



## WORLD IN CRISIS

4 PROMINENT CANADIANS DISCUSS  
THE MAIN CHALLENGES OF OUR TIME

# The Upstream Journal

*Canadian perspectives on global justice*

CANADA - WHY NO SUPPORT FOR U.N.  
INITIATIVE ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL,  
CULTURAL RIGHTS?

THE WEST AFRICA  
ORPHANAGE BUSINESS

"THE WORST" - ETHIOPIA STARTS  
ANOTHER CONTENTIOUS DAM

UZBEKISTAN - REPRESSION  
BECOMES ROUTINE

RIGHTS DEFENDERS ASSASSINATED  
IN CHECHNYA & THE PHILIPPINES

CANADIAN GOVERNMENT CUTS  
NGO AID PROGRAMS

CANADA'S RIGHTS  
AGENCY IN CRISIS



Woman mourns the death of her young child after a hurricane hit the coastal area of Bagerhat in south-western Bangladesh. Climate change is a cause of increasing storm intensity, and low, flat coastal areas are especially vulnerable. Photo: Tanvir Ahmed

## *In this issue:*

### **The orphanage business**

*Children's welfare comes second to profit* 5

### **The killing of rights defenders**

*Chechnya* 8

*The Philippines*

### **No independent thought allowed** 11

*Uzbekistan after Andijan*

### **"World in Crisis"** 16

**The environment, poverty, conflict, resource scarcity  
- is there hope for the future?**

**We get the opinions of:**

*Paul Martin*

*Elizabeth May*

*George Stroumboulopoulos*

*William Watson*

### **Ethiopia dam project stirs local opposition** 25

*Gets African Development Bank financing,  
but World Bank hesitates*

### **Eye on Ottawa** 27

*Why Canada doesn't support the latest UN  
move to strengthen economic, social and  
cultural rights*

*The Canadian government attack on KAIROS  
and other NGOs* 30

*Rights centre in crisis* 32

### **Ernie Schibli's Opinion - Canada's reluctance to condemn the Honduras coup** 34



Cover: Ruqia Aroo, 80, carries her malnourished grandson near the carcasses of her dead herd of cattle, 1100 kms south east of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Photo by George Mulala/IRIN

**Notice: Change to publishing schedule.** The Upstream Journal will now be published 4 times a year.

Our thanks to our volunteer and intern writers, and to the photographers who contributed their work. For information on submitting articles or other material, contact the editor.

The Upstream Journal is printed on 100% recycled paper with a high post-consumer content.





*Dear reader,*

**THIS ISSUE IS THE FIRST** to be available at retailers across Canada, so it's pretty exciting for us. In one form or another, we've been around for 23 years, and now it's time to get a bit ambitious and greet Canadians outside our Montreal base. And what a great bunch of stories we have for this issue! Starting out with our feature - the thinking of four prominent Canadians on the challenges we face as a global community. (Me, I don't think we're doing too well on any front, let alone all together. But I haven't given up hope, of course.) And check out the other stories about struggles for rights around the world.

In the "Eye on Ottawa" section, for example, you'll notice that, in his response on the role of Canadians in the world, Paul Martin spoke about how he met NGOs every time he went to a World Bank and IMF meeting. A true fact. I know, because I was at those meetings too, from their humble beginnings in his hotel suite in Washington, with just a handful of NGOs and government people taking part, to later meetings with dozens of participants in a conference room in Ottawa.

The meetings expanded in size, but not in depth. Eventually, the tradition of government-NGO meetings that we started with Martin was ended by the current finance finister more than a year ago.

This government's overall reluctance to engage in a positive way with advocacy NGOs might be one reason the tradition ended, but it's also true that the discussions had, over time, lost much of their relevance. Why would that happen? In large part, it is because Canadian NGOs are poorly equipped to provide informed, critical opinions on global economic policies.

I recall talking to an official at CIDA who agreed that there is lack of capacity. He said he thought it was CIDA's fault. He said the agency's refusal to support NGOs that did not fall in line with CIDA thinking resulted in an NGO community that was no longer capable of providing new insights and challenges at the global policy level.

Most Canadian NGOs rely on government funds. (The Social Justice Committee, the publisher of the *Upstream Journal*, does not. Thus it is independent but financially... fragile.) There is precious little funding from private foundations - unlike in the US - and individual donations are largely for groups that do emergency relief and basic development project work that focuses on health and education outcomes.

So the recent moves by the federal government that you'll read about in the "Eye on Ottawa" section of this issue have really made NGOs nervous about doing any advocacy work whatsoever. I've been told some NGOs have even scrubbed their websites clean of the very word "advocacy."

Until the government gets bold and honest enough to fund NGOs without wanting to gut them of having anything to say, the situation will just get worse. It looks as if the ability of Canadian NGOs to participate meaningfully in global policy discussions, weak as it is, will almost vanish entirely.

Which makes it all the more important to encourage individual Canadians to be informed and engaged themselves. And that's why it's great to have readers like you, who don't need convincing to take part in trying to change the world for the better.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Derek MacCuish".

Derek MacCuish    1-514-933-6797    [editor@upstreamjournal.org](mailto:editor@upstreamjournal.org)



# For the benefit of children? Orphanage corruption in Ghana

---

BY JULIA PYPER

---

**W**hile volunteering in Ghana, 22-year-old Jenna Macdonald from Tiverton, Ontario, was asked to buy 250 chickens and a coop for the children of Good Shepherd Orphanage. She had already paid an \$800 “volunteer fee” and seen the orphanage administration refuse to pay fifty Ghana cedis (\$37 Cdn) for a young staff member’s malaria treatment, which resulted in his death.

“When I met with the orphanage owner, Bishop Kwaku Addei, he wanted me to give him \$350 cash for the coop. I was apprehensive about that, but it always seemed to be money first and action later in Ghana.”

Even so, Jenna continued to organize the construction of the chicken coop, hoping to establish a healthy and sustainable food source for the orphans.

“The chicken farmer set up a bank transfer from a volunteer’s bank account to the orphanage so that they could pay for the coop, but months later there was still no word on the chickens,” Jenna said. “It felt like the only reason they wanted us at the orphanage was for our money. They see us as a piggy bank, which is hard to take because we’re there to help with the kids.”

The Good Shepherd Orphanage founder and

director is Kwaku Addei, a bishop in the Great Word of God Church, which he also founded. He denies that the orphanage misuses volunteer funds and maintains that volunteers are generally happy with their experience.

“There are good volunteers who come to the orphanage without any problems,” he said. “And there are some who only come here to criticize the work we are doing. Nobody gives me money for the upkeep of the children. Only some individuals and churches donate to support the children. We pay electricity bills, teachers, and internet bills without any volunteer contributions. Young volunteers should not condemn what we are doing here.”

However, Ian Nowosad is another volunteer like Jenna, who is concerned about mishandling of volunteers’ donations.

While he was at Good Shepherd Orphanage, he gave the children’s primary caregiver, “Mama,” an extra five dollars every day so that she could buy them nutritious food. Ian worked at the orphanage for over six weeks and he never saw the kids’ meals improve. It eventually became clear that Mama was pocketing the money.

“It really seems like the staff take our donations and use the money to better their own lifestyles,” Jenna said. “The kids are crammed into small dor-

*“Material gain and personal gain override the best interest of the child.”*

mitories while the orphanage administrators have well furnished houses on the property.”

Orphanage corruption has become a primary focus for some NGOs. “Material gain and personal gain override the best interest of the child,” said the Projects Director of Orphan Aid Africa, Richard Adabrah-Klu. “A majority of orphanages are seen as a source of livelihood rather than child care centers.”

“Running an orphanage in Ghana has become a business enterprise, a highly lucrative and profitable venture,” UNICEF child specialist, Eric Okrah, said in an interview with the United Nation’s Integrated Regional Information Networks. “Children’s welfare at these orphanages has

become secondary to the profit motive.”

“Institutions for children are least appropriate for the development of the child,” said Joachim Theis, UNICEF’s West and Central Africa Regional Chief of Child Protection. “And they may be places where serious child abuse is taking place.”

UNICEF is promoting reform that would see the institutionalization of children as a last resort in order to reduce the possibility of child exploitation.

The levels of child abuse have at times been severe. In 2006 the Domestic Violence Victims Support Unit of the Ghanaian Police Service reported 345 rape cases and 1427 reports of defilement of children.



## ***Emmanuel’s Story***

As a young Canadian with an interest in international development and a passion for travel, I jumped at the chance to volunteer in Ghana in the summer of 2009. I admit that part of me wanted to go and make a difference, but I also realized that I was going to be a guest, a spectator, in this African country. I believe that I had a positive impact on the children at Good Shepherd Orphanage. Working with them was both eye opening and incredibly fun. Emmanuel’s story, however, overshadowed the experience.

I met Emmanuel when I volunteered at the Good Shepherd Orphanage International School. A twenty-one year old from Togo, he taught French at the orphanage. He had only been working in Ghana for nine months when he contracted malaria. He died less than a week later.

The orphanage staff members did not take Emmanuel to the hospital when he started to show symptoms of malaria. Only once our group of Canadian volunteers learned of his illness and demanded they take him to the hospital, along with a volunteer who also needed medical testing, did he finally go. At the hospital the doctor tried to draw blood from Emmanuel, but it was nearly impossible because the disease had made him severely anaemic.

The doctor advised the pastor who accompanied us to the hospital that Emmanuel needed a blood transfusion. When we heard about the possibility of a transfusion we had no idea how necessary it was.

We were asked for fifty Ghana cedis (\$37) to pay for the treatment, but with no way to withdraw money and having paid for the pastor’s lunch, gas, oil change, and the hospital fees, we simply did not have the funds available to pay at that time. Unfortunately the hospital required payment before treatment. The pastor refused, and Emmanuel did not get the transfusion.

Hours later, the pastor notified us volunteers that Emmanuel had taken a turn for the worst. He said that if we covered the cost, he would go to the hospital and ensure that Emmanuel received the transfusion. We agreed, but insisted he take us to the hospital with him.

Upon arriving we were shocked to find Emmanuel dead. We were then horrified when the pastor slapped the corpse on the stomach and said, “That’s it. He’s dead.”

- Julia Pyper

Upon investigating allegations of abuse at the Peace and Love Orphanage, authorities found that 27 of the 32 children living there were not orphans. The discovery is consistent with a study conducted by the Social Welfare Department of Ghana in January 2009, which revealed that 90 percent of the approximately 4,500 children in Ghanaian orphanages have one or both parents. This is because some African families, particularly those in deprived rural communities, are offered money for their children, and are promised that the orphanage will cover the cost of their children's education.

"Orphanage staff exploit the poverty and ignorance of parents," said Bright Appiah, director of Child Rights International, a Ghanaian NGO. In an interview with IRIN, Appiah claimed that orphanage administrations take advantage of families seeking better education or work opportunities by encouraging them to leave their children in institutional care. Thus, orphanages are using the needy and their children in order to make a profit. Appiah believes that as little as 30 percent of the funding Ghanaian orphanages receive is actually spent on childcare.

The Ghanaian government's 2008 report on "The Care Reform Initiative for Orphans and Vulnerable Children" states, "a good number of these homes and orphanages are poorly run and more often do not comply with either national or international standards and requirements."

The report also cites studies that show that "children raised in institutions often have psychological problems of insecurity and emotional instability due to the detachment from a consistent close care giver."

The government of Ghana launched the Care Reform Initiative in 2006. Working with groups like Orphan Aid Africa, Child Rights International, and UNICEF, its purpose is to prevent children from entering orphanages, resettle the children currently in orphanages in family contexts, and support the Department of Social Welfare monitoring of children without suitable parental care.

"It is widely perceived that orphanages provide food and humanitarian services without considering the harm they do to children," said Orphan Aid Africa's, Richard Adabrah-Klu. "They draw a

lot of sympathy from the donor community and public in general. But this is only because people are unaware of the harms that these orphanages pose to the future of these children."

***"A good number of these homes and orphanages are poorly run and more often do not comply with either national or international standards and requirements."***

*Julia Pyper is a student and writer who has published articles in university newspapers and in fashion, outdoor and cultural magazines. She is looking forward to more work involving interna-*

*tional development and journalism.*

More info

Orphan Aid Africa: [www.oafrica.org](http://www.oafrica.org)

Good Shepherd Orphanage:

[www.good-shepherd-orphanage-ghana.de](http://www.good-shepherd-orphanage-ghana.de)



Author Julia Pyper with Diana, an orphan at the Good Shepherd Orphanage. Photos courtesy of Julia Pyper.

# Assassinating the rights defenders

## Chechnya



---

BY SHAZIA KHAN

---

**I**n the early morning of July 15, 2009, leading human rights activist Natalia Estemirova was abducted from her home in Gronzy, Chechnya. Several witnesses heard her scream “I’m being kidnapped” as she was pushed into a car. Her body was found along a roadside several hours later with multiple gunshot wounds. A member of the Human Rights Memorial Group, Estemirova was an award-winning activist known

for investigating and reporting extrajudicial killings, abductions, disappearances and torture of Chechen civilians. At the time of her death, she was investigating a series of house burnings allegedly carried out by government-backed militia. Estemirova worked under a great amount of risk when she openly blamed local Chechen authorities and the president of Chechnya, Ramzan Kadyrov, for the environment of lawlessness and violence. She had investigated and reported crimes allegedly committed by authorities under President Kadyrov’s command.

Along with Estemirova, four other human rights activists who investigated human rights violations in Chechnya were killed in the past year. Human rights lawyer Stanislav Markelov, human rights journalist Anastasia Baburova, and charity workers Zarema Sadulayeva and Alik Dzhabrailov were all shot to death.

President Kadyrov responded to Estemirova’s claims in an interview with Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty.

“Those human rights activists are lawyers. If they say Kadyrov and his people are to blame let them prove it,” he said. “Natalia Estemirova never had any honor, dignity or shame and I still appointed her head of the civil society advisory commission. She would always say stupid things”.



Natalia Estemirova “If you are a true human rights activist, you are constantly violating the unwritten laws created by the Russian government.”



I asked Rachel Denber, Director of the Europe and Central Asia Division of the international NGO Human Rights Watch, about the impact of Estemirova's murder.

"The murder of human rights activists is a strong signal of intimidation to people who, like Natalia, document human rights abuses by local police and security forces," she said.

Following Estemirova's murder, the Human Rights Memorial closed down and stopped its activities in the region due to the lack of protection for the human rights defenders and because of a lawsuit filed by Kadyrov against its chairman, Oleg Orlov, who released a statement days after the assassination of Estemirova claiming Kadyrov was responsible.

"The authorities of the Chechen Republic and President Kadyrov, who once directly threatened her and regarded her as an enemy, are to be blamed for her murder," he said. President Kadyrov denied having any involvement in Estemirova's murder, and filed a lawsuit against Orlov and the Memorial for \$330,000 for damages to his "honour and dignity." Kadyrov won the defamation case, and the judge fined the Memorial 50,000 rubles (\$1, 770 CDN) and Orlov 20,000 rubles (\$710 CDN).

The lawsuit against the Memorial sparked criticisms from international human rights organizations like Human Rights Watch, already concerned about whether the investigation into Estemirova's assassination was being carried out efficiently.

"The case against Oleg Orlov distracts from the main concern which should be to find the people who are responsible for Natalia's murder in a completely thorough and independent investigation," Rachel Denber said. "There has to be a political will to examine all possible versions of who could have been responsible for the murder. It's impossible to exclude some level of official involvement". Delphine Reculeau, Coordinator of the World Organization Against Torture, agrees.

"What President Kadyrov is doing with Mr. Oleg is discouraging human rights defenders from pursuing their activities and getting to the truth in the case of Ms. Estemirova's murder. Some defenders have already fled the region because they fear for the lives of their families."

Anoush Begoyan, Europe Program Officer of the human rights organization Article 19, is also concerned.

"The only voice coming out of Chechnya is the

voice of the human rights defenders and if they are silenced, then there is a real problem of having any information of what is going on in that region. The prompt and objective investigation of the crimes that were committed, and the persecution of instigators as well as implementers, should be the first step."

Those responsible for the murders of rights activists have yet to be found. The 2006 assassination of journalist and human rights defender Anna Politkovskaya, for example, remains unsolved.

Human rights organizations are closing their doors and journalists are fleeing the area, but worldwide attention may prove to be a step towards putting an end to the violence against human rights activists. In December, several international rights organizations announced their support of a monitoring mission in Chechnya which would include Memorial.

"The US and Canada can raise the issue, and the need to protect human defenders in Chechnya and other parts of the Northern Caucasus, at the highest levels in their bilateral and multilateral relationships with Russia," since Chechnya is a part of the Russian Federation, Denber said.



Chechnyan President Ramzan Kadyrov. "I know for sure who is responsible for the killing of Natalia Estemirova. We all know that man. It is Ramzan Kadyrov, president of Chechen Republic. Ramzan threatened Natalia, insulted her, believed her to be his personal enemy. We don't know whether it was Ramzan himself who ordered to kill Natalia or his close associates did it to please the ruling authority. And President Medvedev seems satisfied to have a murderer as a head of one of Russia's republics." - Oleg Orlov, head of Memorial's Board, who was also kidnapped in 2007

Human Rights Watch, Article 19, Amnesty International and other human rights groups are asking the president of Russia, Dmitry Medvedev, to make certain that there are thorough and independent investigations into the assassinations of Estemirova and the other human rights activists.

*Shazia Khan is a graduate of McGill University, where she studied sociology and psychology. She is interested in international human rights and women's rights and intends to pursue a career in law.*

**The Russian Federation representative to Canada:**

Ambassador Georgiy Mamedov  
285 Charlotte Street  
Ottawa ON K1N 8L5  
Email [rusemb@rogers.com](mailto:rusemb@rogers.com)

## **Targetted killings make Russia among most dangerous places for journalists**

In 2009 there were six such murders. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, "Russia is a more dangerous place now than it was during the Cold War. Only Iraq and Algeria outrank Russia on the list of most life-threatening countries for the press. Seventeen journalists have been murdered in Russia since 2000. In only one case have the killers been punished."

"Governments have long used murder to silence human rights criticism. But instead of acting openly, abusers today tend to hide behind the work of "unknown assailants" whose killing is then conveniently ignored by national justice institutions.

In 2009, Russia was at the forefront of murderous retaliation against human rights defenders. Several of the victims had in common their reporting on arbitrary detention, torture, and summary execution committed in the war-torn republic of Chechnya by forces under the de facto control of Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov. Russian authorities have fostered a culture of impunity for abuse that cannot but have emboldened the authors of these killings."

*- Kenneth Roth, executive director of Human Rights Watch*

## **Violence in Chechnya continues**

The bullet-riddled bodies of a Chechen activist and her husband were found in the trunk of their car in Grozny less than a month after rights activist Nataliya Estemirova was kidnapped and killed. Zarema Sadulayeva and her husband, Alik Dzhabrailov were abducted in August from the office of her group, Save the Generation, which helps victims of the armed conflicts in Chechnya, particularly disabled children.

Meanwhile, in neighbouring Dagestan, a well-known investigative journalist was killed. Abdulmalik Akhmedilov, deputy editor of the daily Avar-language paper "Hakikat" (The Truth) and chief editor of the political monthly "Sogratl," was shot in his car on 11 August on the outskirts of Dagestan's capital, Makhachkala.

These killings followed the murder of Stanislav Markelov, a prominent human rights lawyer involved in Chechnya cases, in January.

In December the European Parliament awarded Memorial the 2009 Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought, given to "individuals or international organisations who - like Sakharov - have distinguished themselves in the struggle for human rights."

## **Keep the Upstream Journal coming - right to your mailbox**

Your subscription, for only \$12, gets you "Canadian perspectives on global justice" delivered to you four times a year.

Add on a tax-deductible donation to the Social Justice Committee, and you support the *Upstream Journal* and all our other education and advocacy programs.

It's easy. Use Visa, Mastercard or cheque, by phone, mail or on-line.

514-933-6797

[www.upstreamjournal.org](http://www.upstreamjournal.org)

## Assassinating the rights defenders

# The Philippines

---

BY YURIKO SALCEDO

---

**O**n July 31, 2006, Dr. Constancio Claver and his wife, Alice, were taking their daughter to school when two masked men wielding high-powered rifles confronted them. He and his wife were shot thirteen times. Fortunately their seven-year-old daughter only suffered a scratch on the head, but his wife later died on the operating table of seven gunshot wounds.

A surgeon, he was no longer able to work in hospitals and clinics for security reasons following the incident. He had to leave his children under the care of his relatives, and moved from one place to another to remain hidden from the attackers. Even so, he managed to continue working for the people's rights organizations in which he was a member.

Dr. Claver's experience is not uncommon in the Philippines. Two other political dissidents were similarly attacked the same day. Claver estimates that in the five-year period between the election of President Arroyo and the attempt on his life, there were 835 similar incidences of attacks on activists and 196 cases of disappearances in the country. The exact number is unknown; almost all the victims were members or leaders of people's organizations, non-governmental and legal organizations, and most of the crimes remain unsolved.

Human rights organizations monitoring the situation have seen the list of victims continue to grow. Petty criminals, drug dealers, and street children are also targeted by death squads, and have been killed by the hundreds.

As a response to public concern, the government formed the Melo Commission in 2006 to investigate the killings. The commission soon lost its credibility because it mainly interviewed high-ranking military officials. Even so, Judge Melo concluded that responsibility for the crimes lay with a few corrupt members of the military.

Philip Alston, UN Special Rapporteur on



Dr. Constancio Claver fled the Philippines after an assassination attempt in which his wife was shot to death.

extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, was invited by the government to do more investigation. He concluded that there is an organized force behind the killings, including government-sponsored killing of members of civil society groups.

He made a follow-up report in 2009 that concluded that the government's response to the killings continues to be symbolic and without substance, although when contacted for this article he did point out that the number of killings overall dropped by two-thirds since his first report.

Even so, Alston's report states that "forced disappearances and illegal detentions remain all too

common, as does the bringing of trumped up charges against Filipino activists and human rights abuse victims.”

One of those activists is Axel Pinpin, a political poet who has been imprisoned for speaking out against the government through his writing.

“The government and military are involved in the human rights violations, they are indeed,” Pinpin told me. “I should know, being a victim myself.”



Axel Pinpin, poet, activist and agriculturist, reading from *Tungmaang Matatabil*, a collection of poems written over the 2-year period he was imprisoned.

Pinpin grew up in the 1980's in a political setting that left him skeptical of the system. When he joined the peasant movement and became a community organizer, his poetry took on a social-realism with a blend of eroticism, later branded as “anarcho-romantic” by poet and literary scholar Gelacio Guillermo. During 28 months incarceration, from April 2006 to August 2008, he wrote volumes of poetry which were published after his

release.

“The masses will be bringing change, not some icon or individual. And I am not being romantic at all, although I realize that it is the twenty-first century and the Philippines is still in a semi-feudal/feudal condition. We have to go back to the roots, and the struggle for a genuine agrarian reform.” Pinpin works with the Farmers' Confederation in Cavite, focusing on agrarian activism and aspects of government reform, such as the need for an anti-torture law.

“Being an agriculturist, I always dream of a modern-agricultural Philippines. I was with the Department of Science & Technology before I joined the movement. One of my jobs as an agricultural scientist was to conduct extension and techno-transfer services to the countryside. In one unforgettable session, one of the farmers posed a question that is still etched in my mind to this day: Sir, can your technology gave us an assurance that our land will not be taken away from us by landlords or developers? Agricultural reform means dealing with government corruption, which cannot be stopped unless an overhaul in the system happens.”

*Yuriko Salcedo has a Bachelor's degree in Political Science from Concordia University.*

“Since 2001, when President Arroyo took office, hundreds of left-wing political party members, human rights activists, journalists, and outspoken clergy have been killed or forcibly disappeared, but only six cases have been successfully prosecuted. Although the military has been implicated in many of the crimes, none of the 11 persons convicted in these cases were active military personnel at the time of the killing. The killings surged after Arroyo's declaration in June 2006 of an “all-out war” against the communist New People's Army insurgency.

The Arroyo administration has not sufficiently investigated numerous extrajudicial killings in which the military has been implicated. It has yet to take strong action against local government-backed “death squads” in Davao City and elsewhere, and has tolerated unnecessary delays in investigations into these killings.”

*- Human Rights Watch, Nov. 2009*

## *Uzbekistan after Andijan*

# Repression and the façade of communal solidarity

---

BY CHRISTOPHER PENDENZA

---

**“Thousands upon thousands waited in Andijan’s main square, waiting to talk to their president, their leader, and instead the military started shooting,”** Bakhtiyor Nishanov, now a staff member of Freedom House, a human rights NGO based in Washington, no longer feels comfortable returning to Uzbekistan, concerned for his own security and that of his family. In fact, he is one of many human rights defenders from Uzbekistan whose work has forced him to leave the country.

In Andijan, the forth-largest city in the country, what began as a demonstration by some 10,000 people gathered to protest poverty and government corruption on May 13, 2005 quickly descended into violence. Armored military trucks, tanks and security-forces responded, shooting men, women and children alike.

Nishanov says he himself received only bits of ambiguous information the day of the shootings, as the Uzbek government shut down all telecommunications in and out of the city. Officials cited 187 civilian casualties in the aftermath, although eyewitness accounts, rumors of mass human graves in surrounding districts as well as bodies being shipped in armored military vans suggest that the number could be over 1000. The exact number isn’t known, since no investigation was done.

The Uzbek government described the violence as a security-force led intervention to halt



Bordered by Afghanistan to the south and Kazakhstan to the north, Uzbekistan is ranked by Freedom House as among the worst in terms of civil and political liberties in a region already known for its human rights abuses. A product of the post-Soviet break-up in 1991, Uzbekistan has struggled since its independence with religious factionalism, economic inequality and a repressive ruling regime.

an impending terrorist plot. Nishanov does not believe this.

“The bottom line is that the government shot at its own people. We can talk about motives, we can talk about what led to the violence, but this is what happened and there is no way to legitimise that.”

He says that the real tragedy lies in the fact that demonstrators had gathered with the expectation that the president had flown in to give a speech and respond to their grievances.

The main consequence of the violence that day may be on the country’s primary traditional and cultural institution, the mahalla. The mahalla is a centuries-old institution organized around Islamic rituals, designed to promote communal solidarity at the local level and provide an informal level of municipal government. The mahalla is both a cultural and practical necessity, as it can provide for greater access to healthcare, education and basic social services.

---

“Since 1991, many prominent opponents of the government have fled, and others have been arrested. The government severely represses those it suspects of Islamic extremism. Thousands of suspected extremists have been incarcerated since 1992. The exact number remaining in custody is unknown but may be several thousand. A large number of prisoners have died in custody, many from disease and other poor conditions and others from mistreatment and abuse. Political prisoners and suspected extremists are allegedly treated worse than ordinary prisoners. The police force and the intelligence service have used torture as a routine investigation technique.”

– US State Dept. country report



Since 1999, and more notably after the violence in Andijan, the mahallas have cooperated with law enforcement in the repression of individuals and families that the state deems suspect, Nishanov says. Indeed, he argues that that mahallas, once institutions that helped promote Islamic awareness and solidarity, now resemble the spy rings of the former KGB.

"We're talking about a network of institutions watching everyone's lives – they know everything about everyone."

Because of the historical entrenchment of the mahalla in the everyday lives of Uzbeks, Nishanov says, people fail to acknowledge the downward spiral of the mahalla as a guardian of communal solidarity. "Culturally and traditionally, people do not view the mahalla as bad."

For many Uzbeks, it is not the legitimacy of the mahalla that they question, but the legitimacy

of the central government. According to the Uzbek constitution, the president is limited to two seven-year terms, yet President Islam Karimov was reelected for a third term in December, 2007. He controls the executive and legislative branches of government, as well as all major media outlets, newspaper printing facilities and even the opposition political parties.

Despite all of this, Nishanov remains optimistic about the future of the country he grew up in. It is nevertheless a cautious optimism, as Uzbekistan continues to struggle as a result of the political situation and neglect

of human rights.

"Uzbekistan is a country with huge potential; it has a young, well-educated population that is enthusiastic to work hard. But in many ways, the patience of people is starting to run out, just like it ran out in Andijan."

*Christopher Pendenza is a student at McGill University, studying political science and history.*

Political representation to Canada is through  
Ambassador Abdulaziz Kamilov

Embassy of the Republic of Uzbekistan  
1746 Massachusetts Ave. N.W.  
Washington, DC 20036  
E-Mail: [uzbekembassy@covad.net](mailto:uzbekembassy@covad.net)



Bakhtiyor Nishanov now works with the NGO Freedom House in Washington, promoting awareness about human rights abuse across Central Asia.



President Islam Karimov of Uzbekistan being welcomed at NATO. After September 11, 2001, Uzbekistan let U.S. forces use the Khanabad base for operations in Afghanistan. It later ordered them out when the U.S. criticised its actions at Andijon.

"President Karimov likes to call foreign journalists "agitators," even "terrorists," and has done his best to make it impossible for foreign media to operate in the country since 2005. He has been particularly ruthless in his efforts to crush all opposition and eliminate the independent press since a revolt in the eastern city of Andijan in May 2005. He has the brutal habits of a former Soviet functionary and his victims, including critical journalists, either disappear, or are confined to mental hospitals or are arbitrarily thrown in prison."

- Reporters Without Borders

## Arbitrary detention of human rights activists in Uzbekistan

Norboy Kholjigitov and Khabibulla Okpulatov, members of the Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan (HRSU), have both been detained since June 4, 2005. Mr. Kholjigitov, 60, is diabetic. In August 2009, signs of incipient gangrene appeared on his left leg and hand, as well as on his face. He has contracted bronchial asthma, and lost all his teeth. Mr. Okpulatov has lost all of its sensitivity in his left leg, both his eyes are infected, and he now weights only 55 kilos.

Other human rights defenders detained include:

Mr. Gaybulla Jalilov, member of the HRSU Karshi regional branch (sentenced in January, 2010 to nine years' imprisonment);

Mr. Salijon Abdurahmanov, human rights activist and journalist;

Mr. Yusuf Juma, poet, writer and head of the human rights organisation "Sahroi Sherlar" (Lions of the Deserts);

Mr. Mashrab Jumaev, member of "Sahroi Sherlar;"

Mr. Alisher Karamatov, Head of the HRSU branch in the Mirzaabad district;

Mr. Nasim Isaqov, member of the Djizak regional branch of HRSU;

Mr. Jamshid Karimov, member of the Djizak regional branch of HRSU;

Mr. Zafar Rahimov, member of the Kashkadarya regional branch of HRSU;

Mr. Yuldash Rasulev, member of the Kashkadarinskii regional branch of HRSU;

Mr. Agzam Turgunov, Executive Director and Founder of "Mazlum" human rights centre;

Mr. Abdurasul Hudoynazarov, Chairman of the Angren city branch of the "Ezgulik" human rights society, Tashkent region;

Mr. Dilmurod Sayidov, journalist and member of "Ezgulik" human rights society;

Mr. Farkhodkhon Mukhtorov, member of the human rights organisation "Alliance of the Human Rights Advocates of Uzbekistan;"

Mr. Ganikhon Mamatkhanov, member of the Committee for the Protection of Individual Rights as well as of the Independent Human Rights Society in Uzbekistan.

*- The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a joint programme of the International Federation for Human Rights and the World Organisation Against Torture.*

## Coming soon to the Upstream Journal

Advertising!

Now that we are available nationally at retail outlet, the Upstream Journal is inviting interested advertisers.

Contact the editor for rates.  
[editor@upstreamjournal.org](mailto:editor@upstreamjournal.org)

### Please consider supporting the Social Justice Committee as a "sustaining donor."

Making automated monthly donations spreads out the cost for you, provides us a reliable income, and helps us plan more effectively. (And it's tax deductible!)

It's easy. You can:

- Do-it-yourself. Start by clicking on the "donate" button on our web site, [www.sjc-cjs.org](http://www.sjc-cjs.org).

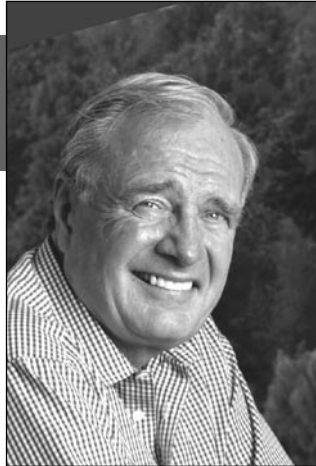
or

- We can set it up with you, using your credit card. Just give us a call at 514-933-6797

*World in crisis*

# four global challenges

# four Canadian responses



Paul Martin



Elizabeth May



George Stroumboulopoulos



William Watson



Julia Pyper

**I'M A YOUNG CANADIAN** who wants to know what the world will look like in 20 years. I want to know the challenges I will face. And I want to know about the major issues in the world today, so I can imagine a better tomorrow.

As naturally curious and self-aware beings, humans have often questioned the future, and have been skeptical about its promise. Shortly after the horrific First World War, Yeats described the apocalypse he felt was close at hand in his poem "The Second Coming": "Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold; mere anarchy is loosed upon the world. The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere the ceremony of innocence is drowned."

Today, there is also a lot to be concerned about. The world is experiencing multiple global crises — a severe economic downturn, persistent global poverty, climate change, war and conflict, and resource depletion. It's difficult not to be discouraged.

But I want to know where the world is failing and where it is succeeding in dealing with these crises. What are the biggest challenges facing our world? What role will Canada play in resolving them? And where is there hope?

I spoke with four prominent Canadians with diverse expertise and asked them. The Honourable Paul Martin, CBC television and radio host George Stroumboulopoulos, economist William Watson, and Green Party leader Elizabeth May graciously shared their views on today's most pressing global issues.



**WILLIAM WATSON** is chairman of the Economics Department at McGill University and writes regular columns for the National Post and Ottawa Citizen. He is the author of *Globalization and the Meaning of Canadian Life*.



**ELIZABETH MAY** is the current leader of the Green Party of Canada. An environmentalist and writer, she was the executive director of the Sierra Club of Canada from 1989 to 2006.



**PAUL MARTIN** was Prime Minister of Canada from 2003 to 2006. A Member of Parliament from 1988 until his retirement in 2008, he was Minister of Finance from 1993 to 2002.



**GEORGE STROUMBOULOPOULOS** is a television and radio personality. Formerly a VJ at MuchMusic television network, he is now host of CBC Television's *The Hour*, a talk show about the world's current events, and *The Strombo Show*, a music program on CBC Radio.



**JULIA PYPER** organised this discussion and posed the questions to the participants. She is a student of political science and English literature. An intern with the *Upstream Journal* in the summer of 2009, she continued her work with the magazine into the winter to complete this project.

#### THE FINANCIAL CRISIS



**What are the implications of the financial crisis for the poorest on the planet? How do you see Canada and the international community responding effectively in terms of aid, trade and other forms of support? Will it be enough?**



There are many people, given that this financial crisis finds its roots in the banking systems in Europe and the United States, who felt that it really would have little or no effect on the developing world. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Major sources of income in many developing countries are remittances from immigrants from the developing world, now working in Europe or the United States and Canada. Those remittances have declined substantially because the first people hit when people lose their jobs in North America and Europe are immigrants. So all of a sudden their major source of money has dried up.

Foreign direct investment has also dried up substantially as companies that are in trouble within the US and Europe have to pull in their horns all of a sudden. And the first place they pull them in is with investments that are made in the third world. Then you have the basic commodities that are produced by a lot of these countries disappearing, mining as an example. So a lot of the industries that were employing people in the third world are gone.

And what is perhaps the most tragic of all, rich countries

started spending money in huge stimulus packages and not a penny went to the third world.

I am very actively involved with Africa, which did get a hearing at the London G20 meeting but it wasn't followed up.

The fact of the matter is that in the part of the world where the people are the most vulnerable and suffer most from this financial crisis, they found their balance sheets and income statements devastated. And as the developed world brought in massive stimulus packages to help their own economy, they simply forgot about the third world.

**What can be done about this? You're involved with the African Development Bank, what role do you see it playing?**

Fortunately, multilateral development banks such as the African Development Bank, which I work with, have been providing some extra capital to deal with the poverty issue. It's by no means sufficient.

I believe that the developing world has got to be given a hearing at the G20 meetings, which are going to be held in Canada in early summer. We've also got to recognize that this recession has hit them harder than anybody else, and that they're going to require a huge investment. I'd like to see a lot of that investment take place in agriculture, and not in the land grabs that we've been hearing about. Rather I'd like to see investment in the improvement of the agricultural base of these countries. We've already come through

one food security crisis and I believe there is another one on the horizon.



When wealthy countries look at their budgets and their economies during a recession, they make cut-backs. And one of the first things that gets cut is aid to other countries.

Another challenge is that when an economy comes out of a recession, and spending starts to be explored, it takes longer for aid to restart. Even aid on an individual level, it takes longer for donations to begin again. People look at their economic situation and think “we can’t afford to give this money,” whether it’s true or otherwise.

Canada has positioned itself quite nicely with regulations and such to prevent the collapse of the banking system. In terms of recession it wasn’t hit that badly. The auto industry was in the news though, because it is obviously important to Canada and certainly Ontario. It was a hard reality dealing with that part of it.

### **Do you think aid is the best way to help the poorest? How else can the poverty issue be approached?**

It’s a complicated question because every situation is different, but aid is important and it may be necessary to get the ball rolling. In terms of whether the recession is an opportunity to decide if aid is the most effective way to help the poor, sure it’s an opportunity, but an opportunity isn’t anything more than just that. It’s an opening. How you fill that opening and what you do with that opportunity is what’s important.

Unfortunately, a lot of the people making the decisions at this moment of opportunity are the same ones we had during previous periods of opportunity, and we’re still in the same boat. So I don’t know how much is likely to change.



It’s not quite true that financial crises are exclusively a rich-country affliction but I suspect that in fact the very poorest on the planet haven’t been much affected by the economic downturn that has so pre-occupied the rest of us for the last 18 months. The very poorest are that way mainly because, almost by definition, they aren’t connected to the world economy. If they were connected, they wouldn’t be quite so poor. “When you ain’t got nothing,” as the song goes, “you ain’t got nothing to lose.”

The very poorest don’t have quite nothing, but they don’t have much. What they do have, if they’re subsistence farmers, as many probably are, they may be subject more to weather cycles than business cycles.

As for aid, there’s been a response, though it’s hard to judge how big or effective. More invariably it is promised

rather than delivered. The new view of aid is that it’s not all that effective even in normal times. Those who are hardest hit by the recession are probably several tens of millions of people in China and India and other newly-industrialized countries who have moved off the farm and into manufacturing in recent years, and are now being hit by the downturn. The most effective aid they can receive is probably going to come from the beginning of the expansion of social insurance in those countries. I doubt foreign aid is going to make much of a difference there.

For the longer run, of course, having China, India and the others have substantial middle classes and sufficient wherewithal to provide basic protections for citizens is a very good place for the world to go.



The financial crisis is very much linked to the climate crisis. The situation for the poor is at least doubly bad because of the implications of the finance crisis, and the implications of the climate crisis.

Some nations are recognizing that the climate lens is essential in understanding effective responses to the financial crisis and global poverty. That kind of response focuses on a domestic stimulus package, which shifts the nation to greater reliance on renewable and efficient energy. These nations also understand that the next phase of climate negotiations must include a substantial transfer of funds to developing countries for the climate crisis adaptation agenda.

For instance, Bangladesh is already working with advice from the World Bank and notable scientists on how to figure out how to relocate the 40 million people in southern Bangladesh close to sea level to the northern part, which severely lacks infrastructure. The development crisis, the climate crisis and the poverty crisis are closely interlinked.

So far the international community has not responded effectively to any of these crises.

Reactions to the financial crisis have been predictably focused on how industrialized nations can rebuild their economies quickly. Recovering the global economy, in theory, makes it possible to imagine improving the situation for the poorest. But just as the climate crisis is not of the making of the poorest of the world, neither was the financial crisis in terms of its making. It’s the wealthiest of the wealthy who, through greed and lack of regulation, spun the financial world out of control and let it come crashing down around our ears. There is not nearly enough in place to prevent this from happening again.

Rebuilding the system as it was is a threat to the poor and capitalism as well. The only real threat to capitalism on this planet is a capitalist system that fails to constrain the greediest. In any steady state economy, which is what Greens favour, you need to recognize the necessity of full



employment and a healthy society. And your chances of doing that go way up when you don't have an unregulated capitalist system that is built on the false notion that there are no limits to the global ecosystem.

This is a threat to capitalism itself. I think the September crisis makes that clear.

So with respect to the poorest of the poor, a fundamental change in the architecture of the economic financial system will help them, and it will protect wealthier nations as well. What we are currently rebuilding, however, is a global economic system that is not sufficiently different from the last one. If we don't talk about greater regulation over financial markets, and we don't ensure that banks are not buying and trading in paper without proper evaluation of the content and risk factors, it will negatively affect the poor and the taxpayers who will end up paying for a bailout. The time of bailing out is over; the time for regulating much more closely is long overdue.

#### CLIMATE CHANGE



**What are the greatest risks associated with climate change? And how do you see them being overcome?**



The greatest risk is to the most vulnerable in the third world.

So many third world countries are low lying countries on coasts, like Bangladesh or the Maldives, and face the threat of catastrophic flooding. The risk of drought in Africa is also overwhelming. We're already seeing that climate change has had a direct negative impact on their agricultural sector and their sources of water and food.

In addition, if the greatest risk is to the most vulnerable in the third world, an even greater risk is to young people. The youngest and fastest growing population in the world is in the third world, and Africa in particular. Thus the risk of climate change is not only to the vulnerable now, but to the vulnerable among future generations.

**Do you feel the Canadian government made any positive changes in regards to environmental damage? What changes do you think still need to made?**

There is a lot of ground to be covered. Canada's lack of

leadership and almost lack of interest is simply incomprehensible. In the lead up to Copenhagen some were even asking the United States to put pressure on Canada so we would take up our responsibilities. I can't believe that; it's beyond the pale.



We can no longer explain the climate issue as an environmental issue, because it's now the largest security threat facing the planet. Climate change is an environmental issue to the extent that drowning is a water issue. We're now looking at whether civilization can survive the decisions our generation has made and that we are still making. The situation is at the moment desperately dangerous.



Woman and child run from burning compound of bodyguards of a presidential candidate, Kinshasa DRC. Photo: Eddy Isango/IRIN

We have lost all the time that was available for delay, denial and procrastination. I've been working on climate issues since 1986 and I have not said with great frequency "it's almost too late". I'm a very positive and upbeat person by nature, but you can't negotiate with the atmosphere; it really doesn't give a damn about humanity.

So this is not about protecting the environment. It's fundamentally about

whether we as a civilization, as a species, will maintain anything like an acceptable quality of life.

Scientists say we have already changed the chemistry of the atmosphere, and now have over 30% more greenhouse gases in our atmosphere than at any time in the last billion years.

Some climate change deniers like to point out that there was more CO<sub>2</sub> on the planet billions of years ago, and that's fine, but that was the age of the reptiles. Humanity has never developed in an atmosphere with levels of CO<sub>2</sub> as high as we have now.

We're adding two parts per million per year to the CO<sub>2</sub> levels globally, and we're at about 386 parts per million closing in on 390. Between 400 and 420 parts per million, we will start to lock in some environmental impacts felt worldwide, involving a global average temperature increase reaching 2 degrees Celsius above the levels of temperature that we

had before the industrial revolution.

If we go to 3 degrees above the global average temperature change, which on the trajectory of business as usual is an inevitable change that will take place very soon, it locks you into runaway global warming.

We must avoid runaway global warming because that is the scenario in which you can't imagine how any civilization or country, let alone the poor, could begin to cope with, say, a significant sea level rise or with persistent drought in areas of the world that grow food.

The impact on human societies will be simply unbearable. Systems will crack and fall apart globally. And we don't have a single nation on earth currently advocating what needs to be done.

Canada is not going to acknowledge the risks of climate change so long as Stephen Harper is Prime Minister. He has made it clear that the Kyoto protocol and action on climate change through the UN are things he wants to avoid.

We were the only country on earth that repudiated the signed and ratified Kyoto Protocol. Our record on this issue can be easily condemned for making promises and not meeting them, and the previous Liberal government can be charged with making lip service, but at least there was some effort to try and reduce greenhouse gases in the plan the Liberals put forward.

Undermining the Kyoto protocol has been the exclusive purview of Harper.

Canada's role is to be global saboteur. It's not that we're not keeping up with the others, but we're aggressively working to block progress with other countries we consider like minded, which these days includes Saudi Arabia and smaller members of the former USSR that want to do nothing. We are arguing against many hard targets, and arguing that our role in international relations is to defend the tar sands and not future generations. The most we can hope for from Canada, as long as Stephen Harper is still Prime Minister, is that no one in the world is going to be like Canada.



The major danger I see environmentally is that people are not facing up to the true trade-offs involved in many of the policies recommended by eco-ascetics in the rich countries. The idea that there is no trade-off between the environment and the economy is just bunk. We can't all be environmental engineers. Somebody still has to produce stuff. And I don't think two or three billion of the poorer earthlings are going to buy the argument that economic growth is over and they now have to accept a lower material standard of living than most people in the OECD countries have come to take for granted.

I also don't believe people in the OECD are going to volunteer for substantial changes in their way of life. My family and I are doing our best to give up plastic bags, but

that kind of piddling superficial change is about the only kind that can get through democratic political systems. Much more than is yet appreciated, we're going to need a technological fix to our environmental problems.

I obviously could be completely wrong—wait 50 years and the world can be shockingly different from what you expected—but I don't believe most people will accept a permanent sentence of poverty. The trouble that rich-country politicians are having in getting their electorates to accept a big increase in the price of carbon is the best evidence of that. Most economists would argue that you're not going to get a big decline in consumption without a walloping increase in price. And it just isn't happening.



Everything is connected, so you affect one thing you'll affect another thing. You affect the natural habitat of a certain animal that has a role in the ecosystem, as all do, that ultimately affects everything else. Climate change isn't just one issue it's a collection of problems. From your food sources, to your personal health, to the stability of the ecosystem – they're all affected by climate change.

Another problem is that people make it a political issue instead of a health and well-being issue. If it were about health and well-being, we wouldn't look at it in terms of opportunities and backlashes and things like that.

Really, it's about sustainability, and trying to make a difference wherever you can. I don't have a lawn that I have to water. All my plants are indigenous, so they're built to grow there. And I have living garden as a roof so the rain that goes in there irrigates and gets recycled. We just need to try to make the smallest environmental footprint we can.

#### WAR, CONFLICT AND TERRORISM



**With many Western nations involved with the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, the threat of terrorism, and increasing concern surrounding nuclear arms proliferation, especially in Iran. What role do you see Canada playing in regards to global conflicts and warfare?**



Millions of the world's most activist citizens regard Dick Cheney as a kind of Darth Vader character, except less warm-and-cuddly. But as I read his two terms as vice-president he was preoccupied with one big job: preventing a nuclear or biological 9/11.

His view that a nuclear device or a "dirty" conventional device going off in one of the world's major cities—he probably was most fixated on its not being an American city—would be a horror many times worse than 9/11 seems to me to be essentially right. It's an inconvenient truth. It may be

unpleasant to think about. It's certainly annoying to have to spend resources preventing it, but it's clearly something that has to be worried about.

How you prevent it from happening is debatable. Maybe intervention in Iraq made it more likely rather than less. That's a big if-question to which I don't think there's a conclusive answer.

I don't see NATO involvement in Afghanistan as being inconsistent with prevention. In fact, the official rationale for it is that failed states are breeding grounds for mega-terrorism and that Afghanistan was a breeding-ground for 9/11, which it was.

Are there other ways to deal with the threat apart from war and policing? How do you persuade Islamic extremists to be less extreme? Injustice and intolerance are not excuses for mass murder, but I think you do have to address your own role in any obvious injustices and you also make clear that your own societies are pluralist and tolerant.

Beyond that, you don't compromise your own principles, which for most of us are the classically liberal ones of liberty, including liberty for women, and tolerance. We have to make clear we will not tolerate intolerance. If those values are under attack, and they are, we have to defend them. No doubt it will require sacrifice. Our societies have made considerable sacrifices before. It is not beyond us to do so again.



I think in regards to nuclear proliferation, whether it is in regards to North Korea, Iran or any other country, I think Canada's voice has got to be heard, and heard very strongly. But I also believe that there are areas where Canada can play a particular leadership role.

In terms of terrorism, people will point out that many of the terrorists are middle class, and they use that as a reason to say that a terrorist does not have roots in poverty, but it

does have roots in poverty.

I think that in places like Africa there is a tremendous leadership role Canada could play in anticipating and dealing with the poverty and thus terrorism. In the year 2030 Africa will have a population larger than China or India. In the year 2050 Africa will have the largest population in the world and the youngest population in the world. That population is either going to provide the world at that time

the kind of growth potential that China is not presenting to the world. Or it's going to be a source of huge insecurity in the world. There are no walls that are going to prevent those waves of migration coming out.

My belief is that Canada's voice should be very much heard in the great debates of today. But we should be taking a leadership role in many of these areas where countries like the US are unable to do so.

In terms of the poverty that exists, the refugee camps that exist, and the lack of military security that exists throughout Africa: there is no doubt Canada could be a leader. The Africans would welcome us with open arms if we took a leadership role.

NGO work is one way to do it. Climate change is going to be a big source of insecurity and one of our basic goals should be to fund NGOs. Put the money in the hands of

NGOs because it's the NGOs that create jobs and will work to reckon with those communities, those small villages throughout Africa. That's where the answers are.



The recession took all of the attention off the idea of stopping wars. The economy became the front page of all the news, because each country has its own set of circumstances they have to deal with.

As for Iraq and Afghanistan, it's a tough situation to face



Waiting for treatment at Esteqlal Hospital, Kabul. about 400,000 Afghans across the country are deprived of access to basic health services due to insecurity. Photo: Manoocher Deghati/IRIN

for the countries involved in the war. Much of the developing world is also having a really tough time though. With all the attention focused on Iraq and Afghanistan and the drama involving Iran, the others seemed to get left behind. The major conflicts are getting a lot of attention, and a lot of it is deserved, but we just can't give them the only attention.



The Green party's position is that we must become even more nimble globally. We are now one of the least engaged nations on earth in terms of UN peace keeping. And the conflict in Afghanistan is not something we'll resolve at all with the NATO strategy.

The Greens' view is that we should not be involved in a NATO mission, and we should only be in Afghanistan in a UN peacekeeping role. Canada and all the nations on earth need to be far more engaged through UN peacekeeping, along with diffusing conflicts before they escalate.

In June of 2008 the UN asked Canada to send four people to the Republic of the Congo to assist, and we refused because we apparently didn't have four people to spare. This is something Canadians don't recognize. We're living with somewhat of a myth that we're environmentally responsible and peacemakers.

It is disconcerting that Stephen Harper didn't attend key climate talks at the UN, but also that he didn't show up for the disarmament talks either. Many ask what Canada has to do with disarmament. Well we weakened the nuclear non-proliferation treaty when we decided to trade in nuclear technology with India after India violated the treaty and built its nuclear bomb using Canadian technology.

This is not a small matter for Canada. There has been a shift from a country that is responsible on climate and nuclear arms proliferation to one that decides neither of those issues really matter so as long as we can sell nuclear technology. Canada is actually undermining nuclear security and ecological stability and that's not something the Canadian public really knows we're doing. Our commercial mainstream news media is so brain dead that nobody hears about Canada's position on these international issues.

### Food, water and energy needs



**With population growth, food and water scarcity and energy resource depletion around the world, what role do you think Canada will play in addressing the world's resource shortages? Will any of these issues have a particularly large impact on Canada?**



Canada will obviously be affected by water shortages, but we will be affected indirectly compared to places with major water shortages in the world, like Africa.

In terms of energy resources, there need be no shortages of energy resources. The technological capacity for renewable energy is huge, and Canada should be leading that field. For instance, there is a group that's looking at building a huge solar panelled field in the Sahara Desert that would be able to provide a substantial amount of electrical energy to Europe. As long as they work closely with the countries in the Sahel, these are the kinds of technological opportunities and positive resource solutions that are being opened to us.

The problem is we're not spending the money on developing those technologies. Of the whole stimulus package that was developed by the Canadian government, none of it went into the development of renewable energy. There's a huge role that Canada could be playing. We are an energy rich country, but an energy rich country should use its energy base to develop renewable energies. Why are the Danes the leaders in wind power? Why isn't Canada? These are the kinds of things we should be investing our money in.



I hope nations won't deal with population growth. The right to reproduce, though widely abused, is probably the most basic of all human rights. Compulsory sterilization, limits on the number of children a couple can have, and similar authoritarian policies, are to my mind abhorrent. I expect that, following the pattern of recent centuries, as poor countries become rich—and they will if their governments encourage competitive capitalism and open markets—birth rates will continue to fall. Perhaps it's a poor reflection on us all, but when people don't need children in order to fund their old age that seems to reduce the number of children they want.

I'm not sure there is a long-run food crisis. Misguided but trendy environmental policies drove up the price of corn and other biofuels in the run-up to the crash, but it's not obvious that if artificial demands from the rich countries were removed from the market, there would still be a problem. As we economists would put it, the supply of nutrients is probably pretty price-elastic in the long run—that is, if price goes up more supply will be forthcoming—so that prices will not rise without limit. It goes without saying—or should—that we will best husband resources if we put a price on them. We say we value water but in most of our cities there is little if any connection between how much a person uses, and how much he or she must pay for it. (Except, of course, in the increasingly maligned market for bottled water.)

What role will Canada play? I suspect, that as usual, we'll talk above our weight. As a country that has a lot of resources, we'll probably continue to supply them. The trend of commodity prices has been pretty flat over the last 150 years, but if over the next

few decades these prices rise steadily, our incomes will rise steadily, too. From those to whom much is given, much is required. As our wealth increases, so does our obligation to those with a less generous birthright. But I hope the 20th-century Canadian assumption that our governments can only fulfil these obligations will lapse. Hiring bureaucrats to do your compassion for you is actually not very compassionate, and not only because they may not be very good at it. As a country, Canada is a shining example (on a snow pile?) of the benefits to be had from open capital, goods and labour markets. I hope we will stand strongly behind those concepts in the years ahead—though I fear we won't.



Having a lot of natural resources, Canada will be fine. We're only as vulnerable to American corporations to the degree we allow ourselves to be. If America, Canada and Mexico can all agree on the terms of NAFTA and live by them, we just have to live out the reality we've created.



There is no single way Canadians can help resolve

major world issues; there is a multitude of ways. Some should take the political route. There is no age barrier to getting involved in public life.

Others clearly should take the NGO route. When I was the Minister of Finance, I was a governor of the World Bank, and I never went to a WB or IMF meeting without meeting with the NGOs that were involved in development, never once. They can have a huge influence on government. Both in terms of dealing with government, because they develop a perspective the government can't have, or in mobilizing public opinion.

There are institutions around the world that are looking for young people who basically want to dedicate themselves to public service. You can do that nationally or you can do that internationally. You can do it through government or you can do it through NGOs.

One thing that I think is very important is the third world at home. The fastest growing segment of the popula-

tion is First Nations, Métis and Inuit. And I am very actively involved in the whole question of the future of aboriginal Canadians. I would simply point out that when I'm in Africa I see Canadians all over the place, and it's a wonderful thing to see, but when I'm working here on a reserve or with the First Nations, I don't see very many young Canadians.

I challenge people to get involved in the aboriginal field. I think that the single most important issue that young Canadians can face is the fact that so many other young Canadians are discriminated against and living lives that are in many ways a tragedy. Why is it that one of the greatest causes of death amongst young aboriginal Canadians is suicide? What kind of society are we building when we allow that to happen?



Children pose for a photo on a hill overlooking Omiya- Anyima IDP camp in Kitgum District, northern Uganda. Photo: Manoocher Deghati/IRIN



Stephen Harper isn't interested in Canada's "resources" plural. We have tremendous resource potential in wind and tidal energy, plus we have a lot of potential in solar. But the only resource that Stephen Harper is interested in is the Athabasca tar sands, and his personal pledge that Canada will expand production to 5 million barrels of oil a

day. We are currently producing 1.2 million barrels of oil a day, so Stephen Harper's goal is to see that expand almost five fold.

The only climate action - and it's not really action - has been to revert money that was meant for wind energy to establish carbon capture and storage. This may have some long-term benefits that reduce harm to the atmosphere, but it is overall one of the most expensive, least useful things one can do, especially when our society is so wasteful of energy.

Our top goal should be to cut energy waste is half in Canada. That is the most practical and doable, plus all the technology is already available. But the pricing continues to tell companies it's cheaper to waste energy than conserve it.

And the focus on the tar sands means that we can't create jobs in other sectors. The high volume of oil exports drives up the Canadian dollar, causing the loss of hundreds of thousands of jobs in manufacturing and pulp and paper



and other sectors.

What do we do about resource shortages globally? Well, Canada is not particularly looking at anything other than the myth of endless growth. Harper remains clearly committed to the expansion of the tar sands, and it's plain that he opposes anything that represents a significant transfer of wealth from North to South. He has already described Kyoto as a socialist plot.

Global population pressures, lack of water, and burgeoning environmental refugees into the billions of people are just not on his radar screen, because he doesn't believe the issue is real. However, significant resource depletion means we are no longer talking about a simple increase in immigration. The planet could be dealing with millions of people clamouring for resources, for food, water, for survival within a decade or two. That is likely to be so disruptive to geopolitical security that it won't just be a change in our culture, it will be cataclysmic. And that is not something anyone can adjust to.

The hope for Canada is that we're a democracy. No one threatens to cut off our fingers or visits our homes and kills our family, like they do in Zimbabwe or Afghanistan.

We have no excuse for our widespread laziness around civic engagement. I'm not saying the public is to blame and blame the victim, but it's disgusted by the behaviour of politicians and reacts by not voting. Choosing not to vote though is actually giving a pat on the back to the most cynical kind of politics. Voting is part of our responsibility to better the world. The other part is to make sure that between elections citizens around the world are engaged

and inspired with hope for the future.

As soon as people wake up and say "I'm not prepared to tell my children, to their faces, that I didn't do anything to make sure they had a liveable planet," transnational corporations, supine media, and politicians who don't think about the next generation won't be able to carry on with a business as usual agenda.

The deliberate effort over the last couple of decades has been to redefine our role in society from citizen to consumer. We have to shake off the addictions of consumer culture that tell us we have no political clout. Why should a whole generation wonder about losing its future? We absolutely do have the ability to turn this around.

People have to show up at demonstrations around the world to show governments that it's not acceptable to pretend that the climate issue isn't the most important issue facing us, and that they absolutely have to accept hard targets.

The largest greenhouse gas emitters are big companies, and they don't want to be controlled or constrained. So let's get over the idea that you cannot move forward

on this until every Canadian has already spent every penny they have on energy efficiency, when all the pricing signals reward waste.

It's not a question of Canadians not being ready, or not doing enough. It's that polluters don't want to be regulated. Individual Canadians have clout and power and need to find those political muscles and start using them. If we could shake ourselves out of apathy and defence of impetus, we absolutely have the tools we need to work our way through this.



Digging the dry waterbed of the Tana River, Kenya, which was diverted.

Photo: Julius Mwenu/IRIN

**Keep in touch with the Social Justice Committee**

**Sign up for our email bulletins, with action alerts and events notices!**

**Visit our Facebook page!**

**Check out the blog!**

**Begin here: [www.sjc-cjs.org](http://www.sjc-cjs.org)**

# Ethiopia's Gibe III dam "the worst"

BY RENÉE FUCHS

**"The Gibe III is the worst dam I have ever come across," one World Bank consultant told Ikal Angelei, the chairperson of the Kenyan organization Friends of Lake Turkana, referring to the large hydro-electric project in Ethiopia.**

Friends of Lake Turkana filed a complaint last year with the African Development Bank (AfDB), one of the primary financial contributors to the Gibe III dam, concerned that the social and environmental impact assessment of the project is "seriously flawed." The group urged the AfDB to improve mitigation efforts and consultations with local indigenous people.

"It's the responsibility of the AfDB management to consult the communities who will be negatively affected by the dam," Angelei said.

The complaint was heard. A few months ago the Bank hired two consultants to meet with the indigenous communities. "We don't know what will be the consequence of that. Will the African Development Bank take that as a sign that they don't have the communities' consent? Or does it mean that they consulted and will carry on with the project anyway?"

The Gibe I and Gibe II dams have already been built along the Omo river, but the Gibe III will be the largest. Hydroelectricity is one of the country's few exploitable resources and the Ethiopian government's hopes are high. It wants to outsource electricity to other countries through interconnected grid systems.

The dam is being built on Ethiopia's Omo river, which flows south to Kenya's Lake Turkana. According to the US NGO International Rivers, the Gibe III dam will negatively affect sources of food for an estimated 500,000 indigenous people because of disruptions to the river's flood cycle. This includes people who rely on flood/retreat methods of agriculture production as well as the people at Lake Turkana. The annual flood also sustains the grazing land for shepherds and signals migratory fish to begin spawning.

Yvan Cliché, spokesperson for the African

Development Bank (and a former spokesperson for Hydro-Québec) insists that the dam will not threaten the livelihood of the indigenous people.

"On the contrary, the dam on the Omo River will be beneficial to Lake Turkana. Controlled flood at the level of the dam will permit agriculture activities downstream, without the associated losses due to natural floods. It will also help keep the average water level in Lake Turkana higher than historical levels." But he admits that mediation efforts and impact assessments "are still ongoing".

Angelei is convinced that the people who live around the Omo River and Kenyans around Lake Turkana will all be adversely affected. If her worries are realized and the flood cycle does disrupt the livelihood of the indigenous people, tension and armed conflict between ethnic groups are likely to increase due to scarce resources. International Rivers notes that firearms and violent conflicts are already present throughout the Lower Omo region and a loss of resources can only worsen the situation.

Angelei is critical of what she takes to be the

mindset Ethiopian government. "Many governments look at the value of everything on a GDP level. They don't really care about the communities this will affect. It's collateral damage."

She is concerned that the AfDB's Environmental and Social Impact Assessment is still not finalized, yet the construction of the dam began in 2006. "We want the government, the banks and everyone involved to undertake this study from the beginning to the end," she told me. "How is the



Local villagers protest construction of the dam.  
Photo courtesy International Rivers

ecology of Lake Turkana going to be maintained? What about the effect global warming will have on the water levels?"

According to Angelei, none of the project's assessments include the projected effects of climate change. Climate change may affect the project's success, since less water results in less electricity. Lake Turkana's ecology has already suffered in recent years due to increased salt levels combined with receding water levels. International Rivers argues that the Gibe III may very well destroy the already fragile balance of the ecosystem.

The AfDB will need help from the World Bank if the project is to be completed. Although the World Bank initially refused to fund the dam, it is now considering it, following an Ethiopian government's request in April 2009.

However, the World Bank Country Director for Ethiopia, Ken Ohashi, told me that because of a no-bid construction contract that was awarded, the World Bank will be unable to provide traditional credit/grant support.

Angelei says that the no-bid contract that the Ethiopian Electric Power Corporation awarded to Italian construction giant Salini further jeopardizes the project's integrity.

"They say that no one was going to beat Salini's bid. I don't know about that. Maybe Salini is just giving the Ethiopian Electric Power Corporation a cheap price and bad construction. They didn't say anything about the quality of the work, they just said he was the cheapest."

Open bidding for projects is a requisite for World Bank funding. A no-bid contract violates its procurement policies. It could, however, provide support through what Ohashi calls a "partial risk guarantee."

Ohashi says the World Bank is aware of the potential dangers of financing this project and is proceeding with caution. "The Bank is keenly aware that the Gibe III will have significant impact, not only on the physical environment of the Omo Basin and Lake Turkana but also on the livelihoods of a large number of people in those areas" he said.

International Rivers and Friends of Lake Turkana say that concerned Ethiopian academics are foreseeing the dangers but are silenced by fear of government retaliation.

"Many people in Ethiopia want to come out and speak but they know the repercussions," Angelei said. "Ethiopia is one of the most autocratic governments at the moment. People who speak out against the government often go missing. It has happened to government opposition leaders. The situation there is really bad."

Asked if she has run into any trouble with the Ethiopian government because of her activism, she said, "It's easier for me because I'm from Kenya. But I have to be careful because my contacts in Ethiopia could be targeted. Often we have to go through five to six people to relay a message across the border."

Angelei asks that people in other countries question their governments' involvement in the AfDB. "Raising objections will go a long way, because through the vote other governments have on the AfDB's board, we could actually get projects that are economically and environmentally sustainable. We don't want development to mean a high GDP while people starve to death, it just doesn't make sense."

*Renée Fuchs is currently completing her Master's degree at Concordia University with a concentration in moral and political philosophy. She is planning to further her studies through a Canadian PhD program and anticipates a career in conflict mitigation/disarmament initiatives.*

Executive Director Bruce Montador is Canada's representative for the African Development Bank.

email: [b.montador@afdb.org](mailto:b.montador@afdb.org).

Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper announced during a G20 Summit in Pittsburgh that Canada will triple its callable capital to the African Development Bank to \$2.8 billion [CAD] in order to benefit African economies suffering due to the international financial crisis.

#### **Update: Gibe II tunnel collapses**

On January 25th, 2010, the entry tunnel to the Gibe II dam collapsed, only 12 days after its inauguration.



## Canada resists expansion of economic, social and cultural rights mechanism

*The United Nations has created a new international mechanism through the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The Optional Protocol (OP) aims to enable those whose economic, social and cultural rights are violated to seek justice if they are denied a remedy in their countries. The OP was opened for signature and ratification in September 2009. Canada, the United States, Australia, the United Kingdom, Japan, India, Egypt and Saudi Arabia oppose the OP. Countries from the poorer regions of Africa and the Americas are the most supportive of it.*

**Here are two perspectives, for and against, the Canadian government position.**

**Dana Cryderman (DC)** is a spokesperson for the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

**Bruce Porter (BP)** is a member of the Steering Committee of the International NGO Coalition for an Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and Director of the Social Rights Advocacy Centre, Toronto. (BP)

**DC:** Canada has serious concerns regarding the complaints mechanism for economic, social and cultural rights set out in the Optional Protocol, including:

- the absence of a clear definition of certain economic, social and cultural rights which raise doubts about whether these rights are amenable to adjudication;
- the risk of undue interference by an international body in the social policy and resource allocation decisions made by States; and
- the existence of a trust fund in the complaint procedure which could be used by States as a means to evade their international human rights obligations, or attempt to transfer them to the international community.

**BP:** Refusal to ratify the Optional Protocol reflects a pattern that we are familiar with in other countries, which do not support effective human rights mechanisms because they know that they are not in compliance with their obligations.

Canada has been severely criticized for allowing homelessness and hunger to become so widespread when we clearly have the resources to eliminate these human rights violations.

The other aspect of their lack of support, however is that they do not really believe in social and economic rights as human rights that should be subject to effective remedies. Canada is now out of step with the international human rights movement which has emphasized in recent years that there must be legal remedies available when governments do not fulfill their obligations to ensure access to adequate

housing, food, healthcare, etc. There is never a “clear” definition of human rights - they are interpreted and applied contextually, and rely on case by case consideration and interpretation. The issue is Canada’s willingness to allow these rights to be clarified and enforced contextually, not the absence of a clear definition.

The Canadian government seems to have lost its ability to see the benefit of constructive criticism within a human rights framework. That is all it would be committed to under the OP.

The Committee would consider “communications” submitted by individuals if they have no remedy left within Canadian law and they would issue “views.” These are not enforceable in court.

The argument that Canada makes, about the OP allowing for “interference” with governments’ decisions about how to allocate its resources or to choose policies is not accurate at all. The government’s alternative to this kind of “undue interference” is to assert that no human rights body should hold Canada accountable for egregious violations of these fundamental human rights when it has an abundance of resources in order to ensure that no one is homeless or hungry.

To be blunt, it means that they believe a country like Canada should be able to choose to let people go hungry and homeless without being held accountable for it in a human rights forum. In other words, Canada wants to leave people homeless in the streets or hungry, without any accountability at all.

**DC:** Canada stands up for human rights and takes principled positions on important issues to promote freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law - values that define this country - are enjoyed around the world. Canada has ratified many of the human rights treaties of the United Nations and has a long tradition of participation in the drafting of United Nations human rights instruments and cooperating with relevant monitoring mechanisms.

As a State Party to the core International Human Rights conventions, Canada is committed fully to the progressive realization of economic, social and cultural rights as well as to the protection of civil and political rights. Canada recognizes that all human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and inter-related. Canada continues to promote and protect human rights through policies, programs and legislation that reflect Canadian values and evolving international human rights standards.

The federal, provincial and territorial governments work both collaboratively and in a complementary fashion to promote and protect human rights in Canada and enhance implementation of international human rights treaties to which Canada is a party.

**BP:** On the other hand, Canada has become increasingly isolated in the international community for its refusal to support stronger mechanisms to protect Economic, Social and Cultural (ESC) rights, its positions on indigenous rights, on the right to water and more recently on environmental rights. Canada seems to have abandoned its historical allegiance to a holistic approach to human rights, based on a strong affirmation of social rights such as the right to housing, to health care etc, which historically distinguished our notion of rights from the more singular focus on individual liberty and freedom from government “interference” in the U.S. and established strong resonance between Canada and the international human rights movement.

**DC:** Many of the rights in the ICESR are subject to progressive realization, which is not the case for the civil and political rights set out in the ICCPR. There are concerns as to whether aspects of economic, social and cultural rights can be appropriately subject to quasi-judicial review as well as with the standard of review that the committee will apply in reviewing complaints. Given these concerns, and as the OP is a new instrument that is not yet in force, Canada has decided to wait to see how the committee handles cases in the future before further consideration is given to signing on to this protocol.

**BP:** All human rights are framed in broad terms. The right to security of the person, to life, to equality, these are very broadly framed rights, as they should be. They acquire more specific meaning through being applied in various contexts to particular facts.

It is by bringing forward issues, whereby particular groups - gays and lesbians, women, people with disabilities, racial groups, etc. - identify particular areas where the broadly framed rights are not being adequately protected.

The standard of review in the OP is that of “reasonableness” - the same standard that is applied to the accommodation of disabilities under Canadian law and use of discretion by government officials.



**DC:** Some ESC rights are addressed by legislation in Canada. All governments in Canada have adopted human rights legislation prohibiting discrimination on various grounds in regard to employment matters, the provision of goods, services and facilities customarily available to the public, and accommodation. Labour laws protecting the rights of workers to bargain collectively, child protection laws, family property regimes and privacy legislation are also examples of these legislative measures.

The Government of Canada does not believe that all aspects of economic, social and cultural rights are amenable to judicial review or that its international human rights treaty obligations require it to protect rights only through legislation. Economic, social and cultural rights are advanced and progressively realized through government policies and programmes.

To best address regional and local priorities and circumstances, each provincial and territorial government designs and delivers programs and services related to Canada's international obligation to enforce ESC rights.

**BP:** It is true that a wide range of legislation may be relevant to the enforcement of ESC rights. On the other hand, the concern that has dominated recent reviews of Canada by UN human rights bodies is that there is a general absence of any effective remedies through which affected individuals and groups may enforce their rights.

As in other countries, the absence of remedies correlates to increasing violations. It is difficult to accept Canada's recalcitrant insistence that we should simply rely on "government policies and programmes" to realize the right to housing, to food, to an adequate standard of living, with no human rights review possible, when these human rights violations increase to tragic proportions.

Quebec has been the only jurisdiction in North America to include social and economic rights in its human rights charter. I think this might be something that Quebec could take some leadership on.

**DC:** Canada declined this recommendation to develop a national strategy because provinces and territories have jurisdiction in this area of social policy and have developed their own programs to address poverty. For example, four provinces (Ontario, Quebec, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia) have implemented poverty reduction strategies while others such as New Brunswick are in the processes of developing their strategies. The Government of Canada supports these measures, notably through benefits targeting children and seniors. These efforts are having a positive impact: low-income rates for seniors, women, and children have fallen considerably in the past decade.

**BP:** There have been a myriad of recommendations and concerns related to the government's failure to address the systemic causes of poverty and homelessness that are within federal jurisdiction: employment insurance ineligibility among single mothers, short term and part time workers; the absence of a national childcare program; cut-backs to social housing and housing subsidies; the National Child Benefit Supplement agreement with the provinces and territories to claw back benefits from social assistance recipients to get funding for other programs; the failure of the Canadian Human Rights Act to protect from discrimination because of poverty or to include international human rights in its mandate, and so on.

---

## Haiti - Debt cancellation uncertainties

Most of the country's **\$1billion debt** is owed to the Inter-American Development Bank (41% of total external debt) and the World Bank (27%). The IMF has just approved a large new loan for Haiti.

Inter American Development Bank (IDB) announced that it is "is considering a mechanism for the further alleviation of Haiti's \$441 million debt to the IDB." That debt is from loans disbursed between 2004 (when Aristide was ousted as president) and 2007. Since 2007, the IDB has provided only grants to Haiti, totaling \$222 million. Haiti's \$10 million in annual debt service payments to the IDB from 2009 through 2011 are covered by resources from a US-supported fund.

The World Bank has announced it has placed a moratorium on payments on Haiti's debt of \$38 million owed to the Bank. "Due to the crisis caused by the earthquake, we are waiving any payments on this debt for the next five years and at the same time we are working to find a way forward to cancel the remaining debt."

The IMF has extended an additional \$114 million loan to Haiti. IMF debts are interest-free until 2012. The Fund's board of directors did not reiterate the commitment of IMF chief Strauss-Kahn that the "IMF is now working with all donors to try to delete all the Haitian debt, including our new loan."

All Haiti's debts to Canada were cancelled in 2009.

# CIDA's NGO partners face uncertain future as agency cuts funds, delays contracts

## Government minister alienates NGOs with charge of anti-Semitism

---

BY SARAH BABBAGE

---

**C**anadian NGOs who receive funding from CIDA are worried about the state of their partnership. Many NGOs suspected change was in the air at CIDA as they experienced increasing wait times for responses on proposals. Their suspicions grew as the ministry announced new policy, such as its new countries of focus, without consulting them. "Serious issues are emerging about how CIDA's partnerships are managed," said Gerry Barr, President of the Canadian Council for International Cooperation (CCIC). "They are basically removing 'partnership' from the term 'partnership organizations.'"

### KAIROS FUNDS CUT

The latest signal of change came on November 30, 2009, when KAIROS, an ecumenical non-governmental organization that had previously enjoyed a productive partnership with CIDA, was told that its funding would not be renewed. No explanation was offered at the time.

When pressed, Minister of International Cooperation Bev Oda informed the organization that the decision to cut funding had been made by her office because the KAIROS projects requiring funding did not meet CIDA's three new areas of focus: increasing food security, securing the future of children and youth and stimulating sustainable economic growth. KAIROS representatives were quick to point out that their funding did in fact address the three areas, and added that their proposal had been submitted in June 2009, before the new areas of focus were announced in September.

Barr also noted that the new themes had been created without NGO input, and that the themes change too quickly for NGOs to keep up. "CIDA has gone through 24 different priorities in the last seven years. Keeping up is like trying to plan next

year's crop on this year's weather," he said. One new area - sustainable economic growth - has not even been launched yet, he added. Those NGOs trying to align themselves with the new areas of focus would be dismayed to discover that guidelines for the new areas were unavailable online and a message directed them to follow the old guidelines.

### CHARGES OF ANTI-SEMITISM

Several weeks later, in a speech in Israel, Jason Kenney, Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, added a new dimension to the story by announcing in a speech at the Global Forum for Combating Anti-Semitism in Jerusalem, that funding to KAIROS and other organizations had been cut because they had been associated with anti-semitism. KAIROS, he claimed, had taken a leadership role in boycotting Israel.

KAIROS vigorously denied the accusation. "KAIROS has always supported the state of Israel and its right to live in peace," said Mary Corkery, Executive Director of KAIROS. She said that KAIROS had criticized the actions of the Israeli government in the past, including its occupation of Palestinian land, but had never done so in an anti-semitic manner. Many members of the Canadian Jewish community also disagreed with Kenney's accusation, and offered KAIROS support and donations in response.

Barr agrees that the characterization of KAIROS as anti-semitic is false. "KAIROS has been maligned, mischaracterized and wrongly charged," he said. "And the government knows it."

It was also rumoured that KAIROS' funding might have been cut because of its criticism of the Canadian government's response to climate change, or its relations with South American governments with a history of human rights abuses (particularly Colombia). KAIROS Manager John Mihevc also objected to these reasons for the funding cut, asserting, "We have had similar positions on these issues as other organizations."

KAIROS remains optimistic that the government will respond or reverse their decision because the cut drew outrage from across Canada and received extensive media coverage. At the time of printing, KAIROS had demanded a meeting with Minister Oda but had not received a response.

In searching for a silver lining, Corkery notes that the funding cuts have returned debates on aid to the public agenda. "This event has set off a discussion across the country... about what aid is about, why a highly-placed government minister would call a church anti-Semitic, and how that term has been misused as a label," she said.

#### **DELAYS AND UNCERTAINTY**

KAIROS isn't the only NGO whose funding is in peril. According to Liberal Critic for International Cooperation Glen Pearson, many Canadian NGOs signed partnerships with CIDA in 2005 under the Paul Martin Liberal government. Their contracts are now expiring and their renewal is uncertain. Pearson said that by the end of 2009, eight other organizations had been told their funding would not be renewed. Unlike KAIROS, they did not speak out against the funding cuts, perhaps to avoid jeopardizing CIDA funding to future projects.

Many organizations are still waiting to find out if their projects will be funded, or only received a response long after their project was submitted. Horizons of Friendship, an organization that partners with organizations in Mesoamerica to work on issues related to poverty and injustice, had their funding renewed at the beginning of January,

a year and a half after their proposal was sent by CIDA officials to the minister's office for approval. In the interim, Horizons and other organizations have survived on limited funds and experienced immense uncertainty about the future of their programs.

Barr attributes CIDA's "glacial pace" to intense supervision of decisions by Oda. Proposals like that of KAIROS may be approved by the ministry but must wait for her approval or dismissal before being returned to their organizations.

According to Barr, CIDA is neglecting its partnerships with Canadian NGOs. They are not being consulted on changes to CIDA policy and their work is becoming less of a priority for CIDA. "CIDA is plagued by issues of transparency," he said, making it difficult for organizations to navigate.

He says that another major problem with the organization is the political nature of CIDA's decision-making which is not driven by Canada's aid legislation and is often non-compliant with it. He points to Canada's increasing concentration of aid in middle income countries as evidence.

Mihevc echoes Barr's evaluation in suggesting that CIDA is shifting towards funding aid that delivers measurable results, while moving away from funding advocacy. "Advocacy is becoming a bad word," he said. Such a shift ignores one CIDA's fundamental goals of interacting with Canadians on policy issues. "CIDA is supposed to be engaging in educating and informing citizens so they can engage their politicians, both in Canada and in developing areas."

#### **The Upstream Journal is seeking volunteers and interns in writing, design or magazine development.**

**Writing a story** will introduce you to important issues of human rights efforts. You'll research the issues, talk with the people who are key to getting the full picture, and learn how to write as a journalist.

**Working in design** will give you experience in using photos and graphics in magazine layout.

**Magazine development** is the big picture - what kind of magazine do readers want? How can we improve the content, the design, the marketing?

If you are interested in volunteering or interning with us, contact the editor.

# Government rights organization in turmoil

---

BY SHAZIA KHAN

---

**T**he Montreal-based government agency Rights and Democracy has been confronted with a controversy after the group's President, Remy Beauregard, died of a heart attack following a disruptive board meeting on January 7<sup>th</sup>. The death of Mr. Beauregard occurred during a time of turmoil and division among the staff and board members. Former President of the Rights and Democracy group, Warren Allmand, spoke with me regarding the recent controversy of Beauregard's death and tension between board members. "The members of the board and the President are appointed by the government in power and they are suppose to appoint people who have different political backgrounds and are committed to the mandate which is to promote and defend all human rights," Mr. Allmand said. "They cannot pick and chose, or defend and shield some countries and go after other countries. It should be an objective and non-partisan approach". Recently, the Harper government has appointed board members who hold a conservative point of view towards issues such as the Middle East. During a confrontational board meeting on January 7<sup>th</sup>, the Harper-appointed conservative members passed a resolution to cut funding to three NGOs in the Middle East that investigate and document human rights abuses. "When the conservative members found out that last January the President had authorized small grants to three NGOS in the Middle East, one in Israel, one in West Bank and one in Gaza, these new members became extremely upset and took steps to pass a motion to freeze and repudiate these grants," Mr. Allmand said. "They also took steps to send a negative evaluation of the President."

The conservative members believe that the Israeli NGO, B'Tselem, is biased, and that the Palestinian NGOs - al-Haq and al-Mezan - are anti-Israeli organizations. The decision to cut the funding resulted in the resignation of two board members. Sima Samar, Chairperson of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission and McGill professor of law

Payam Akhvan, walked out of the board meeting. The board lost another member when the conservatives voted against the reappointment of Guido Riveros Franck, executive director of the Bolivian Foundation for Multiparty Democracy. Mr. Beauregard died a day after this meeting. Forty-six employees of the Rights and Democracy group signed a letter addressed to Prime Minister Harper that requested the resignation of Jacques Gauthier, Aurel Braun and Elliot Tepper due to their strong conservative views. The staff has not received a response from the government, and three senior managers who disapprove of these conservative members and signed the letter were suspended. Despite the staff's efforts to have the conservative members resign, Chair of the Board, Jacques Gauthier, was named interim President. "The interim President they appointed is one of the three that the staff find very objectionable. So not only is he not resigning, he has been appointed Interim President," Mr. Allmand said. Apart from the letter from the staff of the Rights and Democracy group, Mr. Allmand and three former presidents, Ed Broadbent, Jean-Louis Roy and Jean-Paul Hubert wrote a letter addressed to Prime Minister Harper calling for an investigation into the current controversy. There has been no response to these letters as of yet. "I don't have much hope that the government will respond. I would like to say that they may respond and they will have an investigation, but I think they are going to say we have the right to appoint people to the board," Mr. Allmand said. The conflict within the Rights and Democracy group continues to escalate. On the day of Mr. Beauregard's funeral, the organization's office was broken into and laptops were stolen.

All requests for an interview with a spokesperson from Rights and Democracy were ignored. Mr. Allmand does not see the current situation resolving anytime soon. "It's a sad situation. I personally think they are going to stack more people on the board and fire a lot of people and they will get an organization that will be doing what the government wants."

*Rights and Democracy is a government-funded, non-partisan organization created in 1988 by Canada's Parliament to promote and defend human rights and democracy internationally.*

## *The Government of Hong Kong responds to Upstream article...*

### **To the Editor:**

We read with interest Ms Jillian Kestler-D'Amours' article "**Second class in Hong Kong**" on foreign domestic helpers (FDHs) in Hong Kong in the November 2009 issue of the *Upstream Journal*. We are taken by surprise that Ms Kestler-D'Amours had not in any way sought to solicit our views to complete the picture. The unsubstantiated claim that, for instance, 15 percent of the FDHs are underpaid, 27 percent abused, and 22 percent not having weekly days off, is troubling.

The Hong Kong Government attaches great importance to protecting the rights of FDHs and treats FDHs, now 260 000-strong, as part of our valued workforce. Hong Kong is one of the very few places in the world which accord totally equal treatment to FDHs under existing domestic labour laws. On top of that, we have offered FDHs additional protection, not available to local workers, since the early 1970s by devising a mandatory Standard Employment Contract tailored for them, thereby ensuring that they enjoy a minimum wage, free medical treatment, free food (or food allowance) and lodging, free passage to and from their home countries, and full statutory rights and benefits including holidays and rest days, etc.

Where they feel aggrieved, FDHs, like local workers, have equal and unimpeded access to our free consultation and conciliation services, the judicial system as well as the Government's legal aid service.

We take a serious view against wage offenses. An employer convicted of short payment or non-payment of wages is subject to a maximum fine of \$350,000 (CAD\$48,000) and imprisonment for three years. In the first eleven months of 2009, we secured 112 convicted summons of FDH employers for wage offenses. An FDH employer was sentenced to nine-month imprisonment for wages underpayment in January 2009.

Where an FDH is not satisfied with the employment conditions, pursuant to the Standard Employment Contract, he/she is at liberty to terminate the contract by giving one month's notice in writing or one month's wages in lieu. It is not true to say that only "after an arduous process" that an FDH would be able to quit.

It is also mistaken in Ms Kestler-D'Amours' article that when a contract is terminated, FDHs have only two weeks to deal with grievances or collect owed wages. The "two-week rule" allows FDHs whose contracts are prematurely terminated to stay in Hong Kong for two weeks after the termination. However, where there is a labour or abuse claim lodged, our immigration authority would exercise discretion to allow the FDH to stay in Hong Kong until the dispute is resolved.

We conduct frequent inspections, surprise checks as well as thorough investigation upon receipt of complaints. In the first eleven months of 2009, we conducted over 900 inspections to the some 1000 employment agencies placing FDHs in Hong Kong.

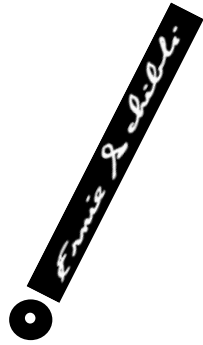
We have an abundance of promotional activities launched every year to raise the awareness of the FDHs and employers of the FDH's rights and benefits in Hong Kong and ways for FDHs to seek redress when in need. In the past three years, for example, we have staged around 30 exhibitions on public holidays at FDHs' favourite gathering places. We have also produced leaflets and guidebooks in FDHs' native languages, and worked with NGOs to ensure that the FDHs are well aware of all the channels open to them, including but not limited to our 24-hour hotline and free consultation and conciliation services.

The Hong Kong Government has spared no efforts in according protection to the FDHs. We will continue our endeavor in proactively detecting and rectifying any irregularities, and very much hope that Hong Kong will remain one of the most popular destinations for FDHs, as it has been in the past four decades.

Yours Sincerely,

Miss Drew Lai

for the Commissioner for Labour, Hong Kong



Opinion

## Honduras' "atmosphere of terror"

Permit me to follow-up my last column with a second on Honduras. I do so for two reasons. The first is that, just as at the time I last wrote, events in Honduras are very poorly reported in the English-speaking Montreal news media. The second is the importance of the Honduran situation. Everyone knows that Honduras is a poor country. However, younger readers especially may not know its long history of a small elite controlling the wealth and the government.

Those who read my last column might remember that most of it dealt with the overthrow of the duly-elected president, Manuel Zelaya, by the political and economic elite of the country in conjunction with the military. I also mentioned the widespread domestic opposition to the coup and the "de facto" government's violent heavy-handed response. On the international front, most countries in the Americas condemned the coup and called for Zelaya's return, though a few, like Canada, were hesitant.

Since then, the "de facto" government, after sabotaging negotiations for a peaceful settlement, went ahead with the elections that had been scheduled before the coup. However, it made sure that the successful candidate would be one it approved. Those who had opposed the coup either withdrew their candidature or were prevented from running. Freedom of the press and assembly was reserved for those in favour of the coup. Civil unrest was high and human rights violations were frequent. The Organization of American States (OAS) condemned the elections as illegal and refused to send any observers.

When the dust cleared, the "de facto" government declared an ardent supporter of the coup, Pepe Lobo of the Nationalist Party, to have won.

Had the media reported on Honduras the past few months, they could have pointed out that there has been continuing widespread resistance to the coup and that this resistance has been met by repression and violence.

A report from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights is damning:

"Serious human rights violations [were] committed, including killings, an arbitrary declaration of a state of emergency, disproportionate use of force against public demonstrations, criminalization of public protest, arbitrary detention of thousands of persons, cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, poor detention conditions, militarization of Honduran territory, an increase in incidents of racial discrimination, violations of women's rights, severe and arbitrary restrictions on the right to freedom of expression, and serious violations of political rights."

This explains why the Committee of the Families of the Detained and Disappeared of Honduras (COFADEH) wrote a few weeks ago: "We enter the first hours of 2010 in an atmosphere of terror with which the coup regime intends to silence the voices of millions of legitimate Honduran citizens who reject the use of violence as a means of coercing consent and governing the state."

Ernie Schibli is a founding member of the SJC, and one of our most popular workshop animators.

The *Upstream Journal* is a publication of the Social Justice Committee of Montreal. It is one of several educational materials we offer on human rights and development.

Donations to the SJC are welcome, and go to support a range of human rights & development education activities.

The SJC is a registered charity in Canada, and donations are tax deductible. We accept personal cheques, MasterCard and Visa. Please consider making a donation and becoming a member.

You can:

- **mail** a cheque, with a note or the reply form in this *Upstream Journal*,

- **call** us (toll free in North America) at 1-877-933-6797 and use your Visa card, or

- make a secure **on-line** donation using any major credit card:

[www.sjc-cjs.org](http://www.sjc-cjs.org) or  
[www.canadahelps.org](http://www.canadahelps.org)

\*Editor's note: Most articles are produced in the SJC office by volunteers and interns who are in training in journalism, with guidance and content input from the editor.



The Social Justice Committee  
Le Comité pour la justice sociale

**The Social Justice Committee of Montreal** has been working to raise awareness of the root causes of hunger, poverty and repression in the world through our education programs since 1975. We work in solidarity with organizations in a number of Third World countries in the search for a more just and sustainable global socio-economic system.

The Social Justice Committee depends on financial support from its members and the general public. It is a registered charitable organization; donations are tax deductible.

**We invite you to donate today, and become a member by supporting the mission of the Social Justice Committee to:**

- Analyze the underlying structural and global causes of poverty, human rights violations and other social injustices.
- Contribute to informed popular participation in eliminating these injustices.
- Work in solidarity, and through education, to transform our world into a just society.

The Social Justice Committee believes that social and economic change is essential for the creation of a sustainable world, and that each person has the right and the responsibility to participate in the process.

Le Comité pour la justice sociale remercie le **ministère des Relations internationales** de son appui à sa mission d'éducation à la solidarité internationale.

The Social Justice Committee thanks the **Québec Ministry of International Relations** for its support of our mission of education on behalf of international solidarity.

**Why not subscribe online?**

**Only \$12 a year!**

**It's quick, easy & secure**

**[www.upstreamjournal.org](http://www.upstreamjournal.org)**

The *Upstream Journal* is published by the **Social Justice Committee of Montreal**. The *Upstream Journal* focuses on economic, social and cultural rights, reflecting the SJC perspective of Third World poverty as a human rights issue. We try to go "upstream" to examine root causes of poverty and injustice.

Subscription to the *Upstream Journal* is only \$12 a year. It is published four times a year.

Views expressed in the *Upstream Journal* are the writers' own and do not necessarily reflect those of the Social Justice Committee. We welcome the submission of illustrations and articles on aspects of international development and human rights.

ISSN 0824-9928

## **Connect**

### **with the *Upstream Journal*:**

**Email:** [editor@upstreamjournal.org](mailto:editor@upstreamjournal.org)

**Telephone:** 1-514-933-6797

**Toll free:** 1-877-933-6797

**[www.upstreamjournal.org](http://www.upstreamjournal.org)**

- ☐ Cheque enclosed  
☐ Visa, MasterCard or Amex  
Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Expiry: \_\_\_\_\_

Total: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

The Social Justice Committee  
1857 de Maisonneuve ouest, Suite 320  
Montreal QC H3H 1J9

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ I would like to receive the *Upstream Journal* (\$12/year, non-tax deductible).  
☐ I support the mission of the Social Justice Committee and would like to become a member.  
My tax-deductible contribution is enclosed.



Revenue Canada Charity Registration 88797 3048 RR0001



