
in darkness, and a home
to the stranger.
Be eyes to the blind, and a guiding light
unto the feet of the erring
Be a breath of life to the body of
humankind, a dew to the soil of
the human heart,
and a fruit upon the tree of humility.



"I like to believe that people in the long run are going to do more to promote peace than are governments. Indeed I think that people want peace so much that one of these days governments had better get out of the way and let them have it."

Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1959

*What is hateful to you, do not to others.
That is the entire Law, all the rest is commentary*

*Jewish,
"The Talmud"*

Jewish Prayer for Peace

Come let us go up to the mountain of God,
That we may walk the paths of the Most High.
And we shall beat our swords into ploughshares
and our spears into pruning hooks.
Nation shall not lift up sword against nation –
Neither shall they learn war any more,
And none shall be afraid.
Come, let us walk in God's guiding light.



Native American Prayer for Peace

Oh Great Spirit of our Ancestors, I raise
my pipe to you.
To your messengers the four winds, and
to Mother Earth who provides
for your children.
Give us the wisdom to teach our children
to love, to respect, and to be kind
to each other so that they may grow
with peace of mind
Let us learn to share all good things that
you provide for us on this Earth.

Local Peace Efforts in Israel-Palestine

The Nusseibeh-Ayalon Agreement

In September, 2002, Sari Nusseibeh, president of Al Quds University, and Ami Ayalon, the former Director of Israel's domestic security service (Shin Beth) and the former Admiral of the Israeli Navy, released a set of principles for an Israeli-Palestinian peace. Since then, 100,000 Israelis and 70,000 Palestinians have signed petitions supporting these principles, and Nusseibeh and Ayalon have visited the U.S. to promote their plan, now known as "The Peoples' Voice." The plan is consistent with the much more detailed "Geneva Accord" "virtual" peace plan announced in the fall of 2003.

The text of the cover letter to the Agreement states:

“The Palestinian people and the Jewish people each recognize the other's historic rights with respect to the same land. The Jewish people have for generations wanted to establish the Jewish state in the land of Israel, while the Palestinian people have similarly wanted to establish a state in Palestine. The two sides hereby agree to accept a historic compromise based on the principle of two sovereign and viable states existing side by side. The following Statement of Intentions is an expression of the will of the majority of the people. Both sides believe that through this initiative they can influence their leaders and thereby open a new chapter in the region's history. This new chapter will be realized by calling on the international community to guarantee security in the region and to help in rehabilitating and developing the region's economy.”

The six principles outlined in “The People's Voice” address such things as two states for two peoples; borders; Jerusalem and the freedom of religion; right of return; demilitarization leading to security; and cessation of the conflict once all principles are achieved.

*Taken from Foundation for Middle East Peace website:
<http://www.fmep.org/analysis/nusseibeh-ayalon-agreement.html>*

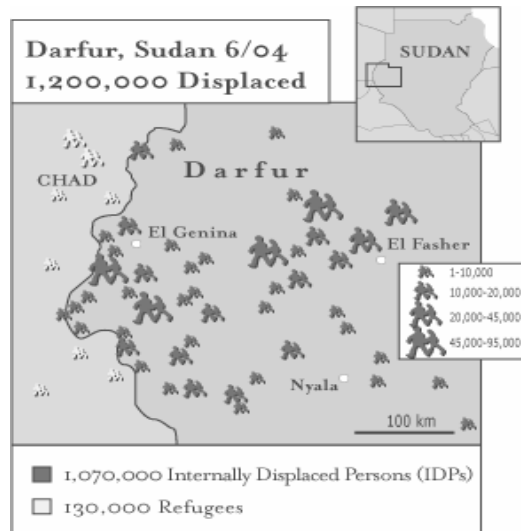
Darfur, Sudan

Over the past year, ethnic and political violence has destroyed the livelihoods of many people in Darfur. Today, the fighting has escalated, forcing thousands of Sudanese to flee across the border into the neighboring nation of Chad.

The United Nations estimates that over 130,000 Sudanese have already fled to Chad as refugees. More than one million people in the Darfur region are directly affected by continued fighting, homeless and vulnerable to hunger, weather and violence.

Conditions among those displaced in Darfur are dire. The United Nations estimates that 49 percent of displaced Sudanese lack food; 88 percent lack shelter; 67 percent lack water; and 93 percent lack adequate sanitation.

Clashes between ethnic groups over land and resources have plagued Sudan for decades. The current conflict is characterized by prolonged clashes between several warring groups. In the confusion of this multi-party discord, farmlands and livestock are being seized and villages looted and burned.



Taken from the Mercy Corps website:
<http://www.mercycorps.org/items/1814/>

Muslim Prayer for Peace

In the name of Allah,
the beneficent, the merciful.
Praise be to the Lord of the
Universe who has created us and
made us into tribes and nations
That we may know each other, not that
we may despise each other.
If the enemy incline towards peace, do
thou also incline towards peace, and
trust God, for the Lord is the one that
heareth and knoweth all things.
And the servants of God,
Most gracious are those who walk on
the Earth in humility, and when we
address them, we say "PEACE."



Sikh Prayer for Peace

*God adjudges us according
to our deeds,
not the coat that we wear:
that Truth is above everything,
but higher still is truthful living.
Know that we attaineth God when we loveth,
and only victory
endures in consequences of which no
one is defeated.*

*We will plant olive trees
where before
there were thorns.*

*All of us the same,
each one of us different,
we will walk hand in hand
with a new song
of love on our lips.*

*We will plant olive trees
where before
there were thorns.*

*Sharing
is the one urgent need
in this new dawning
of a new century*

*Paz, peace, paix,
mir, shalom, salaam;
we will plant olive trees
where before
there were thorns!*

*Federico Mayor
Spanish Director General, UNESCO, France*



*There lies before us, if we choose, continued progress in
happiness, knowledge and wisdom.
Shall we, instead, choose death, because we cannot forget our quarrels?
We appeal, as human beings, to human beings:
Remember your humanity and forget the rest.”*

Albert Einstein

Local Efforts for Peace in Dafur

Taking Risks for Her Family

Eight months ago, Kaltoum Bashar (age 30) fled her village of Boroma with her husband and eight children to find safety in the Hamedia Camp in Zalengei. She described waking up just before dawn one morning to the noise of panicked neighbors. Janjaweed militia, riding on camels and brandishing guns, had surrounded the village. Villagers were forced to run. In the ensuing chaos, five people were shot and seven men were tied up so tightly that they lost the circulation in their arms for several hours. Everything was looted and then her entire village was burned.

Since their arrival at the Hamedia Camp, Kaltoum's family has received some sorghum to survive on and plastic sheeting for a tiny shelter where all ten members of her family sleep. She risks going into the countryside to collect firewood for cooking and selling. She knows that if her husband leaves the camp, he could be shot. Faced with this tragic possibility, she sells part of her sorghum to buy sugar and clothes for her children. Luckily, the children manage to keep busy at an informal school in the camp.

Before she left Boroma she cultivated land for sorghum, but it is impossible for her to do so here, as there is no land available for her family.

*Taken from Mercy Corp website:
<http://www.mercycorps.org/items/2047/>*

Colombia Profile

In 2001, the Colombian government forcibly displaced nearly 2,000 people, using army-supported paramilitaries, in the name of land development. No matter who is winning the dirty war, the poor are always the losers.

History and Politics

Colombian independence in 1819 was followed by more than a century of sporadic violence. The years between 1946 and 1964 were particularly tumultuous, and gave birth to leftist guerrilla and peasant self-defense organizations, such as the Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN). Drugs were seen as a lucrative alternative following a decline in the value of coffee exports. Coca was cultivated by new 'narcotics land-owners,' who formed paramilitary groups to fight guerrillas, escalating the levels of violence in the country. The violence seems likely only to increase thanks to Plan Colombia, a controversial US-sponsored military assistance package aimed at reducing coca cultivation.

Society and Economy

The fourth largest and third most populous country in South America, Colombia has substantial oil and mineral reserves. It also has a highly unequal society and the traditionally rich families of Spanish descent have disproportionately benefited from this wealth. Right-wing paramilitary groups target human rights workers and peasants suspected of helping left-wing guerrillas. Alongside this political violence is drug-related crime, which has made Colombia one of the most violent countries in the world, deterring investors and tourists alike. Colombia is currently facing one of its worst economic crises. Recession has been caused by the opening of markets and a fall in the price of coffee, which used to be the country's main export. The current economic crisis has intensified the armed conflict and further impoverished the poorest people. Industry has been seriously affected and trade unions in Colombia are subject to brutal attacks.

*Taken from the War On Want website:
<http://www.waronwant.org/?lid=94>*

LITANY for PEACE 1

For the world that knows too much of war: for the organizations that work for peace where peace seems unattainable, for wisdom and courage for all political leaders and their peoples, we pray to our God:

May we plant seeds of hope and of peace.

For all people of faith: for peace between different religions, for peace among those who share the same faith, for reconciliation and healing that will lead us to unity, let us pray to our God:

May we plant seeds of hope and of peace.

For a ceaseless desire to seek peace: for an end to believing easy lies about others, for vision to see beyond national vanity, for the courage to question, to think and to reflect, we pray to our God:

May we plant seeds of hope and of peace.

For leaders of nations and churches: for the end of discord born of religion, for no more strife in the name of God, for the reign of peaceful justice in their hearts: we pray to our God:

May we plant seeds of hope and of peace.

For the misplaced belief in the lasting power of armaments to cease: for the selflessness to admit our wrongs, for the courage to seek reconciliation, for an end to war, an end to violence, and an end to all that divides your children: we pray to our God:

May we plant seeds of hope and of peace.

For all who are affected by our choices: for the poor and the voiceless, for those living in war-torn countries, for those who are unjustly incarcerated without legal counsel: we pray to our God:

May we plant seeds of hope and of peace.

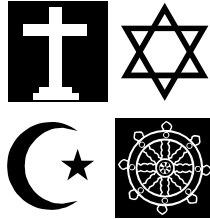
LET US PRAY:

Creator God, our hope, our joy, our light: bring your reign of peace and of justice into the hearts of your people. Through our witness may we search out ways to be messengers of hope and peace.

CALLS to PRAYER

The Salat

Muslims must pray five times a day, either in a congregation or alone, at sunrise, noon, mid-afternoon, sunset and nighttime. Muslims may pray anywhere that is clean, and many devout Muslims carry prayer rugs with them to ensure a clean spot. **Traditionally, the call to prayer was announced by muezzins who chanted from the minarets of mosques at the appointed times each day.** Today, most of the calls to prayer are recorded and broadcast. (<http://www.culturalorientation.net/>)



The Shofar

The shofar's purpose had more to do with the making of an announcement - a proclamation of what was to follow. Two types of shofars were used: the small one is the ram's horn, while the larger Yemenite shofar comes from an African antelope called the Kudu. The shofar was sounded:

- *To assemble the people...
- *As an instrument of proclamation, announcing the presence or coming of the Lord...
- *To praise God.
- *To call God's people to worship Him...
- *To announce the beginning of festivals...

(<http://flashfloods.com/shofar.html>)

Bells

The peal of church bells is a call to prayer. The bells signal morning, noon and evening prayers. They also call worshipers to mass.

Drums

Music and religion in Africa act as a singular enterprise. Between the two, there is no separation of sacred, secular, music, vocals, or instruments. Often, religious music incorporates call and response patterns as well as improvisation. **Drums play a central role** in the both the song and dance. Music reflects the beliefs of the community, sends prayers to particular gods of worship and calls on spirits to influence personal actions. Religion establishes a code of African ethics to define the community and its actions.

(<http://northbysouth.kenyon.edu/1998/music/religion/religion.htm>)

Local Peace Efforts in Colombia

As with other small towns in rural Colombia, the population of Mogotes, a municipality of 13,000 inhabitants in the department of Santander, has long been vulnerable to the actions of both leftist and right-wing armed groups. The outlying areas of the municipality are used as a corridor by these groups as they travel between their mountain bases. On 11 December 1997, shortly after the elections, political violence took a new turn. The ELN entered the town of Mogotes and kidnapped the newly-elected mayor, denouncing his administration as corrupt. Three policemen and two civilians died in the one-day siege.

Despite the climate of fear generated by the heavy ELN presence around the town, the citizens of Mogotes mobilized in protest. With the support of the leadership of the local Catholic Church, they began a series of public demonstrations and prayer vigils, demanding the release of the mayor and an end to armed violence. A solidarity pilgrimage arrived in Mogotes and congregated in the center of the town, issuing a public statement in which they rejected the ELN siege, the kidnapping of the mayor and the political corruption at the root of the violence. They encouraged the local population to defend the real interests of democracy.

In addition to public protests, the citizens began to organize themselves to reflect on the new situation. Earlier in 1997, as a result of a 'pastoral plan' developed by the diocese, new ecclesiastical groups had been created. Following the siege, each group met to discuss the crisis. The analysis of all the groups was pooled and led to the identification of three overall problems that had culminated in the occupation: poverty, violence and administrative corruption.

With the support of the Church, the community developed proposals for a 'project of liberation' in response to the problems. This project, still ongoing some five years later, has three components: a plan for integral and sustainable human development to combat poverty; a strategy to build a 'community of peace' and reduce violence; and a commitment to the recovery and expression of the sovereign power of the people in order to root out corruption.

Taken from Conciliation Resources website:

<http://www.c-r.org/accord/peace/accord13/mog.shtml>

Iraq Profile

What is currently Iraq resulted from the break-up of the Ottoman Empire after World War One. The borders had no roots in history but were simply agreed upon by France and Britain. 40 years later, this was to cause many problems over the years.

In 1958, the Iraqi monarchy was overthrown and Iraq became an Islamic republic. The king and most of his family were slaughtered in the coup. One of the members of the hit squad was a young officer who would later become famous: Saddam Hussein. Iraq continued to be politically unstable. During the Cold War, the US needed an Islamic ally strong enough to counterbalance Egypt, and by 1956 the U.S. began sending technical and military assistance to Iraq.

By the 1970s, Iraq had been under military rule for 20 years. By then the man behind the throne was Saddam Hussein. In 1979, he took sole power himself, purging his few remaining rivals.

In 1990 Saddam Hussein renewed his nation's threat to Kuwait. This time it was not about territory, but money. On August 2, 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait. The UN condemned the action and, in a series of resolutions, not only imposed a complete blockade on Iraq but authorized member states to reverse the invasion by any means. When the UN deadline for Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait expired the coalition launched a massive attack on Iraq.

Due to American military control of information, people outside Iraq saw only pinpoint, surgical strikes from "smart" bombs and missiles. However, the reality was quite different; the majority of strikes used old fashioned bombs. In total, the equivalent of seven Hiroshima bombs hit Iraq, killing some 100,000 people, mostly members of the military. By the time the fighting stopped in February 1991, not only had Iraqi forces been thrown from Kuwait, they had been nearly annihilated. And Iraq itself was starving and in ruins.

After the war, UN weapons inspectors were dispatched to Iraq. Their mission was to locate all stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction, and the means of producing them. Iraq is a poor country. It is also a part of a region whose main wealth lies in its oil, rather than in agriculture. The sanctions have left Iraq starving.

In 1993, when former American president George Bush was visiting Kuwait, there was an alleged attempt on his life. President Clinton retaliated with a cruise missile attack on Iraq. This was the first wave of what would become another cycle of tension between Iraq and the United States which ultimately led to the US pre-emptive attack on Iraq and the current situation there with an Iraqi government trying to emerge.

Adapted from "The story of Iraq" by Gary Katz & Martin O'Malley, CBC News Online: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/indepth/iraq/>

Local Peace Efforts in Iraq

As war approached last spring the Dominican Sisters of St. Catherine of Siena made special housing arrangements and collected necessities, preparing a safety net for the people of the northern Iraqi city of Mosul and surrounding villages; offering refuge to all in village churches, particularly in Kerakush. There, Christians and Muslims slept together as bombs pounded nearby Mosul for several nights in a row.

"Christian and Muslim families would share the same space. Everyone would pray together," Sister Shirine said. People came from all over the country, knowing the northern villages were safer than the cities. "This was a very challenging experience for the sisters," she said, "but it has made us more devoted to our work and faith."

The 52 sisters in Mosul still provide assistance to families too scared to go back to their homes in Baghdad. People also come looking for food, but most of their work these days comes in the form of counseling, especially with children. Equally trying was the death of many children brought to the hospital during the war.

Many Iraqi Christians fear increased sectarian tension, especially with some Shiite factions, who have called for the creation of an Islamic state. Readily recognizable in their habits, the sisters have faced harassment in public areas. On the streets some people shout insults and children climb the convent walls and defame statues of Jesus and other religious symbols. Sister Shirine said the sisters are careful about where they go and usually do not go out after dark.

*Adapted from "In the Shadow of War" by Jill Carroll: <http://www.domlife.org/topiciraq.html>
From Dominican Life Today website*