

May 2006

Slogan of the month:

Occupation *qua* occupation is evil. It is primarily bad for the Palestinians. It is also bad for Israel. We should put an end to it, the sooner the better.

Raphael Cohen-Almagor

Coalition - Pensioners Party, Labour; Haim Ramon - Personal Story; Irresponsible Politics; Iranian Propaganda; Baha'i Persecution in Iran; Mass Murder in China; Petition against Human Trafficking; Petitions against Boycotting Israeli Academics; Palestinian Democracy; Freedom of the Press; World Press Freedom Day; CJFE Seeks Nominations for Press Freedom Awards; New Article on Privacy; New Books; Basketball Final Four; Joke of the Month

Coalition

Pensioners Party

In my April Newsletter I attributed the loss of expected seats in the Knesset to Olmert's vanity, stating that most of those seats went to the Pensioners Party. History sometimes has its strange ways to close circles, sometimes sooner than later. The Pensioners Party and Kadima were the first to sign coalition agreement, creating a unified block of 36 seats. This was the forecast for Kadima a short while prior elections. The lost seats returned to Kadima with the only difference that instead of Kadima people, we have seven elderly and experienced people who are committed to see that the wealth of the Israeli elderly will be improved. Not a bad substitute.

According to the terms of the agreement, the two parties will remain officially independent but will hold joint meetings and observe the same voting discipline. The Pensioners' party was granted two ministerial posts: The health ministry and a new portfolio, minister of pensioner affairs. Olmert also agreed to appoint a Pensioners' party member as chairman of the Knesset's Labor, Social Affairs and Health Committee and another as deputy speaker.

In addition, the Pensioners' party secured a NIS 530 million pension increase, of which NIS 130 million will be allocated to reverse a 1.5 percent cutback carried out in 2002.

Labour

The second party to sign agreement with Kadima was Labour. After weeks of negotiations, they signed a coalition agreement that gives Labour seven ministries in the new government. According to the agreement, Labour will receive the defense, education, Galilee and Negev development, infrastructure, agriculture and tourism ministries and will also have one minister without portfolio (which is an absolute waste of money and shows the irresponsible behaviour of both parties, driven by narrow considerations, not public ones).

The three people who shifted their alliance from Labour to Kadima received nice rewards. Shimon Peres will be in charge of Galilee and Negev development and also Vice Prime Minister. This portfolio was agreed upon between Peres and Sharon just before he received the stroke. If Olmert is sincere in his vocal plans to withdraw from the West Bank and minimize the occupation, one can assume that Peres's hands will be full. The settlers will be encouraged to resettle in Galilee and the Negev, where there is relatively more space. I also hope that on the agenda will be the creation of the first designed Arab-Jewish town. There are towns in which Arabs and Jews reside: Haifa, Lod, Jaffa, Ramle and Acco are the prime examples. But there is no town in which every aspect of life is bi-cultural: residency; work places; education; theatre; sign-posting etc. In the Galilee there is a place to start such an initiative.

Dalia Itzik was nominated Speaker of the House. She is an experienced parliamentarian, well qualified for the job. Haim Ramon was upgraded from minister in the Prime Minister office to Minister of Justice, a post he yearned for years. Ramon studied law many years ago. To the best of my knowledge, he never practised law. He had no time, as his entire adult life were preoccupied with politics. In this respect, he's very much like Peres. He is a politics addict.

Haim Ramon - Personal Story

Many years ago I was active in the Labour Party, doing fieldwork and slowly climbing up the ladder till I decided my back cannot afford any more stabbing and retired. I recall one tensed meeting in which the Tel Aviv cell, then the most prominent cell in the Labour Party, had to nominate its representatives on the Party's list for the Knesset. The large hall was packed. More than 400 people gathered to decide this intricate issue. People were speaking loudly, if not shouting, each with his/her own agenda. The person who was assigned to conduct the meeting was Haim Ramon. Standing there I was thinking there was no way he could direct this meeting in peace. I thought it will soon explode.

Ramon arrived ten minutes late. He went across the hall, and then sat on the Chairman's table in the most casual way, letting his legs fly in the hot air. He had one advantage over the others: a microphone. He asked for silence, received it, and then conducted the meeting in the most professional way. He gave us a lesson that I, for one, will never forget. Pseudo democratic, he attended all raised concerns. With any paper, he reached an agreed list. I did not see the list of his desired people but got the impression that it was identical to the list agreed upon by the packed hall. Superb mastery of politics. I knew then and there that Ramon is here to stay, making his way up and survive the best of us. Twenty five years later, he is still in politics, going from one ministry to another. He is a stray cat with eleven souls. Don't be surprised to see him around for another twenty five years. After the experience of heart attack that knocked him of his legs, he is now taking better care of his health.

Irresponsible Politics

Another example to the irresponsibility manifested by Olmert and Peretz concerns the allocation of portfolios. Labour is the most important ally of Kadima and therefore deserves one of the three major ministries: Defence, Finance or Foreign Ministry. Olmert promised Livni the latter. Peretz, who headed the Histadrut and has little experience with army matters wished to have the Ministry of Finance, and rightly so. Olmert insisted that this ministry will be kept for Kadima. Yet again, partisan interests preceded state interests. Peretz, who received the Ministry of Education as compromise, settled for Defence. The outcome is miserable: We have the wrong person in Defense; we don't have the better person in Finance, and Uriel Reichman, who was designated by Sharon to be the next Ministry of Education retired from politics. This was probably the quickest career in politics Israel has ever known. Reichman was sworn into the Knesset only a week before.

Peretz is unqualified for the post. If Olmert were to really care about state interests, he would not offer him the job. If Peretz were to really care about state interests, he would not have taken this offer or, alternatively, hand over the position to one of his party generals. Ami Ayalon, for one, would have been a very good person for the job. But Peretz wants to keep the honour for himself. This is natural, but not wise.

To add further imprudence to the series of wrong decisions, motivated by partisan politics and not the nation's best interests, Olmert decided there will not be deputy ministries, as the government is the largest per capita IN THE WORLD. Twenty five (for the time being) ministries. China has twenty eight. USA has fifteen. We have twenty seven. There is no justification for this. Pure greed. Consequently, Peretz who understands a lot about social matters, and very little about defence, will be left without a qualified deputy to keep him

out of trouble. Clearly, his advisers need to be by far more qualified than him to enable him grasp the vast complexities of this giant ministry. For the first time in Israeli politics, both the prime minister and the minister of defence lack the necessary experience for handling our defence, and the minister will not have a qualified deputy to guard him from making basic mistakes. The citizens of Israel have a good reason to have trouble sleeping.

Olmert, the astute politician, is making all the possible mistakes. In this way, he will not survive eighteen months in office. I hope that Israel, as a country, could afford such wrong decision-making. Defence for Israel is not like defence for Switzerland. I think Peretz is the least qualified person to hold the position in the entire history of our country.

Olmert evokes unhappy memories, reminding me of Ehud Barak who made similar mistakes and did not survive as prime minister for long. I must say that I appreciated Olmert, as a politician, for more than I appreciated Barak, and am puzzled that he chose to establish his government in the way he did.

Iranian Propaganda

When Hitler, Goebbels, Rosenberg and their ilk made their anti-Semitic speeches in the 1920s and early 1930s, they were dismissed as "lunatics", who even if they believe what their mouths were saying will lack the power to execute their aims. Europeans, first and foremost European Jews, did not wish to believe their ears. One of the lessons we learnt from the Holocaust is to believe our enemies, that when they speak business they mean business.

The video attached is of a lecture by an Iranian university professor, Hasan Bolkhari, speaking on Iranian TV about how the cartoons of Tom and Jerry are

actually a Jewish plot. His words and ideas evoke revolting bell that every human being should protest against.

http://switch5.castup.net/frames/20041020_MemriTV_Popup/video_480x360.asp?ai=214&ar=1049wmv&ak=null

I thank Rosalie Ber for bringing this to my attention.

Baha'i Persecution in Iran

Asma Jilani Jahangir, UN Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Arbitrary and Summary Executions, warned against the new wave of Baha'i persecution in

Iran. The UN has issued more than 56 pronouncements condemning Iran's execution and imprisonment of Bahais, solely because of their membership of the Baha'i community, and criticising the overtly discriminatory treatment by Iran's government of this religious community since 1980.

A nation is known by the state of its minorities. The way the weakest are maintained exemplifies the moral standing of nation; a great nation takes care of its weak and its nonconformist. On that count, the efforts to eliminate the Bahai faith in Iran is the regime's clear-cut effort to pay no heed to the Article 1, 2 and 3 of the UN Declaration of Human rights. UN Human rights charter Article 1 categorically states that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood. Article 2 of the charter cements the right of faith; it states vigorously that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Article 3 guarantees that everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

Bahai systematic plunder is ethnic cleansing that can be understood as the expulsion of an "undesirable" population from a given territory as a result of religious or ethnic discrimination, political, strategic or ideological considerations, or a combination of these. The term "cleansing" ("cleansing of borders"? as used in Soviet documents of early 1930s in reference to the resettlement of Poles from the 22-km border zone in Belorussian SSR and Ukrainian SSR. The process was repeated on a larger and wider scale in 1939-1941). Humankind has seen this plunder all through the ages; we need to be very clear in condemning it irrespective of our color creed and thought. Once, when we are perpetrators, we need to stand up against our own communities, or once, when we are oppressed, we should not let the efforts of annihilation go by; we should stand up and censure shackles that try to limit our freedoms.

See http://www.iranian.ws/iran_news/publish/article_15259.shtml

A personal note: The world Bahai Headquarters is in Israel. Hundreds of Bahais live in Israel, and thousands arrive every year for pilgrimage. This is a positive community who did and does only good for Israel. The Bahai gardens in Haifa are one of the most beautiful tourist attractions in Israel, a true gem to enjoy and appreciate. Iran could have gained so much from their Bahai community, making the most of their presence as a lever for enhancing their country. Instead, they opt for persecution and discrimination. This is a shame not only for the Bahais and Iran. The world community of decent people should condemn Iranian treatment of their minorities, and invest efforts in stopping and curbing this bigoted cruelty.

Mass Murder in China

On April 25, 2006 I wrote to the Chinese Ambassador to Israel, Ambassador Chen Yonglong, saying that I received a call to sign a petition to stop mass murder in China. To recall, a few sources alleged secret death camps were established in China in 2001, where none have come out alive. Victims - Falun Gong practitioners - have their organs harvested while still alive. These organs are sold all over the world, while their remains are cremated in an in-house incinerator. Simply put, I inquired whether this is true, welcoming his response. I am sorry to say that no response was received till now. I'll continue to report.

Meanwhile, readers have started to send me material.

Sky news

<http://www.sky.com/skynews/article/0,,30200-13519519,00.html>

Wenyi on WABC Radio

<http://www.johnbatchelorshow.com/audio.cfm>

BBC

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/4921116.stm>

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/1411247.stm>

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/4853188.stm>

Maariv

<http://www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART1/069/116.html>

Washington Times

<http://washingtontimes.com/national/20060323-114842-5680r.htm>

C-SPAN

<http://www.clearwisdom.net/emh/articles/2006/4/25/72400.html>

Epoch times

<http://www.theepochtimes.com/news/6-4-20/40617.html>

<http://www.theepochtimes.com/news/6-4-20/40604.htm>

<http://www.theepochtimes.com/news/6-5-1/41053.html>

Epoch times Israel (Hebrew)

<http://www.epochtimes.co.il/news/content/view/724/86/>

HOT

News

(Hebrew)

<http://news.walla.co.il/?w=//896081>

Torture in China (Chinese)

http://www.falunnews.org.il/articles_p/2005/07/c_01/62370_16.htm

This forum will continue to gather evidence and report. If there is substance in those horror stories, this needs to stop. I call upon the UN to establish an independent inquiry committee into this matter, to unfold the truth behind the Chinese Iron Curtain.

Petition against Human Trafficking

I received the following, signed the petition, and urge you to do the same:

I'd like to tell you a story - it's not a happy one, but we have the power to turn it around and make a difference in one woman's life.

Anna (not her real name) heard that there are people who arrange work in Israel where you could earn \$1000 a month. She was desperate - her husband had left her in Uzbekistan and she had no job. After being smuggled across the Egyptian border she was taken to a hotel in Tel Aviv where she was shoved into the trunk of the vehicle and driven to her new owner, who explained to her that she owed him thousands of dollars for her transport here. She was told that she would see no less than 25 clients a day, that she could never refuse, and that she would be paid 10 shekel per client. Anna was held captive repeatedly raped and beaten, and deprived of her basic human rights.

According to a recent Knesset Report, there are thousands of women like Anna in Israel at any given time. They are sold into sexual slavery at "auctions" for \$8000-10,000. These women, 23 yrs old on average, are raped, abused, incarcerated and threatened, "servicing" 15-25 clients over 14-18 hrs a day, 7 days a week. The women become indentured slaves with an ever growing debt to their owners. Israeli men of all walks of life pay approximately 1,000,000 visits to brothels per month and the profits from this illicit activity are estimated at 750 million dollars annually.

Take action now to ensure that more women like Anna are not victims and demand that the Israeli government take action against this problem and prosecute traffickers. Please join me in signing the petition against human trafficking in Israel: http://www.tfht.org/index.php?section=form&album_id=21 . Email it to as many friends and colleagues as you can and ask them to sign it and then pass it on. Let's each have a goal in mind of getting at least nine other people-a minyan- to sign it.

I know that I want to be proud of Israel and that in order to do so I must work to make it a better nation. As a supporter of Israel, I am concerned about this human rights abuse. Modern-day slavery in the form of sex trafficking is

happening in Israel, and it is important to learn more about it and speak out it so that we can help to put an end to this human rights violation. As Diaspora Jews, we have the potential to make a great impact on public awareness of this issue, and to effect change for women forced into slavery. Let us work together to end this nightmare for thousands of women every year.

Petitions against Boycotting Israeli Academics

Israeli academics are facing yet again a threat of boycott. I urge each and every one of you to sign the petition below that aims to safeguard academic freedom and to fight down this unjust initiative. As you may well know, some of the most vocal voices against the occupation come from Israeli academia. To claim that we are responsible for this policy or that "we", as a body, condone this policy, is vastly remote from truth.

----- Original Message -----

From: Scholars For Peace in the Middle East

To:

Sent: Tuesday, May 09, 2006 10:43 AM

Subject: Support An SPME Petition



Promoting Academic Integrity and Honest Debate

An Appeal From Scholars WorldWide To NATFHE Not to Vote for or Defeat Any Motions to Boycott Israel Scholars at Their Meetings May 27-29, 2006

May 9, To: The Board and Members of the of the British National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education

We, the undersigned faculty members from around the world, urge the Board and Members of the British National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education to either not vote on or defeat any resolutions that would boycott scholars and faculty from Israeli academic institutions at their annual meeting May 27-29.

Such boycott actions are not only antithetical to principles of academic freedom, they further hamper and confound the chances of seeking peaceful resolution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Academics are frequently among those who work with colleagues and policy makers from

opposing sides to develop solutions to complex issues.

Those who perpetuate and participate in such boycotts are separating themselves from the academic community as opposed to bringing it together to work for peace and support academic freedom.

We urge our colleagues in the UK to withdraw or defeat these resolutions and pledge ourselves to encourage our colleagues from around the world to oppose this boycott action.

- Visit Scholars For Peace in the Middle East website <http://www.spme.net>

- To Sign this petition go to http://www.spme.net/cgi-bin/display_petitions.cgi?ID=2&Action=Sign

- Please consider making a donation to SPME <http://www.spme.net/donation.html>

On May 15, 2006 the American Jewish Congress urged in the strongest possible terms that Britain's National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education (NATFHE) refrain from adopting at its upcoming conference any resolutions to boycott Israeli universities and academics. Adopting any such resolution will only cast NATFHE and its members into disrepute.

As Nobel Laureates, Rhodes Scholars and the American Association of University Professors proclaimed last year when England's Association of University Teachers advocated a similar boycott against Israeli universities, "boycotts against academics and educational institutions have no legitimate place in academic life." In that case, international protest, including actions in both houses of the U.S. Congress spearheaded by AJCongress, forced the AUT to rescind its boycott proposal one month after it was initiated. It is worth noting that AUT will merge with NATFHE after its conference at the end of May.

"NATFHE's proposed resolutions are indefensible," said Neil Goldstein, Executive Director of American Jewish Congress. "One resolution advocates support of the Palestinian government run by Hamas, an internationally-recognized terrorist organization that proudly takes credit for the murder of innocent Israeli civilians. This support of terrorism reveals the one-sided political nature of the NATFHE resolutions and the moral blindness of its statements on the tragic Middle East conflict. They do not represent truth or peace-making—and certainly have nothing to do with academic integrity. What these proposed resolutions are about is propaganda, divisive rhetoric and hatred of Israel."

In response to this measure, the AJCongress launched an email campaign to the AUT and NATFHE leadership urging them to end this insanity.

American Jewish Congress ** 825 Third Avenue, Suite 1800 ** New York, NY, 10022

212-879-4500 ** Fax 212-758-1633; web site: www.ajcongress.org ** email: jengelmayer@ajcongress.org

Finally, David Hirsh who is working relentlessly against the boycott has asked me to post the following, which I signed. This is, in the main, for UK residents:

I would like as many academics as possible to put their names to it - particularly people working in the UK - particularly Natfhe and AUT members - although I will be happy to include academics from all over the world and academics who are not in a union.

If you would like to put your name to it, please email alex@EngageOnline.org.uk.

Please put "Add my name to the letter" in subject heading of your email. If possible, for purposes of verification, please use your academic email address. Please include the following information:

- Your name
- The academic institution where you work
- Your trade union membership

Please **do** pass this letter around to all academic colleagues who you think might be interested in signing it. Please ask them to pass it on too.

Please **do not** post it on websites publicly at the moment because I think the guardian will be reluctant to print something that has already been published.

Best wishes,
David Hirsh

We call on Natfhe (National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education) conference this weekend to reject motion 198c. This motion "invites" academics to blacklist from the global academic community Israeli "institutions and individuals" that do not "publicly dissociate themselves" from "Israeli apartheid policies". The purpose of the apartheid analogy here is not to shed light on the conflict between Israel and Palestine but to mobilise an emotional vote for a blacklist.

We oppose the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and we oppose the daily violence that is necessary to sustain it; as we oppose campaigns to kill Israelis. We are for peace between Israel and Palestine on the basis of mutual recognition. But this boycott proposal would do more harm than good if the aim is to bolster the Israeli and Palestinian peace movements and move towards a peace agreement.

The political test for Israeli academics builds on a tradition established by Senator Joseph McCarthy in the USA and by the anti-Semitic purges in Communist Eastern Europe in the 1960s. We oppose the idea that academics would be forced to sign a statement in order to demonstrate their political cleanliness.

Trade unions should have a consistent policy with regard to human rights abuses abroad and the curtailment of academic freedom that goes with them. We oppose the plain inconsistency of drawing up a blacklist of Israelis but adopting an entirely different attitude to academics in the USA, China,

Russia, Britain, Sudan, North Korea, Zimbabwe, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Egypt – or in the long list of other states that are responsible for equal or worse human rights abuses.

Israeli universities are amongst the most open and anti-racist spaces in Israel and so are the wrong target. They are places where words and argument are the norm rather than guns and bombs. They have large numbers of Arab students (20 percent in Haifa and Jerusalem) as well as significant numbers of Arab staff. The Oslo peace process was forged by links between Israeli and Palestinian academics.

While many voices in Palestine do call for a boycott (although not for a McCarthyite test), many do not. The PLO, the Palestinian Authority and the President of Birzeit University have not called for a boycott. The President of Al Quds University in East Jerusalem argues clearly against a boycott.

Natfhe and AUT (the Association of University Teachers) are currently involved in a bitter and difficult dispute with university managements over pay. This boycott proposal degrades our unity at a moment when academics need to stand together. After the most democratic discussion that AUT ever had, it decided last year to oppose the policy of boycotting Israeli academics; not one AUT branch voted in favour. Natfhe has not organised a democratic discussion within its universities and colleges; if this motion was to pass then it would be passed by a small coterie of Natfhe activists and would not represent the democratic will of academic trade unionists.

The two unions will merge three days after the Natfhe debate. We do not want the new union to be born, while fighting a dispute, into a row over the wrong-headed and counter-productive policy of blacklisting Israeli colleagues.

David Hirsh, Goldsmiths College, AUT
Jon Pike, Open University, AUT

Palestinian Democracy

Last year (July 5-7, 2005 Sofia, Bulgaria), the Center on Democracy, Development, and the Rule of Law held a conference on LEARNING FROM THE REFORM EXPERIENCES OF EUROPEAN, POST-SOVIET, AND ARAB COUNTRIES. The conference was attended by representatives of many countries and semi-sovereign entities. I wish to bring the voice of the Palestinian representative, Sa'ed Al Zain, Researcher at the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, who testified about the rule of law and democracy in his part of the world.

Sa'ed al Zain said that although he did not wish to overemphasize the unique situation of Palestine, the present condition of the Palestinian people presented major challenges to democratization. "Democracy under occupation is not possible, and development under occupation is not possible either," Mr. Zain asserted.

The crux of the problem, he continued, was that the Palestinian Authority, the nominal government in the Palestinian Territories, did not exercise full control over its own lands. Responsibility for different aspects of administration was divided between the Palestinian Authority and Israel, and, of course, Israel controlled the external borders of the occupied territories. Within the Palestinian Authority, the governing council exercised both legislative and executive powers, and the chairman held extensive powers to rule by decree, to limit freedom of expression, and to establish state security courts. Finally, the geographic separation of the Palestinians meant that people had different interests based on their local conditions and problems, such as proximity to the Israeli security fence for some Palestinians in the West Bank, or isolation for all of them in Gaza.

The one thing that united all Palestinians, Mr. Zain said, was the desire for more security. For the past five years, his research had shown, "zero percent of Palestinians have felt that they have adequate security." The Palestine Liberation Organization was too weak to maintain law and order; political parties were incoherent and disorganized; and the community as a whole was highly polarized. Liberal intellectuals and academics with an interest in democracy had created many NGOs, but civil society nonetheless remained extremely weak, Mr. Zain said. And if ever those groups were to lose their foreign funding, "they will immediately collapse," he predicted.

Mr. Zain reported on a workshop organized by his institute in May 2005 that included approximately thirty participants from the Palestinian Authority. When these representatives of the judiciary, the security apparatus, and other sectors were asked about their attitudes toward reform, almost all of them declared their willingness to make the necessary changes. In fact, none of these individuals has ever demonstrated a genuine commitment to reform in his area of responsibility, Mr. Zain said.

Many Palestinians had recognized the need for reform as far back as 1995. Unfortunately, former president Arafat ignored civil society and refused to sign the Palestinian basic law for more than five years. The Palestinian Authority he headed repeatedly violated the human rights of its own people, and a feeble civil society was largely ineffectual in forcing any reforms on the executive authority throughout this period.

To be sure, the United States, the EU, and other international donors had generously provided millions of dollars for promoting democracy, human rights, women's rights, and other worthy causes. Unfortunately, most of this money supported wasteful projects that were never reviewed for their impact or sustainability. "We are a nation of 3 million people, so why do we need ten years of training projects on 'raising awareness?'" Mr. Zain asked. If one of the key components of democracy is a strong civil society, he

considered it risky that Palestinian civil society remains totally dependent on external funding. "There is always language about sustainability in project proposals, but grant applicants write anything to claim that their projects will be sustainable." The most significant benefit of this funding is perhaps the jobs it creates for the employees of more than 1,500 Palestinian NGOs.

He concluded by presenting a recent survey conducted by his institute in which Palestinian respondents identified their most serious problems as corruption, the weak rule of law, the Israeli occupation, and poor economic conditions. Other research on political culture in Palestine and throughout the Arab world found that, while family and tribal affiliations remain important, "we do not have strong affiliations to our states or adequate respect for law and order." Palestinians do not readily participate in the decision-making process, which remains monopolized by a small group within the Palestinian Authority. "None of this is favorable for democracy," Mr. Zain observed.

I am indebted to the Network of Democracy Research Institutes (NDRI) for providing the information. For more information visit www.wmd.org/ndri/ndri.html.

Freedom of the Press

Worth reading on freedom of the press :

1. *Freedom of the Press 2006: A Global Survey of Media Independence*, the latest edition in a series of annual reports launched by Freedom House (www.freedomhouse.org) in 1980. The study, released in New York on April 27, 2006, and covering events from calendar year 2005, "showed continued volatility in Africa, as well as a continuation of a longer-term pattern of decline in press freedom in Latin America and the former Soviet Union," according to a Freedom House news release accompanying the report. Russia saw a further decline in press freedom in 2006, for example, while Egypt, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan achieved some improvement over the previous year. Overall, out of 194 countries and territories surveyed, 74 were rated Free, 54 were rated Partly Free, and 67 were rated Not Free, according to the new study.

The Freedom House press release (www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=70&release=356) provides links to a brief essay outlining the study methodology, a table ranking all 194 countries and territories surveyed, additional regional charts and graphs, and 190 pages of narrative country reports.

2. *Freedom of the Press Worldwide in 2006*, an annual publication of Reporters sans frontières (Reporters Without Borders), a Paris-based international

association dedicated to protecting freedom of the press and defending endangered journalists worldwide.

The 2006 report noted that the year "2005 was a bloody one, with at least sixty-three journalists and five media assistants killed worldwide and more than 1,300 media workers attacked or threatened." Although many high-profile attacks on journalists took place in Iraq, the study documents episodes of violence against reporters in Lebanon, Zimbabwe, Nepal, Nigeria, Mexico, the Philippines, and other countries. And it examines what it described as instances of press intimidation in Europe and the United States.

The full text of *Freedom of the Press Worldwide in 2006* is available at www.rsf.org/IMG/pdf/report.pdf. The Reporters Without Frontiers Web site (www.rsf.org) offers additional resources in French, English, and Spanish, including its own ranking of 167 countries on freedom of the press, brief reports on current events, appeals for the release of imprisoned journalists, and an 88-page *Handbook for Bloggers and Cyber-Dissidents* (www.rsf.org/IMG/pdf/Bloggers_Handbook2.pdf).

I thank Tom Skladony for this valuable information.

World Press Freedom Day

Free expression advocates around the globe celebrated World Press Freedom Day on May 3, 2006 - a day to remind the world of the crucial role a free press plays in strengthening democracies and fostering development.

Celebrated each year since 1993, when it was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly, World Press Freedom Day is an occasion to pay tribute to journalists who have been killed because of their work and to promote the importance of protecting the right to freedom of expression.

As the only U.N. agency dedicated to promoting press freedom and freedom of expression, UNESCO organises an annual prize-giving ceremony and conference to commemorate World Press Freedom Day. This year's events are being held in Colombo, Sri Lanka under the theme "Media, Development and Poverty Eradication."

"Free and independent media serve as a vehicle for sharing information in order to facilitate good governance, generate opportunities to gain access to essential services, promote accountability and counteract corruption, and develop the relationship between an informed, critical and participatory citizenry and responsive elected officials," says UNESCO Director General Koïchiro Matsuura.

Matsuura notes that free and independent media are associated with a range of benefits that are highly relevant to poverty eradication, including the recognition and strengthening of basic human rights, a stronger civil society, institutional change, political transparency, support to education, public health awareness (such as education campaigns on HIV and AIDS) and sustainable livelihoods. "There is also a strong positive correlation between freedom of expression and higher incomes, lower infant mortality and increased adult literacy," he adds.

While emphasising the importance of a free media in the context of poverty eradication, UNESCO and other intergovernmental organisations also recognise the dangers facing journalists worldwide who report the news.

In a joint statement released today, four experts who monitor media freedom for the United Nations, the Organization of American States, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe said "in 2005, the world recorded the highest number of journalists and other media professionals, killed or injured in the line of duty."

The experts called on governments to "combat impunity with regard to violence against journalists and media personnel, by bringing to justice those responsible for attacks against them, and by taking measures that enable journalists and media personnel to continue providing information freely and independently." They also demanded that all journalists detained because of their media-related activities should be released immediately.

Visit these links:

- IFEX World Press Freedom Day Coverage: <http://www.ifex.org/en/content/view/full/242/>
- UNESCO: <http://www.unesco.org/webworld/wpfd/2006>
- UNESCO Conference Programme: <http://tinyurl.com/jn7yo>
- World Press Freedom Prize: <http://tinyurl.com/42zjk>
- Joint Statement by Media Freedom Experts: http://www.osce.org/documents/html/pdftohtml/18837_en.pdf.html
- UN Millennium Project: <http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/>
- Millennium Campaign: <http://www.millenniumcampaign.org>

CJFE Seeks Nominations for Press Freedom Awards

Canadian Journalists for Free Expression (CJFE) seeks nominations for the 2006 CJFE International Press Freedom Awards and the Tara Singh Hayer Memorial Award, which honour journalists who demonstrate courage in defending press freedom.

The International Press Freedom Awards recognise two journalists each year who have overcome enormous odds to report on human rights and have demonstrated a commitment to human rights by reporting without bias or discrimination.

Preference is given to candidates who have not won a major press freedom award from another organisation and who stand to benefit from international exposure due to the difficulties caused by their work.

The awards are also open to media outlets. To be eligible for an award, applicants must be nominated by an organisation or individual. Self-nominations are not accepted. Each award consists of a framed plaque and cash prize of CDN\$3,000 (US\$2,700).

The Tara Singh Hayer Memorial Award recognises a Canadian journalist who has highlighted cases of media repression in Canada or around the world, or has suffered physical reprisals for working as a journalist.

The deadline for submitting nominations is 30 June 2006.

For more details about the awards, see:
<http://cjfe.org/releases/2006/11052006awards.html>

New Article on Privacy

My latest publication, "The Right to Privacy v. Public's Right to Know", *Communication Law Review*, is available on line. All comments are welcome.

www.commlawreview.org

New Books

Paul Bergman and Michael Asimow, *Reel Justice. The Courtroom Goes to the Movies* (Andrews & McMeel, 2006), paperback. ISBN numbers: 13:978-0-7407-5460-9 and 10:0-7407-5460-2.

Edward Alexander and Paul Bogdanoe (eds.), *The Jewish Divide Over Israel* (New Brunswick: Transaction, 2006).

Mazal Tov to the authors and editors. I recommend ordering the books to your library.

Basketball Final Four

Maccabi Tel Aviv reached the European Final Four for the third consecutive year. We were superior to Tau Vitoria (Spain) but in the final could not withstand the excellent defence of CSKA Moscow and lost. There is a direct correlation between the way our leading player's performance on the day, and the final result. When Anthony Parker plays well, Maccabi usually wins. When he is not at his best, we are more likely to lose important games. Parker was on the floor but not in the game; consequently we lost the final after two wins in the last two years. Pity.

I sincerely hope that Will Solomon will not continue for another year. We need a playmaker, and Solomon is not what we need. In the final he had two assists. The person who is supposed to control the game and give the ball to his mates likes the ball too much and rather keeps it to himself. He is doing so many mistakes and makes every game a surprised adventure. It might be fun if you don't care. It is miserable to watch when you do. Luckily, no one received a heart attack yet, though my friend Yizhar feels he needs to do some medical check ups because of "dear Will". I recommended the President of Maccabi, Shimon Mizrahi, to take Tyus Edny and to try courting after Earl Watson, whom I enjoyed watching while at UCLA. Other recommendations are welcomed.

Joke of the Month

FINALLY A GOOD BLONDE JOKE

Guy gets on a plane and finds himself seated next to a cute blonde. He immediately turns to her and makes his move.

"You know," he says, "I've heard that flights will go quicker if you strike up a conversation with your fellow passenger. So let's talk."

The blonde, who had just opened her book, closes it slowly and says to the guy, "What would you like to discuss?"

"Oh, I don't know," says the guy. "How about nuclear power?"

"OK," says the blonde. "That could be an interesting topic. But let me ask you a question first. A horse, a cow, and a deer all eat the same stuff--grass. Yet the deer excretes little pellets, the cow turns out a flat patty, and the horse produces muffins of dried poop. Why do you suppose that is?"

The guy is dumbfounded. Finally he replies, "I haven't the slightest idea!"

"So tell me," says the blonde, "How is it that you feel qualified to discuss nuclear power when you don't know shit?"

With my very best wishes for a sunny, joyful spring,

Rafi

My last communications are available on <http://almagor.blogspot.com>
Earlier posts at my home page: <http://hcc.haifa.ac.il/~rca/>
Center for Democratic Studies <http://hcc.haifa.ac.il/~rca/center/>

Those wishing to subscribe this monthly Newsletter are welcome to contact Raphael Cohen-Almagor at ralmagor@soc.haifa.ac.il