

Peace Teams NEWS

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By Genie & Bill Durland

Peace Teams Confront Middle East Violence

Some time ago, Mustafa Barghouthi, President of the Palestinian Medical Relief Committees and Director of the Health, Development, Information and Policy Institute (HDIP) in Ramallah, said: "Palestinians have been asking for an international protection force to monitor events in the region for months. The US has twice vetoed a United Nations resolution asking for this. . . [M]onths ago, Palestinians began their own grassroots movement of international protection. Since then, delegations from a number of European countries, as well as Canada and the United States, have witnessed to and monitored the situation on the ground reporting the reality to their home countries."

This urgent need for accompaniment, protection, and, above all, witness (in all its forms) is the primary impetus behind the rapidly growing numbers of peace teams and delegations of peace and solidarity groups in the West Bank. Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT), a partner organization of Friends Peace Teams, has had a continuing presence quartered in Hebron and has been active throughout the West Bank since the mid-90's. CPT permanent team members and delegations not only engage in accompaniment and observation activities, but often do nonviolent direct action and public witness on behalf of Palestinians experiencing oppression and injustice.

Most Friends are familiar with CPT's purposes and activities. However, Friends may not know of the other American organizations which send peace delegations to the region, and, even more important, of the indigenous Israeli and Palestinian peace and justice groups working *with each other* and with the foreign nationals.



CPT and Rabbis for Peace inspect destroyed cave homes of Palestinian shepherds.

Ann Hardt, member of Pima Monthly Meeting in Tucson, Arizona, joined an interfaith delegation last year sponsored by the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) and co-sponsored on the ground in Palestine by the Center for Rapprochement Between Peoples (a Palestinian peace group) and the Israeli Committee Against Home Demolitions. Ann says that FOR sends several delegations a year (as does CPT) and that a recent FOR group joined CPT and members of the

International Solidarity Movement in worship in front of the Church of the Nativity. Ann reports that her group was primarily charged with listening and learning from the local peace and justice groups and participating with them when called to do so. In addition to FOR, several American Churches—United Methodist, Episcopalian and Lutheran, among others—also send information-gathering delegations.

The International Solidarity Movement (ISM) is less a peace team than a nonviolent,

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From the Editor

By Val Liveoak

This issue is being put together at a very busy time for me as I work with members of the Exporatory Team to Colombia to raise funds for our trip and to finalize its planning. We have been blessed with generous donors who have covered the cost of the travel, 4 AVP workshops and, I expect, the follow-up material which will include a written report, parts of which will be printed in the next Peace Team News. Before I put the next issue together, I will have returned (God willing!) from both Colombia and a month's trip to Africa where I'll represent FPT at the Friends United Meeting Triennial in Nairobi, and then travel to Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda with its coordinator, Dave Zarembka and his wife Gladys Kamonya. So it will be a busy summer for me, and after all that traveling, I plan to attend Pendle Hill in the fall.

This issue has many references to the Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) which is one of the things our African and Colombian partners have asked us to bring to them. For more information about AVP, see page 4.

Please mark you calendars and visit with our Coordinating Committee when it has its next face-to-face meeting in Nashville TN Oct. 10-13. More information on that will be in the next issue of Peace Teams News.■

FPT's Colombia Exploratory Team, May 29-June 19, 2002

Members of the delegation include:



✿ **Jorge Araúz**, member of Chestnut Hill Monthly Meeting, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting; family therapist and co-founder of Casa Amistad, a peace presence in North Philadelphia. AVP facilitator in Pennsylvania, California, Mexico, Ecuador and Colombia.

✿ **Tobin Marsh**, Member of Mexico City Monthly Meeting, sojourning with University Friends Meeting (Seattle), North Pacific Yearly Meeting; former director of Casa de los Amigos on Mexico City and Peace Brigades International Mexico Project. AVP facilitator in California and Maryland.

✿ **Jane Simkin**, member of Poplar Ridge (NY), New York Yearly Meeting; nutritionist with experience in Central and South America. AVP facilitator in New York.

✿ **Val Liveoak**, member of Friends Meeting of San Antonio, South Central Yearly Meeting; co-clerk of Friends Peace Teams. AVP facilitator in Texas, Louisiana, Ohio, Mexico, Canada and Cuba.

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consciously use them. As they realize they are better equipped to do deal with conflict than they knew, the end of the workshop marks the beginning of practicing these peacemaking techniques more skillfully.

After one month, AVP has reached only 100 people. But already, these participants have begun to share what they have learned with others through both word and action. Once more money is raised, there will be more workshops. Many of the partici-

pants expressed the desire that the socially powerful Burundians also receive this training. Inmates in Gitega prison, many of whom are arguably political prisoners, wished those who put them in jail could have had such training. One participant from Bujumbura, announced his pledge at the end of the workshop, that he would not rest "until the Transforming Power mandala hangs above the entrance to the President's office." Maybe the day will come.■

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direct action resistance-against-the-occupation movement. It is led by Palestinians, and internationals are invited to join. Huwaida Arraf, a young Palestinian-American woman who is one of the founders, states that recognition of "the importance of having internationals join Palestinians in nonviolent resistance (marches, protests, etc.) led to the establishment of ISM towards the beginning of this latest Intifada." The movement was launched with ISM's first campaign in August 2001. We (the Durlands) were asked to provide advice and direction about nonviolence training and orientation for the movement's international participants while we were in Palestine with a CPT delegation just prior to the ISM's August campaign—a good indication of how closely various groups work with each other.

In a recent e-mail, Huwaida told of ISM's excursion to Jericho after being repeatedly refused entry into Ramallah during the reinvasion of that city: "[We] resolved to drive east, down into the Jordan Valley, and try to visit the Christian communities of Jericho. Jericho, as you may or may not know. . . has been under total closure for many months. Indeed, the town was sealed shut months ago when a deep trench was dug by Israeli armored bulldozers around most of the town. The main entrance is through a fortified Israeli checkpoint, which has been placed on the southern approach road." Huwaida's account goes on to describe how the group met with and learned from Christian leaders and schoolteachers in Jericho and were able to distribute the food they had been unable to share in Ramallah.

ISM, CPT, FOR and several Israeli peace groups have tried repeatedly over the weeks of the siege of the Church of the Nativity to bring food to those trapped inside, but in most cases have only been able to pray outside, prevented by the Israeli Army from any contact with those inside.

The Israeli Peace Activists, in many ways, are the true heroes in this crisis since for Israeli citizens to stand

and act in public opposition to their government's policies of repression and destruction in the Occupied Territories requires tremendous courage. Ordinary Israeli citizens work with Rabbis for Human Rights (RHR), the Israeli Committee Against Home Demolitions (ICHD), Tikkun, and Gush Shalom, as well as joining with ISM activities. An Israeli peace activist, Neta Golan, was among those who voluntarily imprisoned herself in Yassir Arafat's Ramallah compound for the entire month of that blockade. ICHD members have often been the ones willing to lie down in front of bulldozers, in some cases successfully preventing the demolition of Palestinian homes.

Peace teams, peace delegations, and solidarity groups, both international and local, have not been able to prevent the atrocities of recent weeks. This is not to say, however, that they are ineffective. The presence of internationals and Israelis, who courageously oppose the occupation, surely has immeasurable value in terms of possibly lessening the violence and curtailing or preventing individual acts of brutality. Perhaps even more important is their role in telling the world the truth.

When the media are focused on the terrible damage done by Palestinian bombers, it is important that CPT and other international groups tell of the other side of the conflict in human terms.

Mary Hughes-Thompson, who was a member of a recent CPT emergency delegation (April 15-29, 2002), wrote upon her return:

In Hebron young children dress[ed] each morning for school, then fearfully walked up to tanks and soldiers to ask if they would be allowed to continue. Settlement children waited to throw rocks at these brave little students who were never allowed to retaliate. Today I read that several schools in Hebron have been occupied by soldiers. My heart breaks as I recall the kindness we received from these gentle people, the smiles and the thanks that greeted us, the words of hope they expressed that we might let the world know of their suffering and despair.■



Rabbi Arik Ascherman, Founder of Rabbis for Human Rights, directing delivery of humanitarian aid to Palestinian families after their homes were destroyed.

BURUNDI: AVP Has a New "Baby"

It is an age-old tradition to announce to one's relatives and friends that one's family has got a newborn. There is a difficult choice of the exact words to blaze abroad such good and happy news. Imagine how many times parents have written to their friends and relations. Imagine again how difficult the choice of the words to encode such a small message has usually been.

In short, Friends Peace Teams' African Great Lakes Initiative, with funding from the Drane Family Fund have done it. Through a kind "dowry" they paid to a "couple" of three facilitators: Peter Yeomans, AVP name, AMAHORU (Peace) Peter, Carolyn Keys, named CREATIVE Carolyn (American citizens) and George Walumoli named GREAT George (a Ugandan citizen), the Alternative to Violence Project (AVP) family is extending to Burundi and hopefully to the eastern Democratic Republic of CONGO (DRC).

The story of AVP in Burundi will actually sound nice, since it portrays a good meeting for peace in the Great Lakes region torn by strife and wars. Among the recently trained facilitators, whose majority is made of Burundians, there were three Congolese from the DRC. In a friendly and lovely atmosphere of brotherhood, the participants shared their life experiences and were pleasantly surprised to be aware that the Transforming Power is inside any person and can make any person able to build peace.

Thanks to the different gatherings (brief go-arounds that begin each session of the workshop and where each participant is encouraged to speak) in the Basic and the Advanced workshops, participants got opportunities to reflect the daily life of people in the Great Lakes region in general, and in Burundi and DR Congo in particular. In these two countries, the daily "Big Wind" that blows is violence. Many suggestions and lessons were drawn from all the topics discussed during the training and many attempts to contextualize the applying of 'I messages' have

arisen. The mandala and the guides to Transforming Power have been appreciated as important tools for an AVP facilitator on one hand, and for any peace builder on the other hand.

The knowledge gained by participants and mainly the new facilitators is expected to be used as consciousness weapons to face the strong and terrifying guns of hatred, injustice, fear, corruption, contemptuousness, covetousness, war—in brief, of violence.

The expectations of the AVP above-named 'parents in Burundi', as well as those who contributed to the program, have clearly been felt by the participants: to have the Burundi as well as the DRC teams, probably likewise twins, root AVP in their countries, grow and join the great AVP family all over the world for peace building. This will provide more happiness and satisfaction to friends who are involved in peace and those who devoted to funding this program.

The newborn will be proud of making these teachings well-known and handy to all people, victims and agents of violence so that a common ground may be set to build a peaceful world. This is the fruit that a 5-week program expects to afford to communities for a behavior change and the wellbeing of and for all.

This announcement to all, we hope, demonstrates a search for identity and awareness of this new AVP family member; and is an expression of gratefulness to the voluntary commitment of our elders in America and Uganda. It is also a thankful motion to all of you who remain unknown and are reading this issue. Pray for the newborn, for his upbringing and spread this message. We wish to hear from you. ■

Editor's note: Charles mentions specific parts of AVP workshops—gatherings, "I messages" and a "Light and Lively", known as "Big Wind Blows". In AVP workshops, participants are encouraged to add a positive adjective to their given names. For more information on AVP please see: www.avpusa.org

Some Africans write their family/surnames in upper case letters and preceding their given names.



AVP-Burundi Completes First Phase

Phase I for beginning AVP-Burundi has just been completed. A team including US citizens, and a Ugandan, sponsored by FPT's African Great Lakes Initiative and the Trauma Healing and Reconciliation Service of Burundi Yearly Meeting joined together to facilitate a series of workshops during the month of April.

We started with a Basic workshop in Bujumbura, the capital city, and then moved upcountry to Gitega. In Gitega we conducted a Basic, an Advanced, and a Training for Facilitators at Ministry of Peace and Reconciliation Under the Cross (MIPAREC), an ecumenical program. In the last week, newly trained trainers had the opportunity to use their new skills by leading one of three different Basic workshops.

One was held in Bujumbura and one in Ngozi. The third one was scheduled for Ruyigi but was canceled on short notice because of security concerns. Responding to the provincial governor's declaration on National Radio that the military had pushed the rebels back to the Tanzanian border, rebel troops arrived in the town of Ruyigi just a few days before the workshop was to begin.

Thanks to GUHUNGU Samson, an AVP facilitator who trained last year in Rwanda and is a member of the Evangelical Friends Church, we were able to replace the Ruyigi workshop with a workshop in the Gitega prison. This was only possible because of Samson's and Ray Boucher's (USA) meeting with the prison director last year and Samson's long-standing acquaintance with the director. All workshops were translated between English and Kirundi. The seven workshops reached approximately 100 people, though some for multiple workshops.

As in Rwanda, AVP has been received with significant energy and interest. Fifteen people have

completed the Training for Facilitators, and thirteen of those have just finished facilitating their first Basic workshop. Three of them are staff members of THARS, others are pastors, teachers, an artist, university students, and school directors. Two men from eastern Congo attended all three levels and then returned home. They are eager to see opportunities for AVP extended into their region of the Great Lakes area.

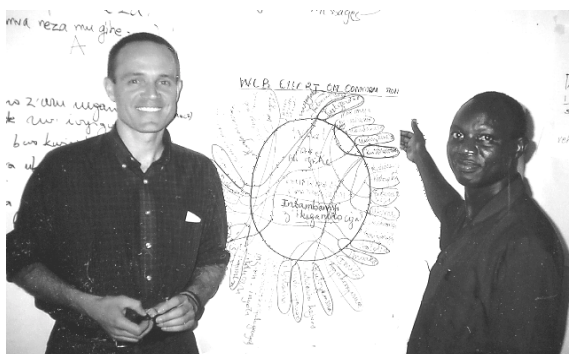
On the morning after the Training for Facilitators workshop, the group gathered to organize and establish a steering committee for AVP Burundi. They elected nine people that reflect the diversity of Burundi on many different dimensions. They will meet next month to further detail the capacities in which they will serve.

Perhaps the most powerful aspect of AVP is how it allows people to see that they already have the skills to address the dilemmas that grieve them and to answer the questions that trouble them. In each Basic workshop, we ask people to share a conflict they resolved without resorting to violence. The stories people shared were rich with skill, wisdom, faith,

and bravery. Participants had interrupted soldiers from abusing innocents, prevented young men from beating a youth from a different ethnic group, spared the life of those who had killed family members, as well as a host of less dramatic but equally courageous acts of peacemaking in the home, at the university, and on the street.

Only after sharing these stories are the participants introduced to the heart of AVP—Transforming Power. This is the term we use to describe the power that we can access, that resides within us, and that if we are open to it, can transform a potentially violent situation into a nonviolent one. The concept helps to make explicit the skills the participants already have and gives them a reference point by which they can more

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Peter Yeomans and George Walumoli

Corporate Discernment for Quaker Peace Activists

After nearly thirty years as a peace activist, more than fifteen of them as a Quaker, I find myself still just learning about how to seek and find corporate discernment in my peace work.

I am coming to see the peace testimony of the Religious Society of Friends as a fruit of Quaker faith and insight, not as its root—although like many of my generation of Friends, I was drawn to Quakers by the peace testimony. I believe it grew out of early Friends' experience of the "life and power that takes away the occasion of all war". So if it is a result of Quaker faith, what practices have Quakers developed to nurture it?

The worship experience of expectant waiting in the presence of the Spirit is the most useful grounding for peace activism that I have found. Waiting teaches openness, flexibility, creativity, persistence and patience. When I sense God's presence, I know I am in the peaceable kingdom and feel a leading to turn that knowledge into outward action to build the kingdom in daily life. (I use the term "leading" to mean what other traditions term a "call" or "vocation". It generally implies an impetus to a specific action—a "concern" is a wider inspiration to become involved with an issue.)

Before I began to worship in this manner, I had inklings of this experience—studying the life of Jesus, protesting the evils of war and injustice, working to create alternative structures of economic and environmental justice, moments of transcendence and a sense of solidarity with the poor and marginalized. These moments were deeply felt, and also were the products of thoughtful reflection. But until I centered down and waited—with a group of others doing the same thing—I lacked a spiritual grounding, because the actions and ideas seemed to come from outside of myself.

As I understand the history of the first decades of Quakerism, it became clear to early Friends that the experience of individual leadings that arose in silent worship needed to be balanced with a group (or *corporate*) process if action was to be taken that reflected

on the Religious Society as a whole. So the process that begins with an individual finding a leading through worship and prayer is continued when that individual brings the leading to the Meeting for further discernment.

The first level of discernment is, "Is this leading truly a leading of the Spirit?" At times it is quite difficult to tell the source of a leading. In my own experience, anger, dislike, vengeance, fear, desire for power or excitement and other unworthy feelings have sometimes motivated me to act, as I rationalized, for peace and justice. I have seen that these base motivations cannot dependably inspire right actions much less lead to good results. On the other hand, when I have been moved to act out of love chiefly, or mercy, justice, nonviolence and Truth, I believe that I am more able to build a better world.

Discerning the source of the leading begins with the individual who has the leading, but as early Friends discovered, there are many benefits to bringing one's leading to the Meeting for further discernment and refinement. Since we believe there is that of God in each person, then having a process to reveal how others perceive the leading can clarify it. So, Friends developed the Clearness Committee to do just that.

Ideally, the Clearness Committee meets with the person to test the leading, and may also look at other questions such as how to put the leading into action and how the Meeting will participate in the action or support it.

Bringing a leading or a concern to a Clearness Committee makes the space for us to deepen our awareness of what is truly inspired and what is created from lesser emotions or needs. It often provides a place where anguish, fear or despair can be voiced and overcome, and where passion can be voiced with tears or shouts if necessary—something few would do in a larger Meeting for Worship. Frequently a support or oversight committee grows out of the Clearness Committee as other Friends become more intimately aware of one's leading, and connect with the Spirit behind it.

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As an activist I have often struggled with a feeling of isolation, and sharing my leadings with a Clearness Committee provides me with a sense of companionship. When I work with an ongoing support group, I am able to look at my motivations and actions as I do my work, and to find spiritually-grounded ways to correct my errors or deficits.. It helps take me out of my head, helps keep me and my work connected with my heart and my soul (that of God within me).

Corporate discernment also provides a way for concerned Friends to accompany other Friends through tough times, helping them to solve their own problems, without having to lead them to a solution. (This is especially important in non-pastoral meetings where we are all ministers and responsible for pastoral duties.)

Many Friends, including myself, have undertaken major life-changes without getting the benefits of corporate discernment. In my own life it has increased a sense of isolation that I avoided when I asked for and received the Meeting's care through Clearness and Support committees. When I consider the lives of other Friends, I have often wished for a way to help or support them through difficult times. In my Monthly Meeting we often mention struggling Friends in Ministry and Oversight meetings—and sometime we remember to offer Clearness or Support committees. I

hope we'll do so more often and that members will begin asking for this support more regularly and earlier on in their decision-making process, because it will help us all walk in the Light together.

I think that corporate discernment, whether by formal Clearness Committee, or through other means (see below) serves the Meeting by connecting members of the Meeting with each other. Members of the Meeting whose gifts are different from the activist are able to support the efforts of the Friend carrying the concern through worshipful listening and reflection.

In addition to discernment on the individual level, when the corporate discernment is focused on the individual, the Meeting sometimes, becomes more involved with the concern that the individual carries and joins in the work in various ways: fundraising, setting up talks, providing minutes of travel, releasing the Friend, providing traveling companions (elders), hospitality, etc. When the Meeting joins in these ways, everyone grows in the understanding of gospel order—one body with many members and a variety of gifts under God's leadership. In the case of a leading to do peace work, all become part of a peace team.

Friends also have practiced other manifestations of testing and discernment: spiritual friendship, committees of care and support and oversight committees. These times of worship and discernment in smaller

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groups are valuable both when appointed formally and when arising informally and are the times when we minister to each other and provide eldering—in the constructive sense—to each other. Becoming aware of this service to each other and naming it is important. The process of discernment within the Monthly Meeting, moving to the regional Meeting and to the Yearly Meeting is also of value.

Within Friends Peace Teams, we have honed our capacities for corporate discernment as our work has developed. For example, the African Great Lakes Initiative (AGLI) grew from a leading of Dave Zarembka, a member of the Coordinating Committee (CC). He discussed it informally with some F/ friends, and developed a Consultative Group to further elaborate the initial proposals for an Exploratory Team. He brought those proposals to the CC, first as a general proposal and after months of seasoning and discernment by the Consultative Group, he made a specific proposal for an Exploratory Team to the CC in Oct. 1998, which was approved. Following the Exploratory Team, a year of work by Dave and the Consultative Group, resulted in two other teams being sent (on to Burundi and one to Uganda), and the development of a long-term proposal for the

Trauma Healing and Reconciliation Service in partnership with Burundi Yearly Meeting. When the CC approved the project, it mandated the formation of a Working Group to oversee details of AGLI's work. The members of the Working Group are nominated by the CC's Nominating Committee, and approved by the CC. The Working Group meets regularly by telephone conference call and reports to the CC which approves new projects, and ongoing budgets for AGLI's work. Through these groups, we've learned to reflect, think and pray together in an effort, which I think has been pretty successful so far, to do faithful and faith-filled work in Africa.

It has been challenging for FPT to learn to do Spirit-led discernment in our semiannual face-to-face meetings, in telephone conference calls and by e-mail. It is not always clear if the technology helps or hinders the process, and it has taken many face-to-face meetings to develop a sense of being a Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business when we are together—but each time we meet, I perceive that awareness growing. It has taught me a great deal about seeking and finding God's plan for our work and our relationships with each other, and I look forward to continued revelation in that regard.■