

dominion, n. 1. Control or the exercise of control. 2. A territory or sphere of influence; a realm. 3. A self-governing nation in the British Commonwealth.



# *The Dominion*

news from the grassroots

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The Israeli attacks in the Gaza strip continued, as the number of Palestinian dead climbed to over 1000, with more than 4,700 wounded and tens of thousands displaced but unable to flee. Thirteen Israelis have been killed since the attacks began on December 27. Israeli tank fire killed 42 people at a school run by the United Nations in the Jabalya refugee camp. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) brought out reservists to continue the attack on Gaza. In Venezuela, President Hugo Chavez expelled the Israeli ambassador and other diplomats due to the ongoing attacks on Gaza, a move which was later followed by Bolivia and Mauritius. Canada was the only country on the United Nations' Human Rights Council that voted against a motion condemning Israel for its recent attacks on the Gaza Strip. Thirteen countries abstained. Media coverage in North America generally favoured Israel. Naomi Klein called for a renewed boycott, divest and sanctions (BDS) campaign against Israel. Protests against Israel's attack on Gaza took place around the world. Nearly 100,000 people took to the streets in London, England; 20,000 in Nabatiyeh, Lebanon; 10,000 in each of Washington, DC, Toronto and Montréal; 2,000 in Ottawa, 1,300 in Edmonton; 1,200 in Calgary; close to 1,000 in Vancouver, and 100 in Halifax. Students at universities in Haifa, Tel Aviv and Jerusalem protested the IDF. Eight Jewish women were arrested for occupying the Israeli consulate in Toronto.

The Congressional Budget Office in the United States announced that the deficit of the world's largest economy would reach over \$1 trillion by September 30, 2009.

**Nortel**, long one of Canada's largest and most profitable companies, filed for bankruptcy protection. Nortel is the first sponsor of the 2010 Olympic games to go bankrupt.

Fortress Investment Group, the main investor in **Vancouver's** Olympic Athletes Village, asked the City of Vancouver to guarantee



**Montréalers braved freezing temperatures to launch shoes at an image of George Bush in solidarity with the actions of Iraqi journalist Muntadar al-Zaidi.**

Anirudh Koul CC2.0

their loan of \$895 million to Millenium Development Corporation, the group responsible for building the housing complex. "The Olympic village is a billion dollar project and the city taxpayers are on the hook for all of it," said Vancouver Mayor Gregor Robertson. Vancouver's 2010 Olympics Organizing Committee (Vanoc) has put a mere \$30 million towards the development, which the City of Vancouver is legally obligated to have complete by 2010.

Youth from **Fort Chipewyan** marched to protest against the tar sands in minus-32 degree temperatures. The march was organized by 10-year-old Robyn Courtoreille to protest the tar sands. "Syncrude and Suncor have been poisoning our water, air, so we protested to let them know we want a future, not cancer," said Dailen Powder, 12, after the protest. "I was protesting because I don't want anymore deformed, two-jawed fish in our lake," said Cherish Kaskamin, 11.

Kimberley Rivera, the first woman **war resister** to come to Canada to avoid returning to Iraq was ordered to leave Canada. She has

lived in Toronto with her husband and three children since 2007.

**Saint John** Mayor Ivan Court decided to refuse all interview requests from the Irving-owned provincial newspaper the Telegraph-Journal. He also canceled the city's subscription to the paper and banned it from his office, saying he is tired of the years of negative coverage of his administration. Mayor Court challenged the newspapers' publisher Jamie Irving to a debate but Shawna Richer, editor of the Telegraph-Journal, dismissed the idea, saying, "The problem is not with the newspaper." Every English daily paper in New Brunswick and all but two community newspapers in the province, as well as four radio stations, provincial newswires and news websites are owned by Brunswick News, which is owned by the Irvings – recently listed as the second richest family in Canada. Calls to bring back a Senate Committee to look at the media monopoly situation in the province stem from the fact that Irving also monopolizes other sectors in the province such as forestry and energy.

A **Canadian** soldier was charged

with second degree murder for killing an alleged Taliban fighter in Afghanistan. Capt. Robert Semrau was given a conditional release and is currently back with his unit in Petawawa, Ontario.

The Band Council of the **Mushkegowuk** First Nation, whose traditional territory is on the James Bay Coast, passed a resolution against any new mining and exploration activity in their homelands until there is a new Mining Law in Ontario.

A transit cop in **San Francisco** killed an unarmed 22-year-old passenger by shooting him in the back on New Year's Day on the city's BART rapid transit line.

An **Alberta** resident began a private prosecution against Syncrude for the deaths of 500 ducks. The birds landed on a Syncrude tailings pond covered in snow and drowned. "We are bringing this forward because this incident of 500 ducks dying ... is further evidence that pollution from tar sands extraction is making the environment too toxic for birds, in this case migratory waterfowl, and people," said Jeh Custer, who launched the suit.

A survey conducted by Alberta's oil industry found that more than fifty per cent of respondents do not believe what oil and gas executives say in the media.

New York Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly testified to Senate that the NYPD would consider jamming cell phones in New York City during a terrorist attack in the city. The NYPD has 36,000 members and is the largest police force in North America.

An environmental activist in **Salt Lake City** posed as a bidder in an oil-lease auction and outbid the other bidders, effectively subverting the auction of state lands for oil drilling. "I've been an environmentalist for pretty much all my life and done all the things that you're supposed to do that are supposed to lead toward change. I've marched and held signs. I've volunteered in national parks. I've written letters and signed petitions. I've sat down with my congressman, Jim Matheson, for a long time... Ultimately, I felt like those things were only mildly effective. And it was having a very tiny effect on a very large problem," said Tim DeChristopher, who has avoided arrest for his actions so far.

**SNC Lavalin** was chosen for a \$50 million reconstruction contract in Afghanistan. SNC Lavalin is Canada's largest engineering firm, with operations from Haiti to Vancouver. The \$50 million "signature" project in Afghanistan will see the firm repairing a dam.

Venezuela's **Citgo** canceled the program by which it was providing cheap heating fuel to US residents. The cancellation was due to falling oil prices on the world market. Days later, after public pressure from US congress people, Hugo Chavez restored the program.

Venezuela deepened trade relations with China, buying a \$400 million satellite which the Chinese launched above Venezuela in October. "This will put an end to media terrorism and help us spread our own truth, to wage the

battle of ideas with efficiency and transparency," said President Hugo Chavez.

A riot cop was shot in **Greece**. Anarchists and students who participated in demonstrations and riots at the end of 2008 were blamed for the incident. "We have to see this through a historical prism: It's tied to the same general theme of the inability of Greek officialdom to crack down hard on these groups, whether terrorists or anarchists," John Sitalides of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington told the LA Times. Participants in the uprising questioned whether the shooting was orchestrated by the state. "Our initial thought is that any individual that is part of our movement, no matter how enraged or in support of urban guerilla tactics they might be, would not chose the area of Eksarhia (literally under police occupation for the past few days) in order to launch an attack of this kind and manage to escape safely," reads a statement posted on Indymedia Athens and translated by OccupiedLondon.org.

Barack Obama admitted that it is unlikely that he can shut down the detention and interrogation camp at **Guantanamo Bay** within the first 100 days of his administration. There are an estimated 250 prisoners of war still imprisoned at Guantanamo, thirty of whom continued a four year long rolling hunger strike.

A fire caused by arson at the Edmonton home of the former president of **Syncrude** resulted in \$850,000 worth of damages.

**Teck Cominco**, one of Canada's largest mining companies, cut 1,400 jobs. Four hundred of the jobs lost are in BC; 105 are in Alberta and 45 are from across the rest of Canada.

**Enbridge** Energy Partners paid out US\$1.1 million to settle a lawsuit brought against it by the Wisconsin's attorney general's office. "While some of the individual violations were likely of limited direct impact, the incidents

of violation were numerous and widespread, and resulted in impacts to streams and wetlands throughout the various watersheds," said Attorney General J.B. Van Hollen.

The **unemployment** rate in the US hit its highest level in 16 years. More than two and a half million jobs were lost in the US in 2008, dropping the unemployment rate to 7.2 per cent by the end of the year, meaning that 11.1 million Americans are jobless. Compounding the problem, an estimated 200,000 Americans will lose their jobless benefits in the coming months.

Nine people were killed and at least 30 injured in car bomb blasts in **Baghdad**.

In **South Africa**, the Supreme Court of Appeal reinstated corruption charges against Jacob Zuma, the leader of the African National Congress and the party's next presidential candidate in this spring's elections. The charges allege that Zuma accepted bribes in an arms deal with a French company.

**South African** anti-apartheid activist Helen Suzman, one of the few white lawmakers to fight against the injustices of racist rule, died at the age of 91.

A US study found that "noseless" **bicycle seats** actually enhance the male sexual experience.

Eight thousand delegates from around the world gathered in **Poznan, Poland**, to decide how the international community will address climate change.

The UN conference on climate change was criticized by **Indigenous delegates** for shutting out their voices from the decision making process. "We may also need to discuss at some point of time the ecological debt that especially industrialised countries have with [Indigenous Peoples]. Consultations with us often only take the form of simply informing

#### Correction:

The photo on page 8 of the December 2008 issue was taken by Kenny King.

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www.dominionpaper.ca  
info@dominionpaper.ca  
PO Box 741 Station H  
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The Dominion

Newspaper Co-operative

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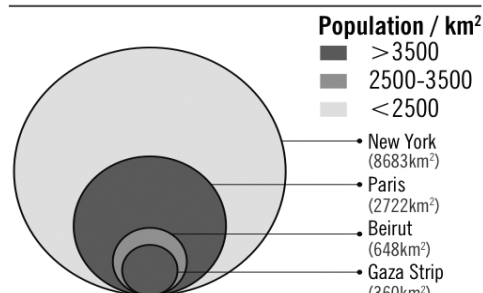
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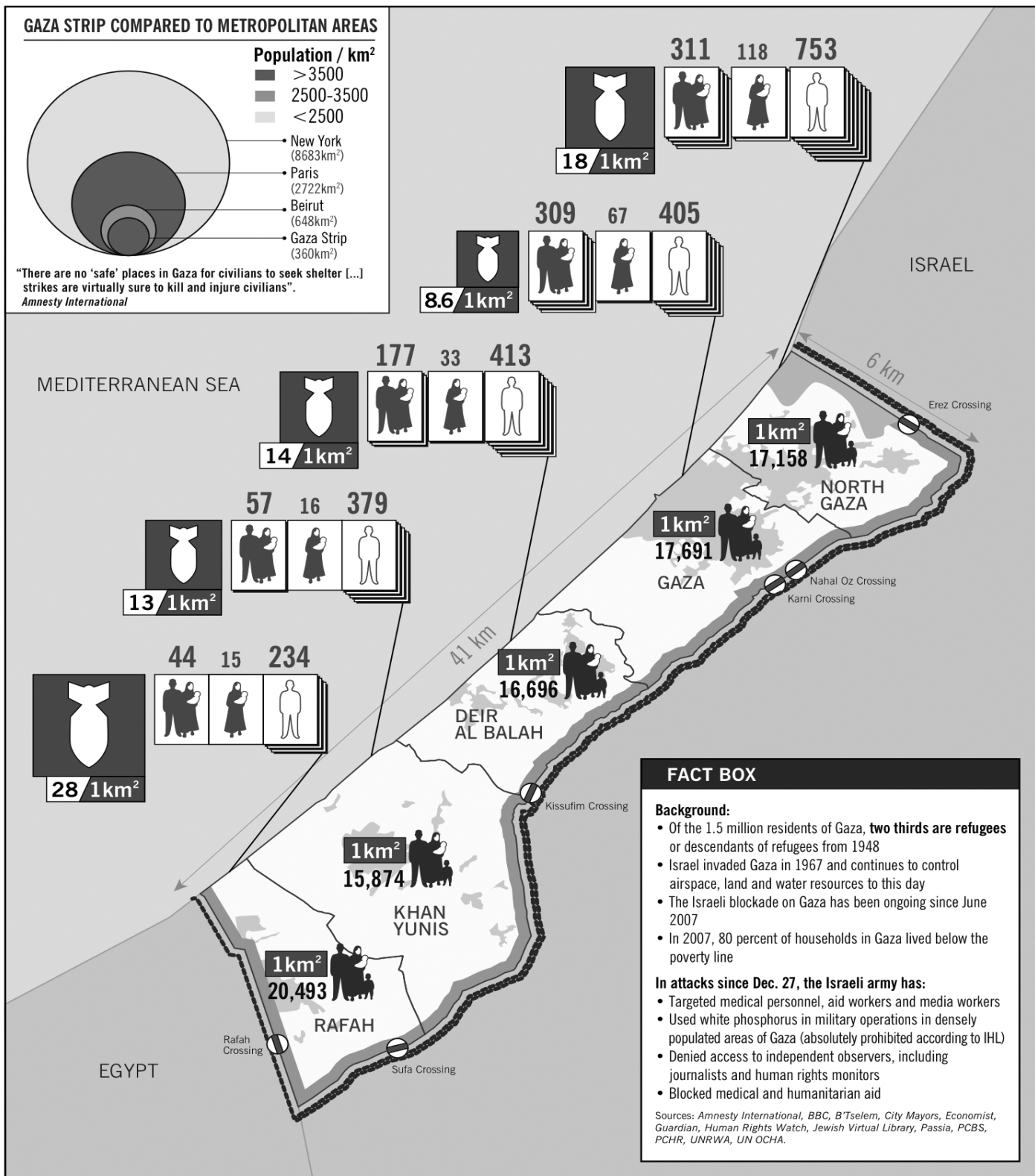
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## GAZA STRIP COMPARED TO METROPOLITAN AREAS

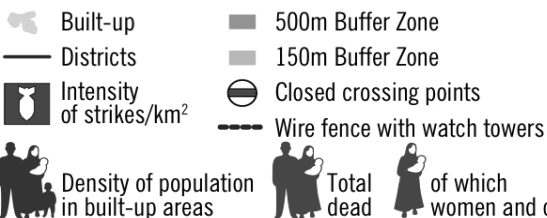


"There are no 'safe' places in Gaza for civilians to seek shelter [...] strikes are virtually sure to kill and injure civilians".  
Amnesty International

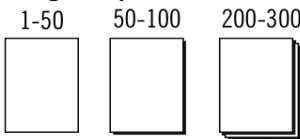


## ISRAELI ASSAULT ON GAZA

## MAP OF BOMBING INTENSITY & CASUALTIES

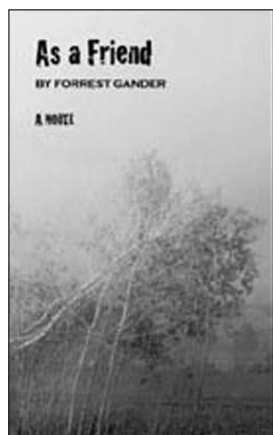


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from **27/12/2008**  
until **12/01/2009**

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*As a Friend*  
Forrest Gander  
New Directions, 2008

When a successful poet sets out to write a novel, the results can often be mixed. From E.E. Cummings to Al Purdy, major poets often see their ventures into prose go long forgotten while their poetry remains revered. By the time a poet has become established – which often takes far longer than a single lifetime – it may be in the best interest of both writer and reader to stay within the bounds of pre-established technique. Forrest Gander, a leading American poet and translator, has carefully taken this plunge into the world of prose with his recent novel, *As a Friend*. However, Gander's work remains immensely successful by making only the slightest concessions to

the novel as an established form. At only 106 pages, *As a Friend* consists of four distinct sections that cover an admirable amount of stylistic and thematic territory. Gander's greatest accomplishment is that he consistently knows when to inject his poetic observations and when to sit back and allow the story to unfold.

The novel opens with a mother in a hospital watching her teenage daughter struggle through a difficult birth. Gander's depiction – interspersing poignant asides throughout a clear and neutral narration – becomes so palpable and gripping it feels as though he has gone through labour himself. From that loosely connected introduction,

Gander explores the unintended consequences that extend from individual choices. The central figure of the novel is a poet and part-time labourer committed to exploring the multiple and often contradictory opportunities that life offers. He marries one woman, lives with another, sleeps with a revolving cast of extras. His goal is to find a "different way to be in the world," but through love and friendship his iconoclasm leads a path of failure and pain, death and grief. It's a stark and somewhat dreary tale, but Gander's instincts as a poet allow him to build a mass of emotional insight without sentimentality, clichés, or wasted words.

—Shane Patrick Murphy



*Crabweise to the Hounds*  
Jeramy Dodds  
Coach House, 2008

The title of Jeramy Dodds's *Crabweise to the Hounds* suggests a connection to circuitousness (crabweise) and surrealism (ditto), but the result is an unambiguously confident debut collection from a rich new voice in Canadian poetry. If one of the creatures from a Marcel Dzama watercolour got its paws on some John Ashbery, the result might sound like Dodds, whose voice is unmistakably local though far from provincial. Running through the collection,

in other words, is a rigorous sense of taste, as several of the poems' first stanzas open with a provocative declaration ("In his stovepipe hat, he hunted / to extinction the animals that brought / us déjà vu."), that beckon the reader towards the subsequent lines packed with the most lushly rendered imagery.

Dodds's spectacular diction and the wide range of his subjects reveal an unconventionally educated imagination and spirit of

inquiry aimed at the natural world. Strange, pseudo-Canadian landscapes appear in "Crown Land," "Some warped beasts pinched off / the rag-and-bone rack, ones that / bit by barbed bit were forced to / fisticuffs in the scrub slump of hills' while the breathless showstopper, "Glenn Gould Negotiates the Danube in the Company of a Raven," provides the capstone for this dazzling book by a young talent already refined.

—Robert Kotyk



*Things on Which I've Stumbled*  
Peter Cole  
New Directions, 2008

Peter Cole is a major American poet and translator based in Israel who brings Hebrew and Arabic poetry to the English-speaking world. In the title poem of this collection, Cole attempts to make a new and original work out of fragments of medieval Hebrew texts he discovered in the archives of Cambridge University. The Cambridge collection contains what was found in an uncovered geniza in Cairo – a storeroom of abandoned Hebrew texts. The fragments are not always poems; they include legal contracts, com-

mercial correspondence, and brief personal letters. As Cole weaves these texts into his own poetry, the result is a strange amalgamation of the sacred and the profane in writing that ranges from highly lyrical to purely pragmatic. In less capable hands, the results might have been a mess, lacking in either historical insight or poetic expression. However, Cole's multifaceted talent allows the poetry to thrive, turning these obscure fragments into a unique work all its own.

—Shane Patrick Murphy



# Israel Bombs Gaza, Killing Hundreds

## Emergency demonstrations attract thousands worldwide

*The following article was published online on December 30. Since then, tens of thousands have marched in solidarity with Gaza all over the world; Israeli consulates in Montreal and Vancouver were occupied by demonstrators; Israeli forces invaded Gaza; and more than 1,400 people were killed. This article covers the first three days of bombing.*

by Dru Oja Jay

MONTREAL—On December 27, 2008, Israeli military forces initiated “Operation Cast Lead,” a bombing offensive against the Gaza Strip. F-16 jets and Apache helicopters, which are manufactured in part in Canada and largely paid for by an estimated \$3 billion in annual US military aid, dropped 100 tonnes of bombs in the first day. Reported targets included municipal buildings, police stations, mosques, homes, cross-border tunnels, and a university. According to on-the-ground reports, facilities that have been hit by bombs include hospitals, medical storage facilities and fuel depots.

As of December 30, over 363 people have been killed, and over 1,700 injured. According to a UN report, at least 39 of the deaths were children. Casualties have thus far included government functionaries, children, women, traffic police in training, and bystanders. In some cases, attacks began when children were on their way home from school.

Operation Cast Lead was named in reference to a children’s Channukah song written by Israel’s national poet, Hayyim Nahman Bialik. The attacks began on the sixth day of the Jewish festival of lights, an official holiday in Israel.

The aim of the operation, according to Israeli officials’ initial comments, was to put a stop to Palestinian rocket and mortar attacks against towns close to the Gaza strip, such as Sderot and Ashqelon. In the last seven years, an estimated 24 Israelis (16 within



A demonstration in solidarity with the 1.5 million residents of Gaza, in London.

Israel, eight in now-vacated Gaza settlements) have been killed and 433 have been injured by Palestinian rocket and mortar attacks. The attacks have caused post-traumatic stress disorder among residents of the affected towns.

“After this operation there will not be a single Hamas building left standing in Gaza, and we plan to change the rules of the game,” armed forces deputy chief of staff Brigadier General Dan Harel told journalists.

“We are hitting not only terrorists and launchers, but also the whole Hamas government and all its wings,” he added. Defence Minister Ehud Barak has said that Israeli forces “will expand to a ground attack if that is needed.”

Since Israeli forces vacated settlements and pulled out of Gaza in 2005, they have maintained control over Gaza’s airspace, borders, and coastal waters. Since 2007, in response to the election of Hamas, Israel has maintained a tightening siege of Gaza. Shipments of food, fuel, clothing, cooking oil and medicine have been severely restricted, and

many Gazans rely on cross-border tunnels to smuggle in basic supplies. Malnutrition affects an estimated 70 per cent of Gaza’s population of 1.5 million. After Israeli forces bombed Gaza’s main power plant in 2006, the sole remaining plant fell into disrepair, leaving the majority of Gazans without electricity. Israel has turned away several ships carrying food and aid supplies.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert’s advisor, Dov Weisglass, described the siege thus: “The idea is to put the Palestinians on a diet, but not make them die of hunger.”

Immediately following the bombing, emergency protests were organized around the world, with tens of thousands taking to the streets in England, Denmark, Italy, Spain, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Syria, Pakistan, India, Australia, New Zealand, and many other countries.

In Canada, emergency protests brought out an estimated 200 in Halifax, 600 in Montreal, 200 in Ottawa, 800 in Toronto, and 300 in Vancouver. Additional

demonstrations are planned in Montreal, Vancouver and Winnipeg.

The New Democratic Party called on the government of Canada to immediately call for an end to the attacks. The Liberal Party and the Conservative government both released statements supporting Israel’s “right to defend itself” and condemning rocket attacks.

“The people who’ve been subjected to this don’t have the right to defend themselves, but Israel has the right to defend,” Dr. Ismail Zayid said to reporters at a protest in Halifax.

Demonstrators in Montreal shouted slogans like “Israel assassin, Harper complice” (Israel assassinates, Harper is complicit) and “Québec, Gaza, solidarité.”

A press release from the Toronto-based Coalition Against Israeli Apartheid condemned what it called “the single worst massacre in Gaza since it was illegally occupied in 1967,” and called for an end to the “two-year siege” that “has restricted all flow

*continued on page 20*

# Live from Gaza

## Eva Bartlett's updates from under the bombs

*The following excerpts have been taken from reports written by Canadian solidarity activist Eva Bartlett, from within Gaza during Israel's military assault. Read the entries in their entirety at [ingaza.wordpress.com](http://ingaza.wordpress.com).*

by Eva Bartlett

January 15

When I'd met the extended Abed Rabbo family, before the ground invasion began, their house had just been bombed by an F-16. Their area has been occupied by Israeli tanks and soldiers since the ground invasion began. Medical workers cannot reach the injured there, and those who have managed to escape testify to imprisonment in their houses, abuse, point-blank shooting (to death), and an unknown number of dead. It is an area Israel views as strategic, lying just hundreds of metres from the eastern border to Israel, a key entry point for invading troops. Past invasions have meant entire families and neighbours being locked into a room of a house for a day, days.

January 16

Naim Abed Saed Shamella, 48, explained how when the tanks shelling in their neighbourhood had gotten intense, near their house, he moved his family of 10 to one ground floor room. After the missile hit his house, going through the second-storey roof, he'd gone upstairs to get his cell phone. He entered into a cloud of smoke, noxious and lung-tightening. Three days later, we visited and found the house by the smear of black burn around the upper window, which was blown out, of course.

The room, blackened, incredibly still had a small fire burning — three days later. Instead of breaking down when it was poked, the fire flamed up, the toxic smell still strong, a mix of burning



**"A person called me saying he was a spokesperson for the Israeli army and that we had seven minutes to leave the house before it was bombed. I begged for 10, told him seven wasn't enough to collect possessions and get our children out safely. He said seven."**

rubber stink and unfamiliar chemicals. I tried to picture a roomful of the stuff, and imagined I'd have more problems than the chest and lung ache Shamella suffers. When doused with water, the fire revived itself seconds later.

Down the lane from Naim Shamella's house, 68-year-old Adal Saed Shemella stood in front of his own bullet- and tank shell-

ridden home, refusing to evacuate. "My children and family have gone, but I'll stay, with my wife," he stated. His wife peered out a second-storey window, nodding agreement. "If we leave our house, they'll destroy it. When it's more dangerous, then we'll move to the back side." He invited us inside to see what he said was even worse damage. And like everyone else I've met, he has no power, no water, no gas, no working telephone lines.

Israeli warplanes just bombed a funeral ceremony in a school in Eastern Shejyayee, east of Gaza city. At least 10 more are now dead. Everything is in vain here: breathing (inhale chemical fumes), running and seeking sanctuary (no sanctuary possible), condemning Israel's war crimes (which even the carefully diplomatic, very articulate John Ging has done, in effect, condemning the bombing first of the UN school and then the chemical bombing — white phosphorus, Ging said — of the UN headquarters, with its supply of food for the refugees of Gaza), hoping, grieving, being admitted to hospitals (Wafa hospital was threatened, attacked, and evacuated; al Quds hospital was repeatedly bombed yesterday, burning late into the night, necessitating the transfer — under danger from the Israeli tanks lurking and snipers targeting), and — of course — staying home and hoping the missiles will not strike.

January 17

In the early hours of January 15, the Israeli army, which had invaded and occupied the Tel el Hawa region, began shelling and firing heavily on the al Quds hospital and surrounding apartment buildings and shops. Residents of that region, the last to be attacked, were sent fleeing, to join the hordes of displaced people sheltering with families — if lucky — or in schools, if truly desperate.

Medics and volunteers inside the hospital reported at least 150 calls not answered because medics' and ambulances' movement had been halted by the presence of tanks and snipers.

Later in the morning, Mohammed, a volunteer medic, reported, "Israelis are shooting at people who are leaving their houses."

Sharon, an international human rights advocate, recounted some of what happened in the initial hours when the blasts hit the hospital. "Around 10am a missile fell outside the office window, near the pediatric unit, where the new babies lie in incubators. There was a second missile soon after, which caught on fire after hitting the same area." She mentioned two more hits, and it was later learned that some of the many hits caused flames which burned throughout the day in the storage centre.

"There was a family, too scared to stay in the house, standing outside Quds hospital," she said. One nine-year-old girl fell quickly after a sniper's bullet caught her abdomen, leaving her now in critical condition in Shifa hospital.

It is hard to believe daily that it can get worse, but daily it does.

Last week, I saw what seemed to be the white phosphorus clouds doctors have written about, condemned. From a tall Gaza city building, the panoramic view showed a spreading stream of poison, on eastern Gaza.

The chemical burns deeply, to the bone, experts say. It is considered illegal warfare, not to be used in civilian areas. Yet accounts of its use grow: heavy use in the Khosar region, east of Khan Younis, and in the northwest of Gaza, and in eastern Jabaliya, Sheik Zayid, Sheik Rajleen, Zaitoun... everywhere. The UN headquarters, which was housing hundreds of fleeing Palestinians, and which was bombed on January 15, was hit with white phosphorus.



# No Justice, No Play?

## Gaza anger overwhelms hoops contest

by Dave Zirin

TACOMA PARK, MARYLAND—We have officially entered uncharted waters. Never before in my years of reporting has a sports team been forced to abandon the field of play due to political protest from fans. Never before have fans become the central actors in turning a sporting event into a political melee.

But Tuesday evening in Ankara, Turkey, the Israeli basketball team, Bnei Hasharon, had to flee the wrath of what the Associated Press described as “hundreds of fist-pumping, chanting Turkish fans.” What exploded was yet another protest against Israel’s bombardment of Gaza. The shock here is the setting, a sports arena, and the target, a basketball team.

It may be surprising that this came to pass in such supposedly apolitical environs — a Eurocup game against a team called Turk Telekom — but local officials knew this could happen and took every precaution. Thousands of police officers surrounded the court, and street demonstrations of 4,000 people were already taking place outside the arena. Protesters shouted, “Israeli murderers, get out of Palestine!” and “Allah-u Akhbar!” as the Hasharon team bus entered the arena.

Only 500 fans were even let into the arena and were also subject to intense searches, but it wasn’t enough. Police made the mistake of not confiscating the shoes.

Before the game could begin, angry chants of “Israeli killers!” came down from the crowd as smuggled Palestinian flags were unfurled. Then, in a scene that would look familiar to a certain now former President, off came the shoes as footwear rained down from the stands (the shoes didn’t hit any players).

As both teams looked at the crowd, frozen in place, battles began between police officers and Turkish fans, as the fans surged forward to take the court. Both



**A member of the International Solidarity Movement disrupts an Israeli basketball team in Spain in 2005.**

*North Carolina Chapter of the ISM (CC2.0)*

Hasharon and Turk Telekom were rushed off and spent two hours in the locker rooms while the battle for control of the arena raged on.

Hashoran captain Meir Tapiro spoke about the fear and chaos he felt around him to the Jerusalem Post: “The fans raced on to the court and ran towards us like madmen, but the police stopped them. It was really scary.”

After 90 minutes all the fans were expelled, arrested or dragged from the arena. The referees attempted to get the teams back onto the court to play before an empty arena, but Bnei Hasharon, after two hours of being prisoners in their locker room, had no desire to play. Referees called it a forfeit, and the Turks were declared winners of the game by the official forfeit score of 20-0.

Hasharon team chairman Eldad Akunis was understandably incensed. “After such a trying ordeal, there was simply no point in playing. The players were just

concerned for their safety. We were also given instructions by the Israeli embassy staff, who were monitoring the situation, not to play,” said Akunis.

There is no doubt that it was “a trying ordeal,” a frightening experience that not even Red Sox fans would wish on the Yankees. But to put it mildly, it pales in comparison to the situation in Gaza itself. With more than 500 deaths, 3,000 injuries and 100 tons of bombs dropped on one of the impoverished regions of the world, the trials of a basketball team seem trivial.

It’s certainly true that none of the players — two of whom are African, five of whom are American-born — bear a hint of responsibility for any of this carnage. But it’s difficult not to remember the famous telegram sent by playwright Arthur Miller to President Lyndon Johnson. Miller was invited for a gala of some kind and refused, saying,

“When the guns boom, the arts die.” Perhaps when the guns boom, sports should die as well.

We may recall January 2008, when soccer star Mohamed Aboutreika lifted his shirt to reveal the slogan “Sympathize with Gaza.” He wanted people to stand up and notice that an economic blockade had triggered, for the Palestinians in Gaza, a humanitarian crisis. The New Year begins with another instance where the reality of Gaza has unexpectedly interrupted the field of play. Only this time — fitting the new moment — it was altogether more livid, more dangerous and more desperate. No sympathy has meant no peace.

*Dave Zirin is the author of A People’s History of Sports in the United States (The New Press) Receive his column every week by emailing dave@edgeofsports.com, or contact Dave at edgeofsports@gmail.com*



# An Open Letter from Jewish Youth in Canada

## Diverse voices oppose apartheid policies, zionism

Like much of the world, we have spent the last week watching in shock and disgust as Israel continues its assault on the Gaza Strip. With the body count rising and a new tragedy in full bloom, we feel that it is important to speak out as Jewish youth in Canada and to denounce what Israel is doing in our name. The Jewish diaspora is diverse and divided on its positions on the state of Israel's policies. At this juncture in history, as Israel has committed its worst massacre in Gaza since it began its illegal occupation in 1967, we feel that it is crucial that Jews speak out and denounce Israel's actions that amount to no more than war crimes committed by an apartheid state.

As Jewish youth, we are diverse, but we are unified in our solidarity with our Palestinian brothers and sisters in Gaza.

Some of us are students. We are outraged by the bombing of the Islamic University in Gaza city, as well as other civilian infrastructure such as hospitals and mosques.

Some of us are Arab-Jews and people of colour. We stand against Israel's racism, which has been enshrined in Israeli law, and privileges its Jewish citizens over its non-Jewish ones. This apartheid state views Palestinians as an expendable people, no more than collateral damage.

Some of us are queer. We reject Israel's branding of itself as the only safe place for queer people in the Middle-East while it targets gay and lesbian Palestinians and renders life unsafe for millions of others.

Some of us are Israelis living in Canada. We are calling for a solidarity that stretches beyond borders and nationalities. Israel's violent actions will only serve to further isolate the state and its citizens from the rest of the world. By calling itself a Jewish state and committing war crimes in the name of Jews everywhere, Israel makes the world even less safe



**A Jewish woman stands with Palestinian supporters at a rally in Toronto against Israel's bombing of Gaza.**

*Elise von Kulmiz*

for Jews, leading to an increase in animus towards Jewish people around the world.

Even though there have been approximately 100 Palestinian deaths for every Israeli killed by rocket fire, we recognize that Israeli apartheid also leads to Israeli casualties. The blame for these deaths lies with Israel – if there were no occupation and no apartheid policies, there would be no rocket fire. If Israel, the world's fourth largest military power, is concerned about its citizens, it would abandon its apartheid policies and seek out justice for the Palestinian people.

In 2005, Palestinian civil society put out a clear call for international support through a non-violent campaign of Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) similar to that carried out against the apartheid regime of South Africa. Now, with the people of Gaza being crushed by Israeli bombs, manufactured in the USA and launched with Canada's blessing, it is more important than ever for Jewish communities throughout the world to take

up this BDS campaign in order to end Israel's apartheid system, which makes life unsafe for millions of Jews and Palestinians alike.

Let us not be silent bystanders while humanity suffers. Let us raise our voices, as Jewish youth, and demand a single, democratic state, with equal rights for everyone in Israel/Palestine.

Ours is a generation that is committed to ending Middle-East violence by opposing all forms of discrimination, calling for a just peace within the entire region, and condemning Zionism to the dustbin of history.

Free Gaza, Free Palestine,

Jenny Peto, Toronto  
Aaron Lakoff, Montreal  
Max Silverman, Montreal  
Rachel Gurofsky, Peterborough  
Simon Gurofsky, Ottawa  
Zohar Melinek, Montreal  
Claire Hurtig, Montreal  
Ben Saifer, Ottawa  
Brook Thorndycraft, Toronto  
Joel Balsam, Montreal  
David Mandelzys, Toronto  
Reena Katz, Toronto

Mia Amir, Vancouver  
Matthew Shuster, Kingston  
Avi Grenadier, Kingston  
Chanda Prescod-Weinstein, Waterloo  
Melissa Harendorf, Montreal  
Jeff Hiemstra, Toronto  
Sacha Moiseiwitsch, Vancouver  
Jake Javanshir, Toronto  
Noam Lapid, Montreal  
Stephen Kamnitzer, Toronto  
Naava Smolash, Vancouver  
Tamara Herman, Victoria  
Ryan Katz-Rosene, Ottawa  
Sarah Fuchs, Montreal  
Daniel Thau-Eleff, Winnipeg  
Deborah Rachlis, Ottawa  
Marie L. Belliveau, St. Catharines  
Sarah Kardash, Sackville  
David Taub Bancroft, Vancouver  
Kinneret Sheetreet, Montreal  
Rachel Marcuse, Vancouver  
Lisa Barrett, Bowen Island  
Maisie Jacobson, Montreal  
Max Tennant, Vancouver  
Noah Fine, Vancouver  
David Hill, Vancouver  
Corey Balsam, Ottawa  
Lee Skinner, Vancouver  
Britt Lehmann-Bender, Toronto  
Alexis Mitchell, Toronto

*To sign on to this letter, send an email to antizionistjews@gmail.com with your name and city.*

# Civilian Uprising against Barrick Gold in Tanzania

## Mine security shoots young man, villagers destroy \$7 million in equipment

by Sakura Saunders

NEW YORK—In December, reports surfaced in the mainstream press that thousands of villagers had raided a gold mine in Northern Tanzania, setting fire to \$7 million\* worth of mine equipment. Most reports blamed problems with crime in the area, calling the intruders “gold-seekers.”

While the spokesman for Barrick Gold\*\* Tanzania, Teweli Teweli, describes these villagers as “well-organized groups” who attacked the pit following the blasting of high-grade ore, others paint Barrick as the aggressor in this event, citing immediate and historic causes that have been largely ignored by the international community.

According to several witnesses, the immediate cause of the civilian uprising was the killing of a young man named Mang’weina Mwita Mang’weina. Human rights lawyer Tundu Lissu, who represents many of the villagers, explains that Mang’weina and some friends were engaged in an argument with Barrick security when one of the guards shot Mang’weina, who was unarmed at the time. This incident caused an uproar within the community, which immediately took up stones, overpowered mine security (who then fled), and attacked the mine, setting fire to millions worth of equipment.

Mang’weina himself is a part of the legacy of the North Mara mine. He was one of the thousands of unemployed locals in the area, angry over the mine’s recent history of forced displacement, loss of livelihoods, human rights abuses and ongoing repression. He is the seventh person killed at the hands of mine security since July 2005, when the killing of a local boy sparked a similar uprising that resulted in the destruction of mine equipment and the subsequent detention of over 200 villagers.\*\*\*

Eyewitnesses to the 2005 killing told The Guardian



**The Mwita family lives next to Barrick Gold’s North Mara mine. Waste rock on the edge of the pit can be seen behind their home.**

Allan Cedillo Lissner

(Tanzania) that “the boy who was shot dead was walking past the company premises when company security guards, suspecting him of stealing oil, stopped him. When the boy failed to heed the order, the guards called the police who, before even questioning him, shot him in the chest.”

Not one year later, security guards employed by Barrick Gold allegedly shot – five times in the back – another villager who was alleged to have illegally entered the mine complex, bringing the death toll to six.

According to Lissu in a letter written in June 2006:

The killings represent a major shift in Barrick’s strategy for dealing with the troublesome locals who have always opposed the Mine. In the period after the forced evictions of the villagers in August 2001, hundreds of villagers, particularly community leaders and prominent locals were targeted for illegal arrests, criminal prosecutions and long term imprisonment. Numerous local leaders including the area’s [late] Member of Parliament

Chacha Zakayo Wangwe and elected Member of the Tarime District Council Augustino Nestory Sasi were harassed this way, with the latter being sentenced to 30 years ins jail before we got him out on appeal to the High Court of Tanzania in December 2004.

Calculating from media reports, Lissu estimates that over 10,000 artisanal miners, peasant farmers and their families were kicked out of the area to make way for the North Mara mine in 2001. Since that time, there has been ongoing tension between the mine and the local communities.

According to Allan Cedillo Lissner, a Toronto-based photojournalist who recently interviewed families surrounding the North Mara mine, “Ongoing conflicts between the mine and local communities have created a climate of fear for those who live nearby.” Since the mine opened in 2002, one family told Lissner that they live in a state of constant anxiety because they are repeatedly harassed and intimidated by the mine’s private security forces and

by government police. “There have been several deadly confrontations in the area and every time there are problems at the mine, the Mwita family say their compound is the first place the police come looking. During police operations the family scatters in fear to hide in the bush, ‘like fugitives,’ for weeks at a time waiting for the situation to calm down,” Lissner explains.

The Mwita family explained that they used to farm and raise livestock, telling Lissner that “now there are no pastures because the mine has almost taken the whole land ... we have no sources of income and we are living only through God’s wishes. ... We had never experienced poverty before the mine came here.” They also told Lissner that they would like to be relocated, but the application process has been complicated, and they feel the amount of compensation offered was merely “candy.”

According to Tanzanian journalist and community advocate Evans Rubara, this latest uprising

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# Canadian Drones Patrol Afghan Airspace

## Unmanned warplanes stretch the definition of “nation building”

by Stefan Christoff

MONTREAL—War is rising to new heights over Afghanistan. Flying thousands of feet over the frontlines of Kandahar are several new unmanned military planes recently activated by the Canadian army.

Beyond reach of the human eye the advanced spy aircraft, the Heron, will monitor territory throughout southern Afghanistan from dizzying altitudes, delivering information for military strikes.

In early December two Afghans were killed in a targeted attack by Canadian forces on the basis of information gathered by the spy drones. According to military officials the Afghans killed were from the Taliban. However, this has not been independently verified.

Far beyond the visual capacities of local Afghan authorities, the Heron will provide hyper details on human movements and activities allowing “ground forces to see...in real time [the] images acquired by the aircraft’s sensors on a laptop on the ground,” according to the Canadian army.

Highly advanced spy aircrafts hovering over Afghanistan, collecting information on local movements, serve as a poignant reminder of Canada’s role as a foreign military force in the country, operating beyond the domain of ‘nation building’ or reconstruction efforts.

Canada’s multi-million dollar unmanned spy airplanes are a direct result of recommendations stemming from the Conservative government initiated commission on Canada’s role in Afghanistan, headed by former Liberal cabinet minister John Manley. The commission’s report paved the way for the controversial extension of combat operations until 2011.

“There simply are not enough troops to ensure that the job can be properly done in Kandahar province... [W]e hope that this [report] is not a poison pill,” stated John Manley at a media



**Highway 401, the section between Toronto and the military base in Trenton, has been disputably renamed “The Highway of Heroes” in honour of Canada’s fallen soldiers in Afghanistan. Crowds gather to pay tribute as Canadian soldiers’ corpses – now numbering 106 – are transferred from Trenton to Toronto. Close to 20,000 Afghan deaths are estimated in the same war.**

Luc Bourgeois

conference following the release of the report. The report specifically outlined Canada’s acquisition of “high-performance unmanned aerial vehicles for intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance” before February 2009 as a condition to extending the mission.

Technicalities of war in Afghanistan, and not the essential nature or context of the Canadian military presence in the country, were the subject of critique in the government-sponsored report, which according to multiple opinion polls the majority of people in Canada, especially in Quebec, oppose.

“Operations on the ground in Afghanistan are easier for the Canadian government to present in their narrative of humanitarian war,” says Sophie Schoen, a Montreal-based anti-war activist with Block the Empire.

However, according to Shoen, “Canada’s military role in the sky makes it is clear that the mission is not humanitarian. [The recent] expansions of military capabilities in the air is indicative of the real nature of Canada’s mission in Afghanistan and our role as an occupying force.”

Operating from the skies allows Canada a huge technological advantage over local guerrillas in southern Afghanistan. The

advantage of aerial combat is especially important in light of recent events which suggest that the US-backed government in Kabul is losing political control over major regions in the country, including Kandahar, where Canadian forces are stationed.

Last June militias staged a spectacular jailbreak at the main prison in Kandahar, freeing up to 1,000 prisoners, after blowing open the prison walls with explosives. This action set a new benchmark for the growing capacities of rebels in southern Afghanistan.

Hundreds have been killed in southern Afghanistan this past year, while US and Canadian military officials – as in Iraq – continue to ignore demands from human rights organizations that they keep records on civilian deaths.

“The number of civilians killed by the international forces in Afghanistan remains significantly underreported,” stated Amnesty International in a 2008 report.

“Taliban is a label applied to any male over eighteen that the Canadian army kills in Afghanistan, a term that is so broadly applied it is absurd,” continues Schoen. “Generally this term Taliban is used without any verification and is used to cover up killings carried out by Canadian

forces.”

Now that Afghan skies are patrolled by foreign military forces, the spy drones that fly over Kandahar providing details for Canadian military strikes are adding another military layer to the thousands of foreign troops already occupying the country.

After decades of conflict in Afghanistan and thousands of civilian deaths since the 2001 US-led invasion, one key point has been clearly repeated by progressive voices inside Afghanistan: military-driven solutions delivered by foreign forces will not provide safety or stability for the country.

“We need liberation, not occupation,” outlines Malalai Joya, celebrated member of the Afghan Parliament, in a recent interview. “Afghans have a long history of fighting foreign occupation and if the ... occupation lasts longer we may witness many mass resistance movements against it.”

*This article was originally published by the community newspaper, Sada al-Mashrek, based in Montreal.*

*Stefan Christoff is a community organizer and journalist based in Montreal and a member of Tadamoni!, a collective of social justice activists in Montreal working for justice in the Middle East.*

# "And Then Let's Go For That Justice"

## Indigenous women demand respect in Ottawa

*In honour of missing and murdered indigenous women, the Walk4Justice began in Vancouver on June 21, Aboriginal Day, and ended with a rally of about 250 on Parliament Hill on September 15.*

*The following article (part two in a series) explores the profound systemic flaws discussed during speeches at the rally; flaws that continue to encourage a deep-rooted Canadian prejudice against indigenous women, which is being supported by the 2010 Olympic Games and Canada's oil economy, specifically the Alberta Tar Sands. Part I appeared in issue #56 of The Dominion.*

by Maya Rolbin-Ghanie

MONTREAL—When it comes to women losing their homes, Alberta and BC are among the worst in Canada.

Alberta's "successful" tar sands economy has created a severe lack of affordable housing, transitional housing and shelter spaces, particularly for women.

Women are often dissuaded from pursuing the resources and abilities essential to benefiting from the booming industry. Unequal wages, gender discrimination and sexual harassment are all significant deterrents. Those profiting most from the oil and gas workforce are predominantly male; current male-female ratios are 79 to 21 per cent for geoscientists and 96 to four per cent for trades.

Contributing to this imbalance is the fact that the exorbitant cost of rent makes it next to impossible for many women in Alberta to afford a home, unless their wages can compete with those in the oil industry.

In the oil town of Fort McMurray, where the housing crisis is rampant, none of the shelters accept minors. A report released by the region's Homelessness Initiatives Steering Committee found that some teenagers are resorting to sex-work in exchange for shelter for a night.



**The February 14th memorial march in Vancouver's Downtown East Side is held annually to remember and honour missing women and support their families and friends.**

Dawn Paley

For those women who do manage to find a shelter, Alberta has no transitional housing program. As a result, there is often nowhere for them to go from a shelter, except back to the street.

"A longer-term transition house is what is needed, one that can be used for as long as people need. A house that has passion for the survival of a whole generation to get past this terrible point of life, in which they did not mean to live," says Nicole Tait, a youth attending the Walk4Justice rally.

Under the Harper Conservatives, cuts to legal aid and income assistance, the closure of women's centres, political assaults on women's advocacy and support services, a lack of childcare support, cuts to welfare and changes to eligibility for welfare, the rising cost of living, and low-income work all contribute heavily to the significant disadvantage that many First Nations women face. The BC Human Rights Commission and Ministry of Women's Equality, both considered tools to fight discrimination, have also been eliminated.

The number of homeless in Vancouver doubled in 2005 and is predicted to triple due to the 2010 Olympic Games. These figures do not account for a much larger population that pays for sub-standard housing. According to the 2005 Greater Vancouver Homeless Count, there are 300,000 (official) homeless in Greater Vancouver, 30 per cent of whom are First Nations people, despite the fact that they make up just two per cent of the city's total population.

An endless host of Canadian development projects, from massive tar sands extraction sites to ventures intended to facilitate the 2010 Games, have rendered homeless many First Nations people who originally subsisted on their traditional territories or on government-assigned reserves. Many are compelled to move to large urban centres in search of work or to escape their consequently depressed communities.

The same pattern of forced displacement of First Nations communities and individuals is happening all over Canada.

For example, in Alberta,

Indigenous people living on reserves close to tar sands plants, residing downstream from tailings ponds, or dwelling on land slated to accommodate government pipelines have a hard battle to fight: against health problems of all kinds – including soaring rates of cancer which are picking off their friends and family members at an alarming pace – and against a government that is constantly attempting to push them farther off of their land for the purpose of extraction and exploration. Many of these people, such as those in the northern Alberta communities of Fort Chipewyan and Fort MacKay, are fighting to stop the pollution and destruction of their homes, some are deriving what benefit they can from jobs in the tar sands industry, and others are leaving their reserves with little or no money to attempt a better life in Edmonton, Calgary, or Fort McMurray.

Similarly, the Olympic Games are acting as an unwelcome catalyst for many First Nations

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# Disappeared Before the Courts

## Internationals accompany witnesses to forced disappearance in Guatemala

by Valerie Croft

TORONTO— The first case of forced disappearance ever to be heard in Guatemala is currently sitting on hold in the constitutional court.

Six charges of forced disappearance have been brought forward from the community of Choatalúm in the municipality of San Martín Jilotepeque against ex-military commissioner Felipe Cusanero Coj. He has been accused of disappearing many community members while he acted as a military commissioner during Guatemala's 36-year armed conflict. However, six specific cases are being brought forward for crimes committed between 1982 and 1984. Like so many others who collaborated with the army during the armed conflict, Cusanero enjoys a position of political power: he is the current mayor of Choatalúm.

This trial marks a milestone for social justice and reconciliation in Guatemala, as the trial's witnesses are the first in the small Central American country's history to give their testimonies of forced disappearance in front of a judge.

Disappearance is a terror tactic that was used in many of the "Dirty Wars," which were wars against the general population in the name of protecting capital and the oligarchy in Latin America. Some argue that forced disappearance first began to be used as a mechanism to systematically terrorize the population during the internal conflict in Guatemala. There are nearly 50,000 people who are still disappeared in Guatemala.

The case has now reached a standstill in the constitutional court, and may be there for a long time to come. The defence for Cusanero argues that his client should not stand trial for felonies he may have committed before they were recognized as crimes. Forced disappearance was only recognized in 1996 after the



**Felipe Cusanero (left) is accused in Guatemala's first trial against perpetrators of forced disappearance. Guatemalans continue to suffer the effects of this terror tactic.**

Valerie Croftcredit

Peace Accords were signed, and is non-retroactive, and therefore, the defence argues, the trial is unconstitutional.

Those bringing the case forward reject this argument principally based on the nature of forced disappearance, arguing that since the bodies have not been recovered, it is an ongoing crime. Cusanero is continuing to perpetrate the disappearances as he is unwilling to tell families where the bodies are buried.

The witnesses are being supported by the Association of Relatives of the Detained-Disappeared of Guatemala (Asociación de Familiares de Detenidos-Desaparecidos de Guatemala – FAMDEGUA). According to Aura Elena Farfan of the organization, people do not want revenge, but, more than anything, to know where their loved ones are.

"This is why we are motivated, all of the family members. We want [Cusanero] to tell us where he left them. I consider forced disappearance to be the worst practice. It is the

worst because you live with an uncertainty; you live with a deep pain."

As part of the agreement of the Peace Accords, an official investigation took place into what had occurred during the war. As a result, the Historic Clarification Committee (la Comisión de Esclarecimiento Histórico – CEH) released a report detailing 6,159 reported forced disappearances during Guatemala's armed conflict. However, the report also indicated that those numbers may be as high as 45,000. Those disappeared were most often taken from their homes in the middle of the night to torture centres or military compounds, never to be heard from by their families again.

The Human Rights Office of the Archbishop of Guatemala also conducted its own investigation into the war and produced the REMHI report (el Proyecto de la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica). After gathering thousands of testimonies from Guatemalans affected by the war, the REMHI report found several commonalities in those

affected by forced disappearance. The practice is used to provoke terror in family and community members, while leaving families incapable of properly grieving or healing, a result of the absence of information about the fate of those disappeared.

Years later, when the process of exhumations began from within military compounds, mass graves were found with bodies showing signs of extreme torture and mutilation, with many still blindfolded with their hands tied behind their backs. The knowledge that this was a likely end for loved ones disappeared has wreaked emotional havoc in Guatemalan communities.

The report is titled "Never Again." It describes the tactics used by the Guatemalan military during the conflict, which, on top of forced disappearance, was characterized by large-scale massacres, torture, rape and other forms of violence against women, and scorched earth tactics. Characteristic of Guatemala's armed

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# Survival is Non-Negotiable!

## Are climate talks the new World Trade Organization?

by Ben Powless

POZNAN, POLAND—The conclusion of December's climate change negotiations in Poznan, Poland, put another nail in the coffin for our collective survival. The event brought together tens of thousands of participants from environmental groups, Indigenous Peoples, other civil society groups, youth groups, and business interests, but meaningful action on climate change was railroaded by vetoes enacted by a handful of nations, including Canada.

Be it stupidity or malice, coming from a country that is 60 per cent Arctic with an Inuit culture completely threatened by climate change, Canada's position only helped to further the marginalization Indigenous groups have faced at these negotiations.

At the conference, I was part of the Indigenous Peoples' Caucus, as a representative of the Indigenous Environmental Network. Only recently being recognized by the UN as distinct from 'environmental groups,' we have struggled to have our voices heard in the debates and have our rights protected. We have often had to contend with the countries who claim to represent us telling us they are selling out our future for our best interest.

Despite being the most impacted by climate change, Indigenous Peoples often have the most to share, and our effective exclusion from the talks only shows how little concern Canada has with dealing with climate change and aboriginal issues.

In fact, Canada won the daily "fossil award" for worst performance 10 times during the conference. Canada also won the overall "colossal fossil award," at the end of the conference, for winning the most fossil of the day awards.

Canada outperformed even the United States, who had little mandate to negotiate with a lame-duck President, which left the world waiting to see how



A climate justice demonstration takes to the streets of Poznan.

Ben Powless

things would change under Barack Obama. Canada's performance - which included such episodes as Minister of the Environment Jim Prentice making the members of the Canadian youth delegation cry with his frivolous jokes about the environment and forcing them to take down a photo exhibition of the tar sands - should make every Canadian wonder whose interests were being represented at the conference.

To drive the point home, Canada even brought out the 'Minister of the Tar Sands,' Alberta's Environment Minister, to play cheerleader for the Tar Sands.

It wasn't the first climate conference to end without action and it likely won't be the last. But the successor conference to the 2007 UN Climate Change Conference in Bali, Indonesia, failed to deliver even on the most modest aspirations held to it. This puts humanity on shaky ground as nations and civil society representatives proceed to the next round of negotiations in December 2009, in Copenhagen, Denmark, to come up with a plan to tackle climate change after 2012.

In 1998, countries agreed to (and failed miserably to meet) the Kyoto Protocol, which had a series of weak targets by which developed countries would reduce their emissions levels by 2012. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, comprised of

over 2,000 scientists from around the world, tells us we need to cut our emissions levels from 25 to 40 per cent (from our 1990 levels, the universal baseline) by 2020 to have a chance at survival. Common sense tells us we should set our aims much higher.

Sadly, in Poznan, countries were not able to agree on any limits to the destruction we are wreaking. Survival should not be something we are negotiating, on behalf of ourselves or the planet.

The event in Poznan was held under the umbrella of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the same organization responsible for the Kyoto Protocol.

Consensus was not reached on a number of important issues, particularly on whether or not developing countries are to be expected to curb their development in the name of reducing their emissions.

Decisions at COP meetings are made by the few thousand representatives of countries around the world. Other participants were limited to protesting or watching from the sidelines. Resolutions are made by consensus, and in Poznan countries like Canada and the US once again stuck up for the oil companies and their friends, continuing their effective opposition to any positive action against climate change, and putting all our lives at risk. At the talks, a colleague remarked that climate

negotiations were increasingly assuming the same atmosphere that surrounded the World Trade Organization talks. Instead of civil society groups trying to influence specific decisions, they have become critical of the process itself, and many see the talks as doing more harm than good. While this view may not be universal, it is part of the growing consensus of a number of groups that make up the environmental justice-oriented group Climate Justice Now!

Among the prime criticisms of environmental justice campaigners over the years has been the reliance of the Kyoto Protocol on market solutions to climate change, such as selling carbon credits (essentially pollution permits) from developing countries to developed ones, in return for funding for "clean development" projects.

The problems are many, but central is the equity issue: Why should developing countries have the responsibility of cleaning up the mess that Western countries have made?

That many so-called clean development projects have been proven not to generate any environmental benefits (such as when dams were going to be built anyway, but received emissions credits for business-as-usual), have caused human rights abuses (forced evictions, for example, from such dams), and are opposed by local residents, should truly trouble us.

About a quarter of all Clean Development Mechanism projects are based on hydroelectric dams, provoking concern about displacement from many Indigenous Peoples who stand between governments, corporations, and millions of carbon-financed dollars. The basic methodology for actually verifying emissions reductions has been criticized by many groups, such as environmentalists, Indigenous groups, and even

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# A Watchdog with No Teeth?

## Mining companies contaminate findings in Sudbury Soils Study

by Shailagh Keaney

SUDBURY—Mounting concern about heavy metal contamination in Sudbury, a city whose landscape is so choked by slag and smoke that it was once used by NASA as a training site for their astronauts for moon landings, led to the creation of the Sudbury Soils Study. But some community members feel that instead of providing accurate data on pollution, the results of the study whitewashed the degree of soil contamination in the region.

For the last 122 years, nickel mines have been operating in the region now known as Sudbury. The companies involved in the extraction were among the world's biggest and most powerful players in the mining industry: the International Nickel Corporation and Falconbridge, among others. Today, the Sudbury basin sources a large portion of the world's nickel, for which the extraction process involves roasting and reduction, producing waste products in the form of slag, tailings and air emissions, all of which contain significant amounts of waste metals.

Before a smokestack was built in 1987 to carry the airborne byproducts further away, the blanket of waste on the ground choked life and prevented new vegetation from growing, thus giving Sudbury its infamous moonscape appearance.

"I don't trust what's in my vegetables. I don't know how much lead, copper, nickel is in the soil," says Tanya Ball, a community organizer and mother who used to garden in Greater Sudbury community of Wanup.

In May of 2008, the first part of the Sudbury Soils Study, the Human Health Risk Assessment, was finally released. The study concluded that there exists "little risk of health effects on Sudbury area residents associated with metals in the environment."

"The SARA [Sudbury Area Research Association] group announced that 'there is no unacceptable risk', despite the fact that

there are levels of toxins that are found to be high in Falconbridge, Copper Cliff, Gatchel, West End, Central Sudbury and Garson. Together, these six geographical areas comprise a large percentage of the city's population," says Ball, who now lives in Central Sudbury.

"It doesn't take a genius to see the prevalence of chronic illnesses in Sudbury," she says.

Many in the community, like Ball, remain unconvinced by the results of the Soils Study. The participation of mining heavyweights in the process may explain why.

The Technical Advisory Committee (TC) of the Sudbury Soils Study was formed in 2002 in order to direct a research project that would determine human and environmental risk arising from soil contamination in the Sudbury region.

The TC hired a scientific research partner and set the research parameters for the study, but some, like Homer Seguin, a local health and safety advocate and former president and staff rep with Steelworkers Local 6500, feel the study was compromised from the beginning because of the role that mining companies play on the TC.

Vale Inco contributed \$7 million and Falconbridge contributed \$3 million to the study. Of the six Committee seats on the TC, two are held by the two locally-operating mining companies, with the other four being made up of government and health organizations.

The Ministry of the Environment decided that the companies should pay for the study, but instead of having the companies give the money to the Ministry, the companies themselves took part in overseeing the study.

"They caused the pollution, they should pay. But my view of them paying is that they should be giving the money to the Ministry of the Environment, who's responsible for the environment, and the Ministry should oversee the study," says Seguin.

Despite holding a minority



The Copper Cliff neighbourhood in Sudbury, Ontario.

Tanya Ball

of seats on the TC, the mining companies gained a great deal of control when TC members agreed to make decisions according to consensus. As a result, any decision could be vetoed by any one member of the committee, including either of the mining companies.

The community was kept out of the process from the outset, and neither media nor public observers were allowed to witness the committee's process. In a gesture towards the community, the TC established a Public Advisory Committee (PAC) soon after the scientific studies commenced in 2003. Vale Inco and Falconbridge representatives participated actively in the public meetings.

During one of the public meetings of the TC, Seguin made a presentation on the health of mine workers.

"The first meeting where I had made a presentation to the PAC, one of the members actually attacked me, verbally attacked me and the union, saying that the union could have done some more. As if it was the unions' responsibility" he recalls.

"In my opinion, they set up this PAC as an attempt to fool the public that somebody was a watchdog over them so [the public] did not have to worry."

Franco Mariotti is the independent process observer for the Soils Study. He refutes the notion that mining-company representatives bullied participants at the PAC or TC meetings.

But the weight of mining companies in the process may explain why some of the testing procedures were, by federal and provincial standards, mild.

SARA, which was hired by the TC to conduct the study, was instructed to only make note of lead concentrations in Sudbury soil that were upwards of 400 parts per million (ppm), well above the federal standard of 140ppm, or the Ontario provincial standard for post-industrial cleanup sites of 200ppm. Lead is a known probable carcinogen with no known threshold. Even the recommended maximum levels of exposure may increase cancer risks.

When the SARA group announced their conclusions,

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**"In review," continued from page 3**

our communities," Ben Powless, a member of Six Nations who was in Poznan during the conference, told IPS.

The Canadian youth delegation in Poland set up a photo display of the Alberta tar sands. The display was torn down by officials at the request of the Canadian government delegation.

A report by Environmental Defence was released, which stated that tar sands production was releasing billions of litres of contaminated water into Alberta's groundwater every year.

The Climate Action Network, an international NGO, named Canada the country most active in blocking, stalling or undermining the UN b in Poland.

CNN announced it would cut its entire science, technology, and environment news staff. The announcement came a week after NBC announced it was axing the entire staff of the "Forecast Earth" environmental program. The Dominion is currently seeking Health and Science & Technology editors.

Over fifty young people belonging to the group Plane Stupid locked themselves down at London's Stanstead Airport in order to delay flights and bring attention to the CO2 impacts of flying. Fifty-seven activists were arrested and later released.

The Shabot Obaadjiwan First Nation band council signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Ontario, Frontenac Ventures Corporation, and the Algonquins of Ontario. Frontenac Ventures wants to explore for uranium in Ardoch Algonquin Territory, but has been prevented from doing so by blockades that eventually led to arrests and the imprisonment of Robert Lovelace. "Although Algonquin and non-Algonquin neighbours have found common ground in protecting the land, this latest attempt at divide and conquer will result in years

of distrust and enmity," read a statement from the Ardoch Algonquin First Nation, which maintains its opposition to uranium exploration.

Barriere Lake First Nation acting Chief Benjamin Nottaway was sentenced to forty-five days in jail in addition to the fifteen he has already served in pre-trial detention. He was charged with three counts of mischief and breach of conditions when participating in peaceful blockades intended to draw attention to the violations of the rights of Barriere Lake by the Canadian and Quebec governments.

"We've been in a recession for 13 years," Chief Bill Wilson of the Squamish Nation Band Council told Indian Affairs Minister Chuck Strahl during a meeting. Chiefs say a two per cent annual cap on new spending means that they cannot keep pace with inflation, much less provide adequate services for the fastest-growing populations in Canada.

The Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation took the Alberta government to court for granting rights for tar sands development without consulting the First Nations who hold treaty rights. "Parts of our traditional lands have been completely changed by industry," Chief Allan Adam wrote in an affidavit. "These lands were once hunting and trapping grounds, but now they are covered by oil and gas wells and blanketed by seismic lines roads and pipelines."

The Conservatives introduced sweeping new changes to Canada's immigration system. A list of 38 professions for new immigrants was introduced, which is expected to severely limit the chances of many people wishing to permanently immigrate to Canada. "The 2009 plan includes up to 156,600 immigrants in the economic category, another term for temporary workers who can come to take Canadian jobs but the government can kick them out whenever it pleases," reported the

South Asian Link News Paper.

The latest federal quarterly report on Canada's role in the war in Afghanistan showed that insecurity in the country is rising. "In Afghanistan generally, and in Kandahar specifically, this summer was especially violent. Numbers of insurgent incidents reached levels higher than in any year since the Taliban regime was overthrown in 2001." Stockwell Day, International Trade Minister, stated that the increased violence was because summer is "fighting season" in Afghanistan. The United Nations estimated that 1,445 civilians were killed in the conflict during the first eight months of 2008.

The Supreme Court of Poland ruled that seven Polish soldiers accused of the deaths of Afghani civilians would be brought to trial in Poland, overturning a lower court ruling that dismissed the case.

Governor General Michaëlle Jean prorogued parliament for seven weeks upon the request of Prime Minister Stephen Harper. The decision to prorogue parliament delayed until January the vote to decide if a coalition government will form. Google searches for 'coalition' and 'prorogue' hit a new high.

People rioted in ten cities throughout Greece, including Thessaloniki, Athens, Corfu and Crete, to protest a police killing of a young man. Conservative Prime Minister Costas Karamanlis rejected demands that early elections be called. Greek police ran out of tear gas.

Montreal Police announced that Jean-Loup Lapointe, the constable who shot and killed 18-year old Fredy Villanueva, would not face criminal charges. Protesters gathered in the Montreal North park where Villanueva was killed to shoot dice, a reference to the dice game Villanueva was playing before he was killed by police.

Unions in Italy held a general

strike to protest against President Berlusconi.

Legislative elections in Ghana were inconclusive, with both favorite candidates achieving less than the required 50 per cent. The second round of elections will be held in late December.

Russian President Dmitri Medvedev visited India for defence and energy talks with Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. The leaders of the two countries signed a nuclear deal that will see Russia building four reactors in southern India.

Ten anti-war advocates were convicted of trespassing in Burlington, Ontario. When charged, the advocates were attempting to dialogue with executives at L-3 Wescam. Wescam is one of the largest military manufacturing facilities owned by Canada's L-3 Communications.

The government of BC approved a controversial coalbed methane project to be operated by BP. The municipal government of Fernie, the town closest to the proposed project, rejected the project out of concern for local ecosystems.

The Bank of America announced that it will "phase out financing of companies whose predominant method of extracting coal is through mountain top removal."

The Bush administration gave a "gift" to the coal sector by easing rules, allowing them to dump their waste in streams.

A memorial rally was held in Vancouver to commemorate the killing of Frank Paul, Kyle Tait, Dudley George, and other people killed by the RCMP or while in police custody. In the Yukon, Raymond Silverfox died while in custody of the RCMP.

BC's criminal justice branch announced that no charges would be laid against any of the four police officers involved in the 2007 taser killing of Robert Dziekanski.



The former head of **NASDAQ**, Bernard L. Madoff, was arrested for fraud after allegedly admitting to running a pyramid scheme worth \$50 billion.

President Rafael Correa declared that **Ecuador** would default on its 2012 global bonds, worth \$31 million. Correa stated that the debt was incurred illegally by previous governments.

Workers at Republic Windows and Doors in **Chicago** began an occupation of the factory after it was shut down when the owners could not secure enough credit to continue operating. "These workers are to this struggle perhaps what Rosa Parks was to social justice 50 years ago," said Reverend Jesse Jackson when he visited the factory. "This, in many ways, is the beginning of a larger movement for mass action to resist economic violence."

The **Miami**-based group Taking Back the Land helped homeless people move into foreclosed homes. Advocates in **Cleveland** worked with the city to allow homeless people to legally move into and repair empty, dilapidated houses. In **Atlanta**, some property owners are paying homeless people to live in abandoned homes as a security measure.

A group of 39 temporary foreign workers building **Vancouver's** "Canada Line" won a multimillion dollar discrimination case at the BC Human Rights Tribunal. The tribunal ordered SELI Canada, SCNP-SELI Joint Venture and SNC Lavalin Constructors (Pacific) Inc. to pay each worker \$10,000.

The panel working on the **Mackenzie Valley Pipeline** report announced that their report, which was originally meant to be finished in 2008, would not be released until December of 2009. Were it to go ahead, the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline would stretch 1,200 kilometers from the North West Territories to Alberta.

Canadian Business Magazine

released their list of the 100 **richest Canadians**. The Thomson family, which controls the Thomson Reuters news agency among other assets, is the richest family in Canada. Their net worth is \$18.45 billion.

Six First Nations in BC demanded that the province implement a First Nations Review Process for **Enbridge's** Northern Gateway project. "Gateway is a major project with significant risks. Yet the federal government is advancing a decision-making process for Gateway without any provision for addressing Aboriginal Rights and Title. This is unacceptable," said David de Wit, Natural Resources Manager at the Office of the Wet'suwet'en. The Haida nation also rejected the Enbridge pipeline.

**Translink**, Vancouver's transit authority, announced plans to use sniffing dogs to sniff transit users presumably to see if they are carrying prohibited substances. The BC Civil Liberties Union called the plan "a massive intrusion into the rights of transit users."

Canadian mining company Pacific Rim announced it will sue the **El Salvadorian** government for millions of dollars under CAFTA-DR (Central America-Dominican Republic-United States Free Trade Agreement) for not granting the company a mining license. Pacific Rim will be using its U.S. based subsidiary Pac Rim Cayman to file for arbitration under CAFTA, because the U.S. is a signatory to CAFTA, and not Canada.

A UK study found that **Britons** rank sex as their favorite free activity.

The Dutch government announced that they will cut the amount of brothels in **Amsterdam** by half, and do the same to the city's marijuana cafes.

A young **Chinese** woman went temporarily deaf in one ear after kissing her boyfriend. "A strong kiss may cause an imbalance in the air pressure between two inner ears

and lead to a broken ear drum," warned the *Shanghai Daily*.

**Iraqi** journalist Muntadar al-Zaidi threw his shoes at President Bush during a press conference in Baghdad. "This is a farewell kiss, you dog. This is from the widows, the orphans and those who were killed in Iraq," yelled al-Zaidi while throwing his shoes. In Montréal and Toronto anti-war protestors hurled shoes in solidarity with al-Zaidi. Bombing in central Baghdad killed at least 18 people and wounded 50, and a car bomb exploded in Kadhimiya, in Northwestern Baghdad, killing 22 people and wounding 54.

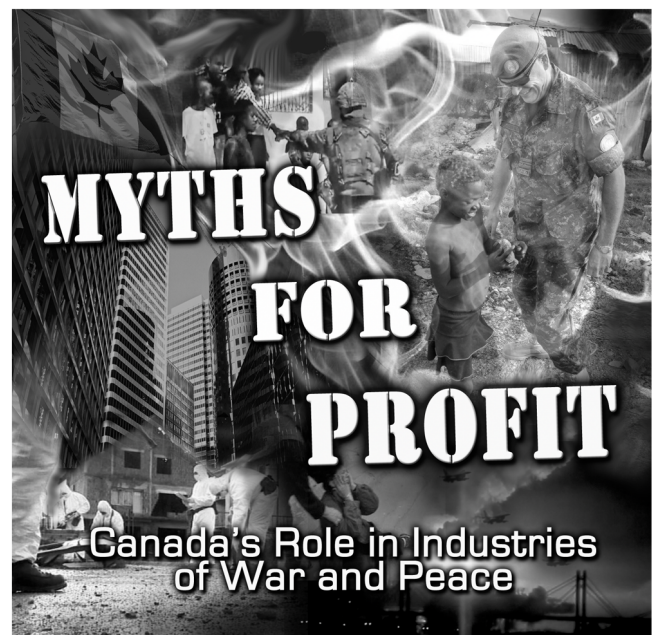
In the US, President Bush began to push through a record number of 'midnight regulations' before the end of his term. On the list of changes include modifications to endangered species, air pollution, abortion, and gun control regulations. "Many of these are radical and appear to pay off big business

allies of the Republican Party," according to The Guardian.

Activists in **Greece** took over a television station during a live broadcast as part of ongoing riots and demonstrations. "The democratic regime in its peaceful facade doesn't kill an Alex every day, precisely because it kills thousands of Ahmets, Fatimas, Jorjes, Jin Tiaos and Benajirs: because it assassinates systematically, structurally and without remorse the entirety of the third world..." read a statement from students at the Athens School of Economics. "This is full-blooded revolutionary anarchism," wrote analyst Uri Gordon. Mobilizations against state murders and in solidarity with the Greek uprisings took place in over 40 cities worldwide.

Eight soldiers were found decapitated in the state of Guerrero in **Mexico**. It is believed that a drug cartel is responsible for the killings.

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## “Justice,” continued from page 12

people living in BC, a number of whom have been embroiled in bitter land rights battles with the Canadian government for most of their lives. Rivers, mountains, lakes, creeks, and old-growth forests, along with trap lines, hunting grounds, salmon stocks, animal habitats, sacred sites, and important food and medicine harvesting areas are being substituted by tourist resorts and highway expansions, like the Sea-to-Sky Highway from Vancouver to Whistler. With vast areas of unceded land, on which indigenous communities depend for their general survival, being destroyed, many First Nations people have been, and continue to be, drawn into cities to seek out new modes of subsistence, often only to discover that they lack the resources necessary to make a living in foreign urban surroundings.

The Secwepemc people of Skelkwékwelt and the St’at’imc people of Sutikalh have long resisted the establishment of Sun Peaks and Cayoosh ski resorts (intended to attract and accommodate tourists, Olympic athletes and trainers) on their land. Powerful and well-thought-out demonstrations of their opposition have been disregarded, ignored and covered-up by the BC government in attempts to profit from a territory for which treaties were never signed.

Native Youth Movement (NYM) member Kanahus Pelkey of the Secwepemc and Ktunaxa First Nations recalls the tactics employed by Sun Peaks to facilitate the construction of their ski resort:

The province bulldozed our home on International Human Rights Day. They hired Sun Peaks employees to tear down our sweat lodges. So you get an idea what happens when Native people stand up and fight for their freedom. We announced it to the media, and all the corporate media, they showed up at Sun Peaks, but the roads were deactivated. They [Sun Peaks] made big, huge ice blockades so no vehicles could get through. And Sun Peaks resort has many,

many snowmobile businesses, but all the businesses were given orders by Sun Peaks not to rent any snowmobiles to any media, or anybody that day.

The Secwepemc people, rendered homeless and faced with the threat of arrest if they continued living on their land, retreated, some to Vancouver. Many had endured previous arrests for similar involvements and did not want to risk imprisonment with no chance of bail.

First Nations women living in the city are more susceptible than men to losing their homes due to abuse or conflict with a spouse or caretaker upon whom they are financially dependent. Because women are more likely to have children to look after, and are less likely to feel safe on the street or in shelters where men are also present, many return to abusive relationships when there is no alternative available.

Across Canada, there are more women among the Aboriginal homeless population than are found in the non-Aboriginal population. According to Native Women’s Association of Canada (NWAC), 35 per cent of the Aboriginal homeless population in Greater Vancouver is female, compared to only 27 per cent among the non-Aboriginal homeless population.

First Nations women are also vastly overrepresented in Canada’s community of sex-workers, and continue to be brutally criminalized by the police and simultaneously marginalized and taken advantage of by society in general.

In 2003, Pelkey, forcibly separated from her baby boy, spent two-and-a-half months in prison for her involvement with the Sun Peaks protests. During her incarceration, she met many First Nations women who had been imprisoned for sex-work and drug abuse. Most of the women’s stories involved sexual molestation during childhood. Many women had experienced these abuses in residential schools, while others were the children of residential school survivors.

Aboriginal rights lawyer and President of the NWAC Beverly Jacobs stresses that often police

lack an understanding of the cycles of abuse that occur within Native communities, and, as a result, do not possess the empathy necessary to view women on the streets as part of the public. As such, they do not feel responsible for the protection of these women. Jacobs has worked with Amnesty International as a lead researcher and consultant on their report “Stolen Sisters: Discrimination and Violence Against Indigenous Women in Canada.”

The controversial BC Coalition of Experiential Communities (BCCEC), the first sex-worker co-operative in Canada, is the brainchild of sex-worker Susan Davis, who has been trying to pressure the government to create legal brothels for the upcoming Winter Olympics in 2010. Despite the decriminalization of sex workers being one of the BCCEC’s primary motives, the issue is contentious both among Canada’s political elite and among sex-workers themselves. The move had the support of Vancouver’s then-Mayor, Sam Sullivan, and VANOC (the Vancouver Organizing Committee for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games), but has so far been refused by Canadian Justice Minister Rob Nicholson.

Tait finds it difficult to understand sex-workers who support the move, and does not envision the legalization of brothels solving the problem of police brutality and societal marginalization.

“They are [Vancouver is] basing their research on one woman’s point of view for creating [legal] brothels in the DTES [Downtown Eastside]. This woman [Davis] is a prostitute by choice who doesn’t have to make a living from the streets. She says that she enjoys what she does. I never met one woman who said that they enjoy being a prostitute, they say that’s just the way things happened. Others are trying to make a living for their family, which includes young mothers who are trying to put food on the table for their babies.”

Tsimshian youth, co-ordinator of North Coast Enviro Watch and member of Native

2010 Resistance Dustin Johnson notes that the Olympic tradition of catering to the elite as a means of social control can be referred to as a policy of “sex, screens and sports,” a phrase coined to describe the 1988 Seoul Games. A massive influx of prostitution, coupled with the pseudo-legalization of the sex industry for the benefit of elite athletes and businessmen, has always been an Olympic norm.

Johnson maintains that not all sex-workers even made a career choice to begin with.

“You actually see, at some of the elementary schools in Vancouver, sexual predators, just waiting around to try to kidnap young Native kids. Some of these kids end up in the sex-slave industry, they get shipped all over the world. This is the kind of industry that VANOC and the people that are organizing the Olympics in Vancouver are trying to continue.”

Jacobs, too, stresses that the issue of violence against Aboriginal peoples in general and Aboriginal women in specific is not a three-decade concern, but instead extends to the past 300 years. The crisis is one of historic proportions. A report she wrote for the Native Women’s Association of Canada looked to the history of colonization, and how it has affected Aboriginal women.

“Because a lot of First Nations cultures were matriarchal, women have suffered the brunt of colonization,” says Jacobs.

Her studies reveal that white policymakers noted the remarkable strength of First Nations women, and found ways of demeaning it. Despite the fact that many clans, and by extension, the status of individuals, were once determined matrilineally, the Canadian government’s invention of the status card changed this: status became determined by the male alone, creating a severe disconnect between Native people and their cultures. The previously significant responsibility of men to act as protectors was also adversely affected by this forced shift, creating internal oppression in First Nations communities that

*continued on next page*



**“Justice,” continued from previous page**

is still very present today.

“The responsibilities and the roles that come with being a Native woman are very highly respected, or at least they were. [First Nations people are] still having to deal with the issues internally within our communities because we’ve learned those patri-

archal values and we’ve learned them really well,” observes Jacobs.

About half-way through the colourful roster of speeches on Parliament Hill, one of Prime Minister Harper’s aids came to formally accept the women’s documented demands. Dressed all in grey, he gripped the bright pink

folder firmly, saying, “I will deliver this to Mr. Harper” as the crowd murmured their skeptical thanks.

But Akwesasne Elder and Bear Clan mother Harriet Boots quickly brought people back to the core of the matter.

“Every person today has a lot of tears. Let’s make it our strength.

Let’s go ahead and cry. Take it all out of our system. And then let’s go for that justice.”

*Maya Rolbin-Ghanie is a freelance journalist, creative writer, and barista living in Montreal. An original version of this article was published by Oil Sands Truth (Fall 2008 print issue).*

**“Disappeared,” continued from page 13**

conflict was also the formation of “community patrol units.” By being forced to participate in these units, many individuals committed crimes such as massacre, rape and torture against their own community members and against people from neighbouring communities. Refusal to participate in these units led to execution or disappearance; however, for some it led to abuse of power. These

patrol units lasted long after the Peace Accords were signed and the power structures created by them long outlast the war and continue to deeply divide communities.

The case of Choatalúm is one such community. Most of the disappeared were forced from their homes in front of their families and taken to the local military compound. According to testimonies from the witnesses,

family members pled for days with soldiers to give them information about the disappeared, but were told nothing, except that those in question were “bad seeds.”

According to Farfan, the human rights community in Guatemala is very concerned for the safety of the families involved in the trial. “[The families] live close to [Cusanero],” she says, “and we really don’t know the

reaction of his family the moment the judge hands out a sentence...I think that the people and families will be left very vulnerable if this case takes [Cusanero] to prison.”

*Valerie Croft volunteered as an international accompanier with ACOGUATE from February to July 2008, and accompanied the witnesses in the Choatalúm case.*

**“Sudbury,” continued from page 15**

community activists, academics, labour organizers and other community members, including Seguin and Ball, countered the “little risk” findings by forming the Community Committee on the Soils Study (CCSS).

Joan Kuyek, chair of the CCSS, explains that the goal of the Committee is to involve the public as much as possible in decisions that affect them with regards to the Soils Study. Currently, the Committee is calling for the Ontario government to provide further testing and analysis such as blood and hair testing, and more extensive testing of gardens. This is data that the community has requested and that the Study is not providing, Kuyek says. The CCSS is also expanding and holding public events in order to involve more people in the Committee’s analysis and response to the Soils Study.

In addition, the CCSS is seeking an independent review for the Soil Study’s next portion – the Environmental Assessment – which is expected to be released in early 2009.

“The reason why I am present [in the Community Committee] is because I want to keep this from happening to my son,” Ball says in

regards to living with heavy metal contamination in the Sudbury area. “I can’t leave this mess for another generation to clean up.”

In the fall of 2008, a union-sponsored report prepared by Environmental Defense Canada poked holes in the methodology used in the Sudbury Soils Study.

Environmental Defense’s report, Human Health Risk Assessment, outlines key concerns for people living in the Sudbury area. It states that SARA’s own conclusions are that lead, nickel and arsenic are above recommended exposure rates in a number of communities in the Sudbury region. Further, it reveals that the Soils Study does not take into account the compounded effect of multiple routes of exposure, nor does it consider how the environmental contaminants might interact with one another in the human body.

The report points out, for instance, that the levels of nickel found in the air are higher than recommended exposure limits for non-cancer and cancer effects in three communities. SARA dismissed the risk, stating that it was within acceptable range because it fell within a “margin of safety,” when in fact margins

of safety are intended to protect people who are more sensitive to contaminants, as well as provide a buffer for uncertainties in the data. They are not intended to discount the risk associated with higher levels of toxins.

Nickel has serious implications for health; in large enough quantities it increases chances of development of lung cancer, nose cancer, larynx cancer and prostate cancer, respiratory failure, birth defects, asthma and other conditions.

“In Sudbury, we have cancers that are 11 per cent higher than the national average. We have chronic obstructive lung diseases at 85 per cent higher, all this stuff that would be caused by these extra [contaminants],” says Seguin.

Another lingering topic of concern is the fact that the study’s model subject in the calculation of health risks is a baby female born in Sudbury in 2005. While this model can be used to explore the health impacts on a vulnerable population, it also excludes anyone born prior to 2005, as well as workers who have been exposed to higher concentrations of metals and toxins in the smelters and mines.

Unions have been advocating

a change in this approach since the formation of the TC was announced. The only reply from the TC has been that health risks that affect workers are the domain of the Ministry of Labour, not the Ministry of the Environment, and that they will therefore not touch the issue.

Seguin himself suffers from chronic obstructive lung disease resulting from his work as a labourer at Inco. The fact that many people in community have not responded to the soils study process affects him deeply. “When I get on this topic, I get very emotional about it. I take it to heart. I find it a hard thing to understand, how Sudburians would allow that to happen,” he says, coughing and clearing his throat.

Currently, Vale Inco is applying for legal exception from new provincial legislation that requires that they reduce their nickel emissions, pushing for an alternate standard for nickel emission levels until 2015.

*Shailagh Keaney is from Sudbury, in occupied Atikameksheng Anishnawbek territory.*

**“Climate talks,” continued from page 14**

carbon traders, as being riddled with corruption, having negative impacts on local communities, being mismanaged, and in many cases, not having any verifiable reductions.

There is now a similar mechanism regarding stopping deforestation on the table, referred to as Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD). It is based around giving forests a value while they are standing, so that they have worth while they are alive and not just as furniture in someone's living room.

The REDD scheme seems innocuous enough, until you realize it shares many of the same risks as carbon trading, since most would like it to be a credit-generating scheme. In fact, REDD goes further by dealing explicitly with

the natural environment in which many Indigenous and traditional peoples live.

We know some of the threats posed by a scheme such as REDD because of past experiences with biofuels, which have devastated territories in many places. If Indigenous rights and other crucial social concerns are not incorporated, REDD schemes may similarly force people out of their traditional homelands. Think of Indigenous groups being forced out of the Amazon in the name of ‘protecting’ the forests.

There was an effort led by Bolivia and a few other governments sympathetic to Indigenous concerns in Poznan (including Panama and Ecuador, with the support of some EU countries) to incorporate some of these

concerns, but this initiative failed due to the opposition of countries like Canada and the US, provoking a large protest by Indigenous Peoples and supporters.

At first, Canadian representatives denied this, but later, embarrassed by international media coverage, they went on the offensive, proclaiming Indigenous rights had no part in a climate change agreement.

This does not have to be the case. In a last minute attempt to raise the stakes and bring attention to the talks, youth staged a protest in the UN on the last day, many risking their passes to raise the banner ‘Survival is Not Negotiable.’

In the run-up to the 15th COP in December in Copenhagen, it may take a regime change

in Canada to allow for the world community to come up with an agreement that is just and climate-friendly.

Already, in anticipation of COP 15 failing wretchedly, civil society groups worldwide are planning massive mobilizations around the world and in Copenhagen on the occasion of the summit. It is up to all of us to force Canada and other countries to come up with a plan that will safeguard the survival of all peoples and living things, but that work needs to start now, because by the time we get to Copenhagen it may be too late.

*Ben Powless is a Mohawk student at Carleton University who works with the Indigenous Environmental Network and Canadian Youth Climate Coalition.*

**“Israel bombs Gaza,” continued from page 6**

of aid, medical supplies, fuel and other necessities of life into the territory.”

Vancouver organizers also condemned “official US and Canadian complicity.”

“Targeting Hamas targets, when any civilian employed by the Hamas government, be they traffic police, civil police or in the Ministries, counts as a target, is an immoral declaration of war against a civilian population,” Canadian Gaza-based solidarity activist Eva Bartlett wrote in a blog entry.

In Israel, some observers have ascribed the attacks to positioning for Israeli elections coming in February. “Israeli leaders are competing over who is the toughest and who is ready to kill more,” Michael Warschawski of the Alternative Information Center in Jerusalem told journalist Jonathan Cook. Writing shortly before the bombing began, Yoel Marcus observed that “the hysterical reaction by the public as a whole and politicians in particular stems mainly from

the fact that the country is in an election period.”

Ali Abunimah called for increased support for the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement, initiated in 2005 by Palestinian Civil Society organizations. “Palestinians everywhere are asking for solidarity, real solidarity, in the form of sustained, determined political action,” Abunimah wrote on the day the bombing began.

Media coverage was criticized for omitting the historical context

of Palestinian dispossession. Writing in the Independent, Robert Fisk said, “The fact that the five sisters killed in Jabalya camp had grandparents who came from the very land whose more recent owners have now bombed them to death simply does not appear” in media coverage of the bombing.

*Dru Oja Jay is an editor at The Dominion.*

**“Barrick,” continued from page 10**

“is a sign to both the government of Tanzania and the International community (especially Canada) that poor and marginalized people also get tired of oppression.” He hopes that the recent conflict will inspire Barrick “to start another strategy that will bring a good and constructive relationship with the local communities by implementing programs that do not enhance more looting and belittle Tanzania, leaving thousands in destitution.”

Since this most recent

uprising, dozens of villagers have been arrested. According to Lissu, who plans to represent those arrested, “They have arrested dozens of people; [Barrick is] on a war path; these people have been denied bail, they are targeting the youth and repression is on.”

Lissu also spoke about reports of weapons making their way into the North Mara area. “Two days ago, we got information that [Barrick is] importing weapons: a ton and a half of tear gas, and

hand grenades were transported to the mine on Thursday. The hand grenades were seized by customs on the way to the North Mara Gold Mine, but have since been let through,” he told ProtestBarrick.net on the phone from Tanzania.

*Sakura Saunders is an editor for protestbarrick.net, an all-volunteer news site that networks organizations and community groups organized against Barrick Gold around the world.*

*\* On December 17, 2008 Barrick Gold said it had revised down the damage to its North Mara Mine in Tanzania during an attack last week to about \$7 million from an earlier estimate of \$15 million.*

*\*\* In January 2006, Barrick Gold merged with Placer Dome, who previously owned the North Mara mine.*

*\*\*\* By mid 2006 all of the villagers detained after the 2005 uprising had been released by the courts after the authorities failed to prosecute them.*