

Jewish World Watch
Quarterly Update on Global Crises
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In Victor Gold's absence at this meeting, I have been asked to update the quarterly World Crises summary.

Darfur, and now, Chad, still head the list of most egregious human rights abuses, currently taking place, as the murderous Sudanese government continues unchecked on its mission to annihilate the non-Arab populations of the region. The magnitude of this crisis cannot be diminished; the scale of human suffering remains extreme and requires urgent action on the part of the UN Security Council. Tragically, aside from what appear to be dire warnings from the UN Secretary General¹, this action does not appear to be forthcoming as of this writing.

Equally disturbing for Jews worldwide were the brazenly anti-Jewish, anti-Israel statements made in the last quarter by Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and the Hezbollah Secretary-General, Sheikh Sayyed_Hassan Nazrallah. The genocidal threats from both leaders rang loud and clear and cannot be underestimated. Therefore, I have included below a brief report on Iran and Hezbollah together as an impending crisis which warrants consideration by the JWW SAC for further action.

¹ BBC News, Sudan Leaders Warned Over Darfur, September 9, 2006,
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/5329548.stm>

HEZBOLLAH AND IRAN

In a recent article entitled "Hezbollah's Final Solution", Alan Dershowitz states that "the Iran-Hezbollah axis is the greatest threat to world peace, to Jewish survival, to Western values, and to civilization." In this article, Dershowitz argues that Hezbollah and Iran are engaged in an alliance of convenience in which the allies together provide the motivation, the manpower and eventual nuclear capacity to annihilate Israel.²

HEZBOLLAH

Hezbollah was conceived in 1982 by a group of clerics after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. It was formed primarily to offer resistance to the Israeli occupation.³ and quickly became the region's leading radical Islamic movement. Its original declared manifesto included three goals: 1) the eradication of Western influence (imperialism) in Lebanon, 2) the transformation of Lebanon into an Islamic state and 3) the complete destruction of the state of Israel. Hezbollah has abandoned the goal of transforming Lebanon into an Islamic republic, but continues to call for the elimination of Israel⁴. Its definition of Israeli occupation has also encompassed the idea that the whole of Palestine is occupied Muslim land and it has argued that Israel has no right to exist.

Hezbollah has established a powerful base of support in Lebanon. It has won seats in the Lebanese government, it operates a radio and a satellite television station, and coordinates extensive programs for social development. Throughout most of the Arab and Muslim worlds, Hezbollah is highly regarded as a legitimate resistance movement.

The United States, Israel and the EU Parliament consider Hezbollah to be a terrorist organization.⁵

Hezbollah is intimately connected to Iran from which it receives arms, soliders, and financial support. It has also forged an essential relationship with Syria, which has been the main supply route for Iranian arms and possibly for Syrian weaponry as well.⁶

² FrontPageMagazine.com, Dershowitz, Alan, Hezbollah's Final Solution, August 11, 2006.

³ BBC News, April 4, 2002, Who Are Hezbollah? http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/1908671.stm

⁴ Wikipedia.org

⁵ ISN Security Watch, EU lawmakers label Hezbollah 'terrorist' group, November 2005, <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/news/sw/details.cfm?id=10923>

⁶ Economist.com, Israel, Peace Now With Syria?, August 24, 2006, from The Economist print edition.

The current leader and Secretary-General of Hezbollah, Sheikh Sayyed Hassan Nazrallah⁷ is hell bent on continuing Hezbollah's genocidal doctrines toward Israel. Dershowitz quotes Nazrallah from the New York Times, May 23, 2004, "If Jews all gather in Israel, it will save us the trouble of going after them worldwide".⁸

While it is clear to the international community that Hezbollah provoked the 34 day conflict with Israel this last summer, the underlying motivation for this particular attack is not as clear. There is speculation that Hezbollah instigated the conflict as a proxy of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad for the purpose of deflecting attention from his upcoming meeting with the UN Security Council (see below). An August 3 article in The Economist suggests the re-emergence of a broader, pan-Islamist nationalism in the area which inspired Hezbollah in this war not only to inflict damage on Israel as a militarily superior enemy, but to thwart the efforts of Israel's strongest ally, the United States, to dominate the region.⁹

While the toll for both sides has been heavy, Nazrallah appears to be viewed as the short term victor, and accordingly, has become emboldened by what has been what has been widely perceived as Israel's overreaction to the provocation as well as its dramatic failure to destroy Hezbollah's military resources.

For now, a tenuous cease-fire is in place. Hezbollah has accepted a UN call for deployment of international forces on its southern border, a state monopoly over weapons and an embargo on arms deliveries to nonstate organizations (i.e., Hezbollah itself). However, it has also succeeded getting the Lebanese government both to disclaim any intention to disarm the organization, and to ratify the legitimacy of the resistance movement. Since the cease fire, Hezbollah has been moving to build political will among the Lebanese citizenry and to swell its own ranks by taking action as a primary agent of financial support for the reconstruction of the devastated area¹⁰. No doubt, they are using this time to replenish their weaponry stocks as well.

For much of the Arab world, this war has seriously damaged the myth of Israel's invincibility, and as a consequence, Israel's great peril is that it could be viewed as exhausted rather than as the dominant military force in the area.

Most assuredly in the next round, Hezbollah will have the capability to strike deeply into Israel. In this light, the challenge for Israel will be not only about

⁷ BBC News Online, Who Are Hezbollah? http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/1908671.stm

⁸ Alan M. Dershowitz, Hezbollah's Final Solution, FrontPageMagazine.com, August 11, 2006.

⁹ Economist.com, The Arab World, A Surge of Anger, August 3, 2006, from The Economist print edition.

¹⁰ International Crisis Group, August 24, 2006 review of A New Middle East, by Robert Mailey, in the New York Review of Books, September 21, 2006

rebuilding its image of strength and military superiority but about reclaiming its ability to define the rules of the game.¹¹

However, the more grave danger for Israel is the very real potential for Iranian nuclear capability, described below.

IRAN

For its part, Iran's motivation and involvement in the war is more complex. Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has repeatedly called for the annihilation of Israel and is actively engaged in developing nuclear fuel cycle capability including the ability to enrich uranium which would ultimately lead to the production of nuclear weapons. He has adamantly refused to stop the program of uranium enrichment despite the demands of the full UN Security Council, including China and Russia, and has rebuffed a proposal offered by the EU for a compromise program. Iran was just about to be called before the Security Council for refusal to accept the EU compromise nuclear offer when the Hezbollah kidnapping took place, fueling speculation that Ahmadinejad wanted to deflect attention from its nuclear ambitions by encouraging Hezbollah to spark an incident with Israel.¹²

In the meantime, despite facing the possibility of sanctions from the UN Security Council, Iran defiantly continues with its enrichment program. In an interview with Time Magazine earlier this year, Ali Larijani, Iran's Foreign Policy Chief and top nuclear negotiator stated categorically that the country won't suspend its research program as a bargaining step in negotiations with other countries over its nuclear program and that the threat of sanctions will have no influence.¹³ Ahmadinejad gambles that China and Russia will not cast a vote for sanctions because of their deep economic ties with Iran. So far, his gamble has paid off.

However, the stakes are getting higher. Pulitzer prize winning journalist, Seymour Hirsch, in a recent article in the New Yorker magazine, reports that the Bush Administration, while publicly advocating diplomacy in order to stop Iran from pursuing a nuclear weapon, has increased clandestine activities inside Iran and intensified planning for a possible major air attack¹⁴. While experts agree that such a strike would be extremely risky for the US and could inflame US problems in the Muslim world, Bush has stated categorically

¹¹ International Crisis Group, August 24, 2006 review of A New Middle East, by Robert Mailey, in the New York Review of Books, September 21, 2006

¹² The Iranian Calculus, Phillip H. Gordon, Senior Fellow, Foreign Policy Studies and Kenneth M. Pollack, Director of Research, Saban Center for Middle East Policy, The Brookings Institution, article as appeared in the Wall Street Journal, August 3, 2006.

¹³ Time Magazine interview, February 27, 2006.

¹⁴ New Yorker Magazine, The Annals of National Security, The Iran Plans, April 17, 2006.

that the US would use military might to protect Israel.¹⁵ This talk has reportedly stoked fears in Tehran that a US air assault on its nuclear facilities, even regime change, are moving to the top of the US agenda.

Although Iran has “volunteered” for serious talks over its nuclear plans, it has thus far refused all incentives to stop enrichment. On September 1, the New York Times reported that inspectors discovered new traces of highly enriched uranium at an Iranian facility.¹⁶ It appears to be just a matter of time before Iran will have the full capability to produce a viable nuclear weapon. Israel, clearly, is in the direct line of fire and Ahmadinejad shows no sign of softening his stated desire to “wipe Israel off of the map”. Without a resolution, the risk to Israel and the west remains serious.

¹⁵ US tries to dampen talk of Iran strike, Nedra Pickler, AP writer for Boston.com news, April 9. 2006.

¹⁶ Highly enriched uranium is found at Iranian Plant, New York Times, September 1, 2006., <http://select.nytimes.com/search/restricted/article?res=F00717F9355A0C728CDDA00894DE404482>

WORLD CRISIS SUMMARY REPORT: Key areas of world concern in order of pressing priority are:

Darfur and Chad, Iran, North Korea, Guinea, Zimbabwe, Cote D'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Burma and Nepal (resolution of conflict).
Nepal – resolution of conflict

Off the list from last quarter are Uganda, Saudi Arabia, Uzbekistan and Egypt. These countries have been omitted here, not because they are no longer committing human rights abuses, but because there was no significant information to add in the last three months.

1. Darfur. For the update on Darfur, please refer to the report prepared by Honey Kessler Amado.

1a. CHAD: As of July, Eric Reeves reports that Khartoum is attempting to punish Denby's Chadian government for its support of Darfur's rebels, and to convince the Chadian military and political officials to end the aid. To this end, Khartoum has taken two steps: First they are backing an opposing group, the United Front for Change, a loose coalition of forces that are seeking to overthrow Denby's government. Second, they have unleashed the Janjaweed proxies against the civilians in Chad, primarily the non-Arab groups that live along the border. Denby has been forced to redeploy his own forces to the larger towns, leaving the rural areas almost without security. UNHCR has reported that the Janjaweed attacks against the civilians have become more deadly in the last several months, and there is no sign that they will stop.

The resulting chaos in Chad has left more than 350,000 civilians in Chad vulnerable, including Darfuri refugees who have crossed the border during the past three years as well as internally displaced Chadians. As in Darfur, it is the violence that is causing humanitarian groups to withdraw from the region, which raises the likelihood that enormous numbers of civilians, stranded without food or medical care at the height of the rainy season will die.

Meanwhile, the Janjaweed in eastern Chad are using areas of Chad where they establish control to stage new attacks in Darfur. As with Darfur, the international community has been paralyzed. Response is desperately needed.

2. IRAN

See report on Hezbollah and Iran.

In addition to presenting an imminent danger to Israel, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has been taking strong measures which increasingly violate basic freedoms in his own country. Human Rights Watch reports the deaths of two political prisoners in five weeks time. Last month, the government has also outlawed the Center for Defense of Human Rights (CDHR) an NGO co-founded by 2003 Nobel Peace Laureate Sherin Ebadi. The CDHR has provided pro-bono legal counsel to hundreds of dissidents, journalists and students facing prosecution for exercising fundamental freedoms, such as peacefully protesting against or criticizing government policies. Lawyers from the CDHR have taken the lead in representing many high-profile victims of human rights abuses.

Finally, in a move last week toward a more fundamentalist Islamist theocracy, Ahmadinejad called for the ouster of liberal and secular professors from the country's universities.

Since his election last August, Ahmadinejad has been replacing pragmatic veterans in the government with former military commanders and inexperienced religious hard-liners. His aim appears to be to install a new generation of rulers who will revive the fundamentalist goals pursued in the 1980s under the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, father of the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran.

3. NORTH KOREA

North Korea remains one of the most repressive governments in the world, in which individual rights are greatly curtailed, dissent against the government or its leaders is illegal; citizens must obtain permission before legally traveling or leaving their province. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has officially acknowledged the widespread human rights violations that regularly occur in North Korea, including torture and other degrading treatment, public executions, extrajudicial and arbitrary detention, the absence of due process and rule of law, imposition of the death penalty for political reasons, the existence of a large number of prison camps and extensive use of forced labor.

In the last three months, however, two issues stand out as critical. 1) the potential for a major famine in the area, with actions taken by the government to ensure that sufficient food is not available to those who are

not considered "priority", and 2) the specter of a North Korea in possession of a nuclear weapon.

Report: Human Rights Watch: Food Crisis: In October 2005, North Korea reversed some of its most applauded economic reforms by banning the private buying and selling of grain, the main source of nutrition for most North Koreans. The government asked the World Food Program, which had been feeding millions of the nation's most vulnerable people for a decade, to end emergency food aid. The agency believes the request is premature, and proposed a new, considerably smaller aid package. The North Korean government had not formally accepted the offer as of the end of April.

Forcing the World Food Program to radically reduce its food shipments and monitoring, and making it illegal for ordinary North Koreans to buy and sell grain, is a recipe for disaster

North Korea has a long history of providing food on a priority basis, feeding the preferred class, such as Workers' Party members and high-ranking military, intelligence and police officers, while discriminating against the so-called hostile class. If past patterns hold true this year, the government will first send food to "war-preparation storage" and preferred citizens, and only then to the general, leaving many North Koreans hungry.

Report: International Crisis Group: Potential for nuclear capability: North Korea's efforts to develop nuclear weapons have presented North East Asia, the United States and indeed the whole international community with an extraordinarily serious security challenge. In 2003 it became the first country to pull out of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Diplomacy and limited engagement have been the primary tools used to deal with North Korea to date but success has been limited. Alternative policy options are isolation and containment and a military strike.

North Korea's precipitous internal situation compounds the international threat of a nuclear North Korea. Economic or political collapse would place a heavily militarized failed state on the border of China and South Korea. An outflow of millions of refugees into China would destabilize this important economic region and be met with sharp resistance.

4. GUINEA

Report August 22, 2006: Human Rights Watch: Guinean police and other government security forces routinely torture, assault, rob and sometimes even murder the citizens they are entrusted to protect. Police brutally torture men and boys held in police custody. The victims are individuals suspected of common crimes as well as those perceived to be

government opponents. Once transferred from police custody to prison, many are left to languish for years awaiting trial in cramped, dimly lit cells where they face hunger, disease and sometimes death.

These abuses are occurring in Guinea during a time of uncertainty tied to economic turmoil and impending political transition. Guinea's economy is in a tailspin; its president, Lansana Conté, is rumored to be gravely ill; and its military is believed to be deeply divided.

Report: International Crisis Group: Guinea is at risk of becoming West Africa's next failed state. President Lansana Conté's poor health and the resulting political uncertainty are driving the country towards anarchy as demonstrated by a series of melodramatic cabinet reshuffles in April and June 2006. Should Conté fail to serve his full term (until 2010) there is an increasing likelihood that the constitutional directives for succession will be ignored and a military coup will occur.

In an unprecedented move, the trade unions launched two general strikes in February and June 2006 which crippled the country, exposed the popular discontent and the incapacity of the current government to provide durable solutions to the mismanagement of this mineral-rich country. The situation in Guinea remains alarming and a crisis of succession could be disastrous both for the Guineans and for rest of the region.

5. ZIMBABWE

Report August 24: International Crisis Group: The political and economic crises in Zimbabwe are worsening at an alarming rate. The policies, corruption and repressive governance of President Robert Mugabe and his ruling ZANU-PF party are directly responsible for the severe economic slide, growing public discontent and international isolation of the country. In April 2006, inflation officially topped 1,000 per cent, helped by the decision to print \$230 million worth of Zimbabwean currency to pay international debts and sustain operations. Unemployment is over 85 per cent, poverty over 90 per cent, and foreign reserves are almost depleted. Over four million persons are in desperate need of food. HIV/AIDS and malnutrition kill thousands every month. The government-sponsored 2005 "Operation Murambatsvina" to clear urban slums forcibly deprived more than 18 per cent of the population of homes or livelihoods and badly damaged the informal sector, the lifeline for many urban poor.

6. COTE D'IVOIRE

Report September 7, 2006: International Crisis Group: The international community must remain very actively engaged in Côte d'Ivoire, and implement a range of new measures, if the country is to avoid an eventual bloodbath. As in 2005, this year's UN deadline for a presidential election, 31 October 2006, will be missed. Without new rules to govern the

post-October period or the necessary pressure on the political leaders who attempt to block “clean” elections, no transitional Ivorian government will be able to organize a presidential poll in the foreseeable future. Urgent measures should be implemented, including granting Prime Minister Banny extraordinary executive power for a six-month period.

7. DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Report July 2006: International Crisis Group: The Democratic Republic of Congo’s strides toward peace could prove short-lived if the government and donors do not increase efforts to create a transparent and accountable government. State institutions such as parliament, courts, the army and the civil service remain weak and corrupt. The national elections scheduled for 30 July 2006 risk creating a large class of disenfranchised politicians and former warlords tempted to take advantage of state weakness and launch new insurgencies. Donors must initiate new programs in support of good governance that include more funding to strengthen state institutions (in particular parliament and the various auditing bodies), as well as apply more political pressure to make sure reforms are implemented.

These governance problems have an immediate impact on the humanitarian situation. Unpaid soldiers harass and intimidate civilians. Factions within the army and government continue to fight over mines and control of border crossings. The displaced civilians have almost no health services to fall back on, and 1,000 or more die daily as a result.

August 28, 2006: While the July 30 election went peacefully, the August 20 announcement that Kabila fell short of the 50 percent needed to avoid the runoff provoked fighting between army soldiers loyal to Kabila and those aligned with his opponent, Bemba. Kabila’s loyalists, members of his red beret wearing special presidential guard used tanks and heavy machine guns against Bemba’s army fighters, who battled back with rocket-propelled grenades and machine guns. The fighters only returned to barracks after the UN brokered a cease fire and Kabila and Bemba ordered the battles to stop. In the end, 31 people were killed – the worst violence since the end of the war was negotiated in 2002. The UN says that the humanitarian crisis there is among the world’s worst. After years of wars and corrupt, dictatorial rule, many Congolese wonder if a vote is worth the risk of a return to all-out fighting. The runoff election is set for October 29---**MSNBC.COM, AUGUST 28, 2006**

8. BURMA

Report: May 3, 2006 Human Rights Watch: The U.N. Security Council must urgently respond to Burmese army attacks on ethnic Karen civilians that have displaced more than 10,000 villagers since November. Civilians seeking refuge in Thailand have been placed at grave risk by landmines planted by the Burmese army along the border.

Human Rights Watch has repeatedly urged the U.N. Security Council to put Burma on its formal agenda.

“China and Russia need to stop blocking action on Burma by the Security Council, as that gives a green light to the military government’s scorched earth policy.

Human Rights Watch reiterated its call for the United Nations to appoint a commission of inquiry to investigate possible war crimes and crimes against humanity committed since the Burmese military government took power in 1988.

9. NEPAL

King Gyanendra’s capitulation on 24 April 2006 in the face of a mass movement marked a victory for democracy in Nepal and, with a ceasefire between the new government and the Maoists now in place, the start of a serious peace process. Forced to acknowledge the “spirit of the people’s movement”, Gyanendra accepted popular sovereignty, reinstated parliament and invited the mainstream seven-party alliance to implement its roadmap – including election of a constituent assembly to rewrite the constitution in line with the parties’ five-month-old agreement with the Maoists. Real concerns remain about the shape of a final settlement, and the commitment of all parties to seeing it through. The international community must remain actively engaged to help safeguard this difficult transition.—International Crisis Group.