

November/December

Peace Matters

There Is No
Peace Without
Justice

Palestinian Diplomat Visits Nebraska

By Anne Else, Chairperson NFP
Palestinian Rights Group

Dr. Afif Safieh heads the Palestinian Liberation Organization's mission in Washington, D.C. Prior to coming to the United States in 2005, he served as the PLO ambassador to the Vatican, Netherlands and the United Kingdom. He spoke at Creighton University and Dana College on November 1 and 2. The audiences, totaling about 400 persons, at these two schools included students, faculty, administrators and community members. While in Nebraska Dr. Safieh also met with members of the Omaha Jewish community, the Omaha and Lincoln Palestinian community and editors of the Omaha World-Herald.

"I believe Palestine will resurrect," Dr. Safieh said at the conclusion of each of his speeches. "After all, we in Jerusalem have prior experience with resurrection."

Dr. Safieh believes that the Bush administration wants the proposed peace talks to succeed, resulting in the formation of two states: Israel and Palestine. This is a crucial time for us to urge our U.S. senators and congressmen to voice support for the success of the peace talks. All previous peace processes have stalled, as Israel continues its illegal confiscation of Palestinian land and increases its imprisonment of the Palestinian people by building walls and setting up additional checkpoints (now totaling over 650 in an area smaller than the state of Delaware).

The sponsors for Dr. Safieh's visit were the Palestinian Rights Task Force of the NFP Omaha Chapter, the Creighton Justice and Peace Studies Center, the Amelia and Emil Graf Chair of Theology at Creighton, the Sisters of Mercy Omaha Community, and the Nebraskans for Peace Dana Affiliate.

Remember to purchase olive oil and olive oil soap for your holiday gifts. Your purchase provides fair trade wages to Palestinians, plants olive trees to replace those destroyed by the Israeli government and provides educational programs for the youth. Call Anne at 556-5184 to order.



2007 Peace Conference Focuses on StratCom's Role in the Militarization of Space and a Christian Response

By Elaine Wells, Chairperson NFP Peacemakers Group

"Never doubt what your presence might unleash!"

These and other inspirational words from the keynote speakers at the 2007 Annual Peace Conference set the tone for an eye-opening event. The University of Nebraska at Omaha School of Social Work and Nebraskans for Peace sponsored it together. Over 150 people attended



the conference on Saturday October 6 at the First United Methodist Church in Omaha. Two prominent speakers highlighted the event: Emeritus Auxiliary Bishop Thomas Gumbleton of the Catholic Archdiocese of Detroit and Bruce Gagnon, coordinator of the Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space, who made the foregoing statement.



"In 1968 I was a Young Republican for Nixon," Gagnon said, "and I joined the Air Force right after high school. Many of the 15,000 GIs stationed at my base came home from Vietnam wounded or in body bags. Outside

the base, 10 to 12 protesters regularly held anti-war signs and probably thought that their presence did no good—but they created a discussion and unleashed a dynamic inside the base that changed my life."

Mr. Gagnon will return to Omaha April 11-13, 2008, along with many international members of the Global Network, because according to him, "There is no more dangerous place on Earth than StratCom." Is this hyperbole? Not when one considers that StratCom:

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- 1) Coordinates America's 700 military bases in foreign countries, mainly for the benefit of international corporations;
- 2) Joins the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines in a "unified command" that is directly accountable to the President of the United States;
- 3) Pursues the NeoConservative mission stated in the 1997 document "Vision for 2020": "The United States will dominate and control space...";
- 4) Operates within a yearly military budget of **\$500 BILLION**, with a secret high-tech fund of \$30 billion, which Congress is not allowed even to monitor.



When President Bush recently announced that the Pentagon can deploy space weapons to deny other countries access to space,

China attacked its own satellite to show us that it can prevent the United States (just 5 per cent of the world's population) from becoming the "Master of Space." The new policy of U.S. domination assigns each country a role: China and India are to manufacture things, and the United States is to "export security" and coordinate "full-spectrum global strike." We still have over 7,000 nuclear warheads and are building new generations of weapons of mass destruction as well as military bases in Central Asia, Africa and Latin America to assure the cooperation of "non-integrated countries." Already our No. 1 export is weapons, so our global marketing strategy is to perpetuate war.

Gagnon calls us to close bases at home and end our addiction to war by converting the military/industrial/governmental/educational complex to a sustainable economy based on wind and solar energy and a rail system to connect all of America.

Speaker Emeritus Bishop Thomas Gumbleton added that General George Lee Butler resigned from StratCom when he allowed himself to comprehend fully that he had been charged with the destruction of tens of millions of human beings! When President Kennedy was briefed by StratCom on the results of using our nuclear weapons, he muttered, "We call ourselves human beings, and yet are willing to do this?"

Bishop Gumbleton elaborated on some of the reasons Pope John Paul urged, "Never again war." First, it destroys many innocent people and is therefore murder. A careful study reported in the British journal "Lancet" documented 655,000 Iraqi civilians killed during the first four years of U.S. occupation. Depleted uranium weapons leave radioactive particles in the food chain and water system, causing cancer, birth defects and sterility.

Second, he continued, those who kill are taught to hate and dehumanize "the enemy," and British and American soldiers are ordered to run down Iraqi children in the road. Many soldiers back from combat find it hard to sleep, to love, and to overcome the deep psychological trauma of war. Third, the chaos of war makes it harder to resolve the original problems.

Howard Zinn, historian, playwright, social activist and bomber pilot during World War II, wrote that the bombings of Japanese and German cities were unspeakable crimes that we were able to commit once we decided that we were good guys and "they" were villains. War itself is the enemy of the human race. If we don't end war, war will end us, he contends.

Excellent workshops focused on renewable energy, GLBT inclusion, North Omaha development, death penalty abolition, domestic violence/bullying/gangs, immigration, Palestinian rights, and climate change; and several leaders tutored participants on specific resources and strategies for alternatives to our military juggernaut.

The NFP Peacemakers Group meets at 5:30 p.m. on the first Monday of every month in the Conference Room at the



First United Methodist Church at 7020 Cass Street. Persons are encouraged to attend and help prioritize issues and determine strategy. For more information contact Elaine Wells at 573-1702 or 415-9500.

Answer:

President George Washington (1789-1797)

NEW DISCUSSION LISTSERVER

By Steve Thyberg, NFP Member and Listserver Moderator

The Omaha Chapter of Nebraskans for Peace has started a new listserver for discussion and posting of notices. It is for anyone in the Greater Omaha Area and beyond who is interested in hearing or sharing about peace and justice issues. The new listserver is called **NFPomahaDiscussion**.

We encourage you to join and use these great features:

- ✂ Post news, comments, and information to the entire list;
- ✂ View current or previous messages posted;
- ✂ Use the search engine to look for specific articles or postings.

The simplest way to join is to ask to be added to the list.

Send an e-mail to me at incompassion@yahoo.com and write "add me to the new listserver," and it will be done.

Or, if you want to **do it yourself** you can join the new list by going to the following web page: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/NFPomahaDiscussion/join>. If you already use a yahoo group, then you have a Yahoo! Profile and it will be very fast.

Even if you have to create a new profile, it is fairly simple:

1. Name Your Profile--you might try your e-mail address, everything before the "@";
2. Expand Your Profile--everything here is optional. For speed and privacy it is recommended that you pass on these.
3. Choose Display Options--pick one of the three choices.

Once signed up on the new listserver you can post a message by sending to:

NFPomahaDiscussion@yahoogroups.com.

Contact me with any questions: 593-1810 or incompassion@yahoo.com. And let's have some great discussions!

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OMAHA CATHOLIC WORKER DEMONSTRATION AND DIE-IN

By Jerry Ebner, NFP Member and Omaha Catholic Worker

On Wednesday October 10 Omaha Catholic Worker sponsored a demonstration and die-in at the Strategic Space and Defense 2007 Conference held again this year at the Qwest Center in Omaha. Nebraskans for Peace sponsored legal public protests on Tuesday and Thursday at the same event.



After prayer and reading of scripture eight persons demonstrated: Fr. Jack McCaslin, Peg Gallagher, Jerry Ebner, Sr. Marian Klosterman, Mark Kenney, Leo Marks, Michael Murphy and Steven Welch. Fr. Jack McCaslin, Peg Gallagher and Jerry Ebner then risked arrest by maintaining their positions on the cold hard concrete in front of the building. The purpose of the die-in was to symbolically portray the deaths that would result from the use of the space weapons bought and sold at the conference.

While Michael Murphy played "Taps" on his flute in honor of the soldiers who have died in the Iraq War, Omaha Police Department personnel handcuffed and arrested the three lying on the ground. The charge was "refusing to leave," a misdemeanor. They were released in an hour and given a court date of November 14 at 1:30 p.m. on the second floor in the Douglas County Courthouse at 17th and Farnam Streets. The maximum penalty is \$500, six months in jail or both.

Contact information for the three follows: Peg Gallagher, 4821 Chicago Street. Apt. 14, Omaha 68132, 402-553-0111; Fr. Jack McCaslin, 7323 Shirley Street, Apt. 305, Omaha 68124, 402-926-2599; and Jerry Ebner, Omaha Catholic Worker, 1104 No. 24th Street, Omaha 68102, 402-502-5887, e-mail cwomaha@gmail.com. For a slide show, go to: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/monashaw/sets/72157602429926814/show/>.

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Question: What former President in his farewell address warned against "ungenerously throwing upon posterity the burdens we ourselves ought to bear"? (See *inside*.)

Calendar of Events

Every Wednesday, 4:30-5:30 p.m. Peace Vigil at StratCom/UNO, 6825 Pine Street (three blocks east of 72nd and Pine Streets, which is 16 blocks south of Dodge Street, east of UNO Scott Technology Center). This is a cooperative effort with the Omaha Catholic Worker House. For more information contact Jerry Ebner, cwomaha@gmail.com or at 502-5887.

Every Saturday, 2:00-3:00 p.m. Impeach Cheney and Bush Demonstration on the footbridge over Dodge Street near UNO at about 60th Street. Contact Elaine at 415-9500 for more information.

November 14, 1:30 p.m. War Resisters' Court Hearings for Peg Gallagher, Fr. Jack McCaslin, and Jerry Ebner at the Douglas County Court House, 17 and Farnam Streets, 2nd floor, downtown Omaha. See related story in this newsletter.

November 14, 6:30 p.m. (second Wednesday of every month) NFP Omaha Leadership meeting at Augustana Lutheran Church, 3647 Lafayette Avenue. All are welcome. Contact person is Mark Welsch at 453-0776.

November 17, 6:00 p.m. Potluck meal, 7:00 p.m. meeting of the Progressive Omaha group at 4924 Chicago Street. All progressive people are welcome. Contact person is Jack Dunn at 551-2552.

November 19, 6:30-8:00 p.m. An extra planning meeting for the Peacemakers Task Force at First

United Methodist Church, Conference Room, 7020 Cass Street. Enter the church office door on the south side and turn left down first hallway. Contact person is Elaine Wells at 415-9500.

November 26, 7:00–8:30 p.m. Palestinian Task Force meeting in Room 125 in the Administration Building at the College of St. Mary, northeast of 72nd Street and Mercy Road. Contact Anne Else at 556-5184 for more information.

December Palestinian Task Force meeting. Contact Anne Else at 556-5184 for date, time and location of the meeting.

December 3, 5:30-6:30 p.m. (first Monday of every month) Peacemakers Task Force at First United Methodist Church, Conference Room, 7020 Cass Street. Enter the church office door on the south side and turn left down first hallway. Contact person is Elaine Wells at 415-9500.

December 6, (first Thursday of every month) 6:00 p.m. Peace Seekers and Pizza, **7:00 p.m.** discussion, reflection and leadership support at 4924 Chicago Street. Contact person is Jo Peterson at 350-3019.

December 12, 6:30 p.m. (second Wednesday of every month) NFP Omaha Leadership meeting at Augustana Lutheran Church, 3647 Lafayette Avenue. All are welcome. Contact person is Mark Welsch at 453-0776.