

ACTS OF TERROR AND THE FAMILY

EDITORIAL

Grief is not measurable: violence bulldozes boundaries. Acts of terror do not just affect the victims, they devastate parents and siblings and bring horror and fear to families and communities. The voices that follow are from those who have experienced terror: the mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters and friends of those who have been killed or injured by acts that seem as random in their choice of victims as they are brutal. We wish to let them speak for themselves.

Note. The articles in this newsletter are in alphabetical order of country.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

All these never-ending wars have stripped the people of all their social projects, destroyed many of the infrastructures and ruined the economy. The rebels and the militia carry off everything they find. They pillage the fields, the animals and even destroy germinating crops. Paradoxically, the daily reality of Congolese women is

that, far from being liberated from oppression, they are being deprived of the very hope of life. In the DRC, anyone who escapes the sword or the bullet is likely to fall victim to starvation.

Sexual acts of terror

In times of political crisis, the men are quick to take up arms to show that they can do. The strongest kill and eliminate the weak or turn them into slaves. Apart from firearms, sex is used to demonstrate the phallic power that can crush and annihilate women and young girls.

In the DRC, grandmothers, mothers, daughters and even little girls as young as four, have been violated. Rape seems to be systematically practised as though it were part of the law of war, whereas in fact it is an abusive act and a war crime. This situation accompanies almost every war in the world, but the ordeal imposed on the women of Eastern DRC outdoes everything by the sheer intensity and depravity of it. It is beyond imagining. According to reports by humanitarian organisations working in the region, the war in DRC from August 1998 until 2003 produced 8,000 cases of rape in the province of South Kivu alone. The true figures are probably much higher because many women fear being ostracised and

say nothing about the rape they have suffered.

In the region of south Kivu, in the Mwenga territory, some 150 km south of Bukavu, a worker said that rape had reached such proportions that they have started purifying women rather than repudiating them, using a rite normally used for women guilty of adultery. She explained that in this territory rape had been committed on such a scale that all the women and girls there had been raped. "At first men repudiated their wives, then when they realised that they would have to repudiate all the women without exception, they initiated purifying rites."

The violence against the women intensified with the second war of aggression against DRC. It seemed as if the war encouraged the violence, which then became daily practice. Despite all the efforts for peace, this terror continues. This is how one observer has described the depravity:

"Since the beginning of this year, sexual violence is ritually exercised so often that it is almost standard practice. Several men rape one woman and do so several times. Her

husband is bound hand and foot in their cabin and the children are brought in too. All of them are forced to be present... The attackers force the family to engage in acts of incest between father and daughter or brother and sister. They even go so far as to sodomise some of the men, an act that is quite unthinkable in rural Africa, even in consenting relations.”

Sexuality remains a taboo in Africa: sex can never be practised in public, far less in front of one’s own children. Customs are being overturned. These children are left inwardly shocked and injured. It teaches them to lose respect for everything to do with their culture or even to develop a deep-rooted hatred for all those guilty of raping their mothers.

The men who commit these atrocities have no idea of the physical and psychological costs of their loathsome actions. The worst thing is that some of the men who commit these crimes have even gone on to execute some of their victims, on the pretext of saving them from shame and suffering.

Sometimes the women who have been raped are condemned to live in isolation. African humanity is under scrutiny as a result of this violence. It has been betrayed by inhuman practices. The respect due to the one who gives birth to life has been trampled underfoot. The whole notion of decency has been lost, things that are taboo and prohibited are revealed for all to see.

The child victims of terror in Eastern DRC

The violence perpetrated against children comes on the one hand from the war itself and on the other from the consequences of the violence against women, their mothers. What is special

about the Eastern DRC is that the children who are recruited into militias are the youngest ones who are still totally dependent on their parents. They are known locally as “Kadogo”. They are forcibly snatched from their parents or from school and taken into the forest to receive military training. The ones who cannot keep up with the training die without their parents knowing anything about it. It has happened that in the fighting, children from the same family recruited by different groups have found themselves face to face. So, although the war has been officially ended by the Pretoria agreements, and some children who survived have been demobilised and returned to their families, they have become dangerous – not just among themselves but for their families and for society as a whole because of their disastrous education in violence.

In the second case, the children are victims of the violence to which their mothers are subjected. Even in his mother’s womb, a child can communicate and follow her movements, moods and feelings. But while they were carrying their children, these women were victims of every kind of violence. They were intimidated, terrorised, frightened by gunfire and the nightmare of rape and death was ever present. Such acts of terror spare no one, not even babies in their mother’s womb, and all the children born during this crisis are affected by it.

Peace will not be restarted where everything has been laid waste by violence simply by rebuilding the social and political structures; above all, we will have to eradicate the violence that resides in people’s hearts. This has less to do with politics and economics than with the mission of the Church and of the family, as the nucleus of the nation and all

the other areas of education. To be effective, this mission will have to accompany both aggressors and victims, condemning acts of violence and trying to bring the two groups to make peace and act justly. This mission will also have to include therapy to help in healing all the women and children left traumatised by violence and thus break the vicious circle.

While recognising all the work done so far by non-governmental organisations, the Church itself has a not-inconsiderable contribution to make to this great mission for peace. It is well placed to speed awareness of peace and ways of practising peace because it is still the place that assembles large numbers of people in Africa. What is needed in this struggle against terror and violence is a fundamental shift of consciousness. Konrad Raiser, former general secretary of the World Council of Churches writes: “We must give up being spectators of violence or merely lamenting it and become active in overcoming violence within and outside the walls of the Church. We remind ourselves and the churches of our common responsibility to speak out boldly against any defence of unjust and oppressive structures, the use of violence and gross violators of human rights committed in the name of any nation or ethnic group.”

It would be a great and significant undertaking if all theological institutions and the local churches active in the religious field were to form a network in order to carry out their common mission of educating the people for peace and reconciliation, drawing on their relations at regional and continental level. We must invest in educating women and children who are the future of the whole region.



On 7th July last year my daughter Jenny was travelling to work at a music publishing company on the London underground, when she was killed by a suicide bomber. Jenny was one of 52 people who died.

The previous day, Jenny was at the centre of celebrations in Trafalgar Square following London's successful Olympic bid for 2012. She sent excited text messages to her father and me saying how wonderful the atmosphere was, the Red Arrows display aircraft were flying overhead, laughter and cheers filled the air. Although I was many miles away at the time, in North Wales, the picture I retain is of Jenny, bubbling with excitement, full of joy and typically spreading it all around in a loud and infectious way.

In less than 24 hours, Jenny was at the centre of another event, one of devastation and carnage and this time there was no text message, no Red Arrows, laughter or cheering. Instead the sound of sirens filled the air and the ripples of death started to spread.

Due to holidays, work and demographics, like most families, ours was scattered at the time of the terrorist attack. Within hours and without fuss or panic, this enormous machine called "family" shifted seamlessly into practical action and support. By Friday morning, the day following the attack, our vigil had begun in earnest and the family had drawn together physically, emotionally and spiritually. When I reflect on those early days after July 7th it seems to me important to articulate how profound an expression of family that "drawing together" was. It was not about wider or immediate or closer family clan gathering. Rather it was a motley group of relatives,

unique and individual, becoming part of one painfully beautiful, broken and poetic whole communion, a communion which waited, dreaded, hoped and, finally, on the fifth day when Jenny was confirmed dead, lamented.

There is something about the beauty and nobility of the human soul which has the power to transcend the ugliness and brutality of war and terrorism. In the immediate aftermath of the London bombings, a surreal calm pervaded the atmosphere in the house as we waited for news. Even when faces and names of suspected suicide bombers began to appear and dominate news reports, the beauty and loveliness of Jenny and the other victims could not be supplanted by the cruelty and wickedness of the act. Even in the face of death, it is essential to preserve the sanctity of life and protect that which is most precious against violation.

I've never experienced an actual earthquake, yet I would describe the resulting effects of July 7th on the family as an earthquake in its emotional sense. One moment life was good, day-to-day normality, the landscape recognisable, familiar and fairly secure, albeit with an occasional spot of turbulence. Then everything changed, the ripples of death were felt, the calm made way for the storm, and chaos and confusion threatened to overwhelm us all. Like a building rocked by an earthquake, every aspect of life, including faith, is shaken to the core. Order becomes disorder, cracks appear in the foundations, the landscape is distorted and the spirit despairs. Muddle is everywhere and the structures can barely contain it.

Grief is a tough and confusing process in

any circumstance. Yet there is another layer of grief, a darker layer which accompanies an act of terror such as my family experienced on July 7th. It was as though an eruption of evil had spilled over into our lives, an encounter with the most destructive behaviour to which the human soul can descend.

An 80-year-old grandparent and an 18-year-old sibling do not respond to such an event in the same way. Reactions are unpredictable and expressions of loss and grief are as uniquely felt as the relationship to the person who has died, mother/child, father/daughter, sister/sister, brother/sister, and so on. We are united in our grief for Jenny, but also isolated in our individual sorrow. All of us have come to learn that this must be respected. We help each other when we can but accept when we cannot.

As a family, we are in a process of trying to deal with our collective and individual grief for Jenny but also, and perhaps more complex, the anger and outrage of July 7th and our feelings towards the people who chose on that day to detonate bombs in the midst of a random group of people and bring about death. We live daily with constant reminders of that event, not least through news reports of other terrorist attacks around the world. Terrorism and its effects have become part of family normality. We don't attempt to deny it, but embrace the reality as we move forward positively into each new day with a wealth of care and kindness from church, professional support structures, strangers and friends.

IRAN

I have a six-year-old son who, despite my best efforts, is obsessed with guns and shooting. My only brother was murdered by fanatics in 1980 during the Islamic revolution that swept through Iran. Bahram was shot in the head when he was 24 for no other reason than that our father was a convert to Christianity and Bishop of the tiny Persian Anglican church. His killers walked free and justice was never done. I have good reason, therefore, for wanting to ban toy guns from the house and I have explained these to my son repeatedly. But my adult logic simply doesn't wash. "It's only pretend," he argues, designing his latest weapon from a piece of wood, a half-eaten sandwich or anything else that comes to hand.

Gabriel's behaviour and that of little boys the world over, seems to suggest that violence lurks within us all. At some level, this particularly boyish phase points an accusing finger at humanity. A propensity for violence is part of human nature. Perhaps it is circumstances and life experience that determine why, for some, childish make-believe turns to cruel reality in a variety of forms. I and my

family have been victims of violence. Who knows whether, if my life had been different, I might have become a perpetrator. "There but for the grace of God..." This is not to excuse the violence, for to some degree we each bear responsibility for our actions. Rather, it is to try and understand the depths of depravity to which humanity can sink and in understanding, to keep hatred at bay and allow new possibilities to emerge.

In my family, whilst tears and anger and a deep sense of loss have undoubtedly played a part, over the years we have tried not to succumb to bitterness and hatred. This has meant a struggle with the Christian call to forgive. Not because forgiveness is the easy option but because it is the most compelling. Ultimately, as with all sin, only God can forgive the act of murder itself. For our part, we choose to forgive the wrong done to us and in so doing we free ourselves to remember Bahram unconstrained by bitterness and to live our lives unencumbered by hatred.

Each of us needs God's forgiveness – a gift freely given, to be shared. How can we accept it for ourselves if we do not even

try to offer it to others? No one ever said it would be easy or pain-free. Suffering and forgiveness are not religious clichés, cheaply bandied around until it becomes too difficult. They are, rather, fundamental to Christianity which has the cross as its central symbol. Suffering and forgiveness, whilst costly and painful, bring us nearer to Christ and give us an insight into the Good Friday story which leads eventually from agony to the joy of Easter day.

I was 13 when my brother was killed and it is only in adulthood that I have begun to ponder these things for myself. At the time, together with my sisters, we were led by the example of our parents who displayed for us a pattern of Christian forgiveness. Through the pain of grief, religious sentiments became living faith. Forgiveness brought the ability to banish hatred and continue loving when all seemed lost. For my own three children, my hope is that when they have outgrown the desire to play with toy guns, this reality will shine through for them.

NORTHERN IRELAND

In 1975, when I was just two years of age, my father was very seriously injured in a terrorist bombing in Northern Ireland. He was a serving police officer at the time and his injuries, both physical and emotional, meant that he never returned to normal duties again, even though he continued in the job for nearly another 20 years. To look at him now you would never know what happened to him all

those years ago, but people are very good at concealing their physical as well as emotional scars. The night my father was injured not only changed his life but changed the lives of the whole family. When statistics for the troubles in Northern Ireland are published, they list the dead and the injured but rarely – if ever – do they mention the thousands of family members and friends whose lives

were affected and unalterably changed by barbaric acts of evil – of man's inhumanity to man. The grieving widow, the children left without a mum or dad, the elderly parents left to care for a badly-injured son or daughter. The list goes on. Acts of terrorism do not just affect individuals but scar whole families and communities.

As a priest working in rural Ulster, I have met with many families who lost loved ones in "the troubles". Life has changed dramatically for them. There will always now be a sense of emptiness. Tied up with those very painful and sad memories of how their loved ones died, are cherished memories of times in the past spent with those they loved and have lost awhile. Some recalled Christmas dinner with the family all around the table and dad in his usual seat; others talked of a brother who played a vital role on their wedding day. Suddenly that central and important figure in the life of that family was removed, cruelly taken away. In the homes of many of these families there is a special photograph which has pride of place, the focal point of the whole room – to keep a memory alive. The photograph is cherished and its frame is well polished. It is a valued memorial to love given and received and now replaced with tears.

So how can life move on for these families? There is a serious need for them to be able to tell their stories, recount how it was before that fateful day or night, what happened and how they have dealt with their pain in the years since. When peace has been fully established in the Province and people feel safe once more, it is clear that some facility to hear the stories of the past needs to be found. It has been pointed out that "Remembering and telling the truth about terrible events are pre-requisites both for the restoration of the social order and for the healing of individual victims."* It is only when the individual victims begin to find healing, that society can find healing and the ability to plan for the future.

My early childhood experiences of "the

troubles" and how they impacted on my own family have made me more determined to work for peace and reconciliation in the community. As I look back on my formative years, I realise that what I took as normal, such as my parents checking under the car for a bomb before they would take me to school each day, was indeed far from normal. Instead of making me bitter though, it has made me more determined that another generation of children, those in Sunday School today, will not have to live in the same way.

During those dark days of "the troubles", many people lost their faith and trust not only in the human race but also in God. People had to find somewhere to apportion blame and so God often had to

bear the brunt of their anger. Yet God understands the pain, the tears and the heartache, and through his love and understanding the seeds of reconciliation and hope are now starting to grow in Northern Ireland. My hope and prayer is that those seeds will continue to grow and that all the families of this small province will in time benefit from a harvest of peace.

*Judith Lewis Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*, p1

PAKISTAN/NEW ZEALAND

It's hard to look back nearly four years and in a sense drag up thoughts and feelings that have finally been processed and mostly laid to rest. But in writing this article it is good to realise that as a family we have all come out the other side of a terrorist experience and still have no doubt that serving the Lord in a difficult place, even with a difficult ending, was the right thing to do.

What is the impact of terrorism on a mission family? It tears you from your friends, your home, your job, and your identified calling by God. It leaves you questioning, hurt and angry. It leaves you with a deep sense of loss and it takes a long time to recover.

Terrorism had two bites at our work and lives in Pakistan.

The first bite came after September 11th, 2001 when all expatriates were evacuated in two days. Packing and leaving in a hurry certainly sorts out your priorities – family, photos and a few treasures are all that are important. Back in New Zealand, we worked through the impact of that event on us and came to the point where we felt it was right to go back to Pakistan and continue with our work and lives there. It was not an easy decision but it was one that we felt at peace with.

The reality was that life had changed from that of pre-September 11th. People were more cautious, security was increased at home and work, large gatherings of expatriates were restricted especially after grenade attacks on a Christian hospital and church, and this affected our corporate worship. Much later, after we had left Pakistan a second time, I realised that in the background of our lives, fear had been a constant companion for me, often felt as a churning in my stomach when I awoke each morning. However, in saying this, I also acknowledge that our return was an encouragement to the people we worked with and our local friends and God certainly encouraged and sustained us as we handed our fears over to Him.

The second bite that terrorism took at our lives came on 5th August 2002. On that day our three children aged 17, 15 and 12, along with 140 other children and staff of Murree Christian School, huddled in classrooms and offices while terrorists attacked. The sound of the firing of automatic weapons and the fear and concern about the safety of their siblings and friends elsewhere in the school is something our children will probably never forget. As parents we are thankful that some of the safety precautions put in place after September 11th prevented the terrorists

finding the children, but six people died that day, one a good Pakistani friend of our son.

Despite the terrorists' careful plans, we know that God intervened in miraculous ways. He prevented the terrorists from arriving five minutes earlier during break-time when children would have been swarming outside. He protected the lives of children and staff by not allowing the men to see any of the 140 people hidden in classrooms. He allowed inclement weather so the classes were not outside. He confounded the men into not carrying out further plans of destruction with their grenades and He enabled children to hear His angels singing in the rafters of the High School building during the shooting. These things we all treasure and store in our memories as wonderful examples of God's miraculous intervention.

One of the impacts of terrorism is that it can undermine one's sense of personal safety. We never thought that anyone would attack a place where innocent children live and study and yet the terrorists crossed that psychological barrier. We thought our children's school was a safer place than our place of work elsewhere in the country and yet the school was attacked first and on the following day, a Christian hospital which served both Christians and Muslims was attacked with grenades. The following day we also had to shift out of our summer home of 11 years as it was being "watched" and was considered a vulnerable target. We were reminded afresh and made acutely aware of our vulnerability and dependence on God – not a bad thing, but still difficult to adjust to when brought about in such a sudden and brutal manner.

Following the attack, the school closed and later relocated to Thailand for two years until its reopening in 2005. We, however, made the decision to return permanently to our home country of New Zealand. Our place of work in Pakistan was in an already volatile area and we didn't want to put the lives of our Pakistani colleagues and students further at risk with our "Western" presence. We had already hurriedly packed up our Murree home and

said tearful farewells to neighbours, school staff and friends of 11 years and then had two days under high security to do the same in our place of work.

Back in New Zealand in the months following our return, some debriefing and trauma-counselling continued on from that provided in the school immediately after the attack. However, nightmares, poor sleeping patterns, heightened awareness of danger, jumpiness with sudden sounds, tearfulness, anger, difficulty with concentration and other symptoms of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder were evident to varying degrees in our children.

As parents, we needed to work through and overcome a sense of guilt that our children

were suffering in this way, as well as deal with the grief of our own losses. This was not always easy, as the need to settle into a new life in NZ often meant we put on hold some of our own processing of everything. Prayer, loving and supportive family members, friends and home church all helped, but it is very difficult for others to truly empathise and understand the impact of such an event.

As we look back over the three years since that unplanned, hurried departure, it was probably the grief of leaving homes, school, a wonderfully satisfying job, friends and a country we loved, that had a greater effect on us than the terror of the attack itself. It was our home for 11 years and our children had grown up there for the majority of their lives.

I don't believe "time heals all", but time is needed to heal. Our experiences haven't dampened our enthusiasm for mission. Pakistan is still close to our hearts. Soon all three children will have had reunions with their class fellows. Two of them want to eventually return to the Two-Thirds world to work. All three say despite the difficult finish to our time in Pakistan, they wouldn't change their growing up there for anything. We continue to pray for our friends in Pakistan and God's work there.

PALESTINE/ISRAEL

Two stories touched my heart deeply during those long years of Israeli military occupation. The first is of Dr. Nurit Peled – El-Hanan, an Israeli Jewish woman whose only daughter Smadar, 13 years old, was killed in Jerusalem by a suicide bomber in September 1997. The other is that of Ismail El-Khatib, a Palestinian Muslim whose son Ahmad, 12 years old, was shot by the Israeli army in Jenin in November 2005. One was killed by an individual violent act of a Palestinian living under occupation, while the other was killed by the occupying military forces of the State of Israel.

When Nurit was asked by a reporter how she was willing to accept condolences from the other side, she explained that the other side – the enemy – was not the Palestinian people, and that the struggle is between those who seek peace and those who seek war. That is why when representatives of Netanyahu's government came to offer Nurit their condolences, she would not sit with them. In her speech to Women in Black* she said: "My people are those who seek peace. My sisters are the bereaved mothers, Israeli and

Palestinians who live in Israel and in Gaza and in the refugee camps. My brothers are those fathers who try to defend their children from the cruel occupation, and are, as I was, unsuccessful in doing so."

Despite her great loss, Nurit did not turn into a bitter woman. She was able to see clearly the root cause of the "terror" that took the life of her daughter. The Israeli military occupation was the enemy, and that is why she continues to speak out in order to spare other mothers, both Palestinians and Israelis, the traumatic experience that she went through.

Ismail Khatib reacted to the loss of his child by donating his son's organs to the Israeli hospital where Ahmad was taken after he was shot. It would have been very easy for him not to even think of such a detail in the midst of his sorrow. But he did not lose focus, and out of this sad experience he wanted to spare other parents the experience of losing a child: an option that was made available to him only by the loss of his own child.

What makes the two stories, eight years

apart, so unique is how those parents reacted to the great loss of their children, almost the same age, and how the violence causing the loss of those children was viewed.

Violence on the part of resistance movements struggling for liberation and independence is looked upon as "terrorism," while state violence on behalf of the occupiers is always justified for the security of the state. Unfortunately the individual violence has failed to bring about liberation and independence to the oppressed, and the state violence with all its brutal measures, walls and checkpoints, cannot guarantee security to an oppressive regime.

Sabeel, through all its programmes, anticipates its journey of reconciliation and healing. But healing is almost impossible while the wound is still bleeding. The occupation is still there, and the suffering on both sides goes on. And both Nurit and Ismail realise that justice is the only guarantee for security, for without justice there can be no peace, reconciliation or healing.

** A worldwide network of women committed to peace with justice and actively opposed to injustice, militarism, and other forms of violence. Their actions often take the form of silent, non-violent vigils of women wearing black.*

"Yesterday, we were at the YWCA, to bid farewell to the General Secretary. One of the women arrived so angry and frustrated after crossing the check point that she told us that we should not be surprised if she ends up a suicide bomber. I could not believe my ears: but this is a sign of how bad the situation has become, and it will certainly be a new phenomenon for Christian Palestinians. If a woman from a comfortable home feels this way, what do you expect from a starving population in Gaza, Nablus and Jenin and other refugee camps?"

Samia Khoury

Background Note

Since President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo joined the US global "War on Terrorism", the Philippines has become the site of an ongoing war against peasant and union activists, progressive political dissidents and lawmakers, human rights lawyers and activists, women leaders and a wide range of print and broadcast journalists. Because of the links between the Army, the regime and the death squads, political assassinations take place in an atmosphere of absolute impunity. The vast majority of the attacks occur in the countryside and provincial towns.

Extract from *Philippines: the Killing of Asia* by James Petras and Robin Eastman-Abaya

He had dreamed of being someone his father was not and could never hope to be. What that was, only time would tell. If he had time. Edgar (not his real name) threw a doleful glance at his sleeping siblings on the earthen floor of their shanty. Poor things! They had gone to sleep hungry last night. There was hardly a morsel of rice in the house. And Mang Andres, their father, was out of work. Since he joined the United Luisita Workers' Union, he would leave the house at dawn for the picket line, not the sugar-cane fields. More often than not, he could not come home for weeks on end. He had to be at the picket line, providing security for the Union leaders who were being watched and tailed. He had to explain to visitors why they were on strike... what they wanted from the landlords – the Cojuangco clan – family of

former President Corazon Aquino... how it was possible for the farm workers to brave the harassment from police and military forces and paid goons of the Cojuangcos. Edgar did not understand. How he wished the farmers would just give in to the landlords' wishes and quietly return to work. Then, perhaps, there would be some rice on the table for his brothers and sisters.

More than fifteen years ago, the farmers were seduced into a scheme where they were considered as "stockholders" of Hacienda Luisita, Inc. (HLI). But that did not make things any better for them. They continued to receive starvation wages while the Cojuangcos remained one of the richest families in the country. The collective dissatisfaction of the 5,750 sugar-mill workers and farm workers came to a head in November 2004 through a strike following the dismissal of more than 320 labourers. Like all other peasants, they had but one call: land to the tillers!

Every day, thereafter, Edgar would bring cans of drinking water to the striking peasants. He would linger a while to listen to the leaders talk about their demands. Each day, the strike area mushroomed with uniformed men. Their long arms and fierce facial expressions were fearsome... Intimidating. Once in a while, they would shout invectives at the farmers. Sometimes, their guns were pointed at the strikers. But the farmers stood their ground. They would stay put as their union leaders indefatigably

negotiated for more humane conditions for them all. After all, weren't they human beings?

On that fateful November 16, the combined forces of the Philippine National Police and the Armed Forces of the Philippines mercilessly pounced upon the farm workers violently dispersing them. Volleys of fire from nozzles of high powered guns, clouds of tear gas that blurred their vision, shrieks and screams of pain, people scampering in all directions, bloody bodies strewn all around. Total pandemonium!

Edgar, with his water cans, ran toward the strike area, dodging the bullets. As he desperately searched for his father, he felt his body being lifted and carried away. And then searing pain. A burly soldier hung him on the barbed wire fence. Just like the crucified Jesus on the cross. Blood oozed from his arms and back. A gunshot rang. Edgar died without finding his father. He couldn't even say goodbye to his mother and siblings. The drinking water that he was going to give to the thirsty strikers that day flowed out of the cans on to the dusty road to join the rivulets of blood from dead and wounded bodies.

That carnage was but the start of a relentless HLI campaign against the terrorism of the State. The farm workers kept the strike up, braving the gigantic military trucks that rolled past their tents. The massacre became a rallying point of solidarity. Edgar's siblings told their stories again and again. Church people, professionals, youth and students, religious leaders from many parts of the world flocked to Tarlac to stand where it all happened and to be imbued by the indomitable spirit of courage... the deep passion for freedom and justice... the hope that springs eternal in the hearts of the exploited and the oppressed.

On December 8 2005, the United Luisita Workers' Union and the Central Azucarera De Tarlac Labor Union ended their year-long strike by signing agreements with the management. They got all that they demanded for. Thirteen martyrs and countless attacks on their human dignity are what Hacienda Luisita labourers can show to give evidence to the legitimacy of their struggle for land, jobs and decent wages.

RWANDA

The 1994 mayhem claimed over one million innocent Rwandans and left severe scars on many families in the Rwandan society. These resulted from a hundred days of genocide in Rwanda where thousands of men – young men – were butchered; and young girls and mothers raped and defiled, causing them to have unwanted pregnancies and HIV/AIDS. It is sad to mention that the majority of these surviving victims of rape contracted HIV/AIDS and they are now struggling with the disease, absolute poverty and hardship to raise and educate their children. As a result of this massive raping, HIV/AIDS became rampant in Rwandan society. Many have died due to the virus while many others were traumatised as a result of forced sex. Also, the victims of rape gave birth to the unexpected children which put the young mothers at risk and tension, since they could not support their families financially. The whole society was left in a state of quagmire, resulting in young children becoming heads of families.

The atrocities left families and some homesteads in ruins. Vivid examples can be traced in places like Gasabo, Bugesera and Gikongoro, where over 2,500 children were left homeless and parentless. The children act as heads of families and are, moreover, under the scourge of poverty. This has therefore left many families in despair with no hope. The young children still nurse in the effects of genocide and poverty.

To add to this, the genocide left the society in a traumatic state because ten thousands of Rwandans were traumatised due to severe killings and the torture they experienced during a hundred days of genocide.

Moreover, the atrocities left the society in shambles because many Rwandan families and properties were destroyed and churches, schools and pit latrines became dumping places for dead bodies killed in cold blood. Rwanda was left in a sorry state. Other people were left crippled, cut by the use of pangas, and they are living in a desperate situation.

All this severely affected Rwandan families in all spheres. Also, the 1994 atrocities were followed by years of insurgency and insecurity across the country. To date, security has significantly improved but genocide survivors' lives are still under threat, with reports indicating that they continue to die mysteriously; even in broad daylight they are intimidated and made to commit suicide or flee their homes by the killers who want to make the evidence against them disappear. Worse still, many of these orphans live in a desperate and absolute poverty, lacking education, shelter and medication. It is now estimated that currently the genocide-related orphan, whose parents were killed during the genocide, those whose parents died of genocide-related AIDS, and those whose parents committed genocide and died in exile, amount to about 1.2 million.

With regard to my own story, in my family we lost 104 men, women, young men and young girls. These are uncles, aunts, cousins. Men and young men were slaughtered and thrown into pit latrines. The women and girls were raped and then pierced by sticks in public and then later left for dogs to eat. When this happened, I was not in Rwanda. But all this was revealed by the few surviving children and the repenting

killers. My mother and sisters are very stressed and traumatised by this situation. It took me three full years of prayers and regular fasting to do away with this grief. It took me five years to be able to forgive those who killed and raped my relatives. Christian faith was very instrumental in my healing and in the forgiveness.

As a result of forgiveness, God has put in my heart the vision to care for the orphans and to preach a message of forgiveness to suspect killers in prison and to the survivors.

I call upon the world to support the reconciliation in Rwanda and the orphans to give them hope for a better future.

SCOTLAND

Stories of families affected by the Lockerbie disaster, when a huge plane was brought down by a bomb on the night of 21st December 1988, have been well documented. Whilst my own family did not suffer directly that night, as we happily prepared for Christmas, we were very involved in the community response. Recently appointed as the local Women's Royal Voluntary Service co-ordinator, I had an immediate role and my husband was one of the first to arrive at Sherwood Crescent where the fuselage of "Maid of the Seas" Flight Pan Am 103 to New York crashed. The scenes of devastation will remain with him and all those involved forever; so will the grief and suffering witnessed by our close-knit small community in the aftermath of the event, as families from

SOUTH AFRICA

both sides of the Atlantic tried to come to terms with their loss. Amazing individual stories of caring, compassion and sensitivity emerged over time, helping to balance the ongoing publicity as the long drawn-out hunt for the perpetrators was brought to a conclusion with their eventual trial.

It was inevitable that questions were raised many times such as:

Where was God that night?
How could God permit an act of such
unspeakable and calculated evil?

But on reflection, it was obvious that God was most certainly there. His hand was evident in even the smallest acts of kindness, as the people of Lockerbie and the surrounding communities supplied shelter, food, love and support not only for the victims and their loved ones but also for the emergency services as they set about their grim task.

And some good did come out of the atrocity. Lasting friendships were forged between local people and the bereaved families; a youth club – which continues to this day – was formed in Lockerbie to help the young people of the town, many of whom were traumatised by the disaster. Scholarships were set up by various families, colleges and universities. One such scholarship, in memory of 35 students of Syracuse University lost as they returned home from London for Christmas, annually provides for two students from Lockerbie to study in Syracuse. For the young people involved, including one of my own daughters, it is an unforgettable experience and helps to keep alive the memory of those who died.

It is often something simple that puts things into perspective. Visiting Sherwood Crescent before the crater was filled in, I noticed under a charred tree the most beautiful, perfect snowdrops I had ever seen... “A Blessed Assurance” of fresh hope and triumph over the evil that men do.

Confronting the past and creating the future in South Africa and beyond.

In 1992, I returned to South Africa after an absence of 16 years spent in Lesotho and Zimbabwe. The first thing which struck me on my return was that we were a damaged nation – damaged in our humanity by what we had done, by what had been done to us, and by what we had failed to do. And all of us with a story to tell – about our experience of the apartheid years.

In 1993 I became chaplain to the Trauma Centre for Victims of Violence and Torture in Cape Town. Already, even before democracy came to South Africa, the debate had begun about how the nation would deal with its past. A few dreamed of “Nuremberg”, although a negotiated settlement with all its compromises meant that this option was never really a possibility.

Questions were raised in the media about violations of human rights in the military camps of the African National Congress outside South Africa. The liberation movement responded by acknowledging and accepting responsibility. It asserted that in a new democratic state it would be important to lay bare as complete a picture as possible of the full horror of what had happened under apartheid – not just the transgressions of those who fought for freedom.

The whole negotiating process became log-jammed over the question of amnesty. The apartheid generals demanded blanket general amnesty in private – tacitly acknowledging that they had committed indefensible atrocities to preserve white rule. Amnesty was agreed to on an individual basis and in public.

As South Africans, we looked to Latin America to find a mechanism that would take us from an oppressive dictatorial past to a future based on respect for human rights. A number of Latin American countries had set up truth commissions for that purpose. We too opted for a Truth and

Reconciliation Commission as a mechanism to acknowledge and to overcome the past.

Even before the Commission began its work, I asked myself – how many stories will be heard by the Commission and what will happen to the other stories? 23,000 people came forward to speak about torture, murder, abductions, sexual violence and other forms of severe maltreatment. 7,700 sought amnesty for what they had done for political reasons but only about 10% were successful. For nearly five years, the nation was transfixed as we gazed into the mirror and saw what we had done to each other.

Much was revealed, but even today much remains hidden. Significant areas of South African life have not yet had to account fully for what they did – this includes international corporations, the military and the judiciary which presided over countless unjust laws – without talking about those who passed the laws.

3,500,000 people were forcibly removed from their homes but their stories were not heard by the Commission. No one knows the full scale of damage done to African family life after more than a century of migrant labour.

Perhaps the greatest weakness of all was the failure of the State to respond quickly, generously and systematically to the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, especially with regard to reparations. Nevertheless it is true to say that South Africa captured the imagination of the world by facing its past and putting it on the table to a greater degree than any country had hitherto.

In the face of the question, what about the stories of those which did not come before the Commission, a few of us decided to set up a parallel process. We created for the purpose an experiential workshop which we called “The Healing of the Memories”.

During a three-day period, groups of 25 people at a time have an opportunity to explore how the past of the country has affected them psychologically, emotionally and spiritually – to cough out the “poison”. A safe and sacred space is created to enable participants to begin to acknowledge and lay to rest what in the past is destructive and to take from the past that which is life-giving. We guarantee those who come to our workshops one step on the road to healing. But it can be the step which takes people away from victimhood, from the cycle that turns victims into victimisers and towards becoming victors.

Editorial Note. Father Andrea Santoro was a priest from the one Catholic church in the city of Trabzon. He was shot and killed while praying in his parish. A teenager has been arrested and is said to have been influenced by the cartoons lampooning the Prophet Mohammed. But many questions remain unanswered.

It seems to me a bit strange that I, a religious of consecrated life, have been asked to give a contribution for a magazine dedicated to families. But I am convinced that the true family is the place where each of us has placed the treasure of his heart, a space open to a meeting of a specific person as in a couple, or a meeting that renews itself in every person we are asked to love as God would. I think that in this second perspective we can see the life of a consecrated monk or nun as someone who very soon discovers a brotherhood with other brothers and sisters who, from different starting points, have decided to live a life of more universal solidarity and partnership. We are not always given the possibility to enjoy the beauty and the richness of this brotherhood that creates an “enlarged” family, but I can say I have experienced them in many ways, during my religious life, first of all in the religious community I belong to, that is the Black Friars (Dominicans Brothers). However, a more touching experience of this deep brotherhood for me occurred here in

Turkey, where I have been living for more than two years, on the day of the killing of my friend, Fr. Andrea Santoro, on February the 5th of this year, in Trabzon, on the Black Sea. Andrea was not a Black Friar, but a common perception had soon brought us to a mutual understanding; we can't just live side by side in mere tolerance in a land where we are foreigners and a tiny minority in our religious creed. Though miles distant from one another (he in the North East and I in Istanbul), and living in different contexts, we tried to make true our wish to meet one another and from time to time we could enjoy each other's company.

Then the tragic news you don't want to believe, a feeling of deep uneasiness in receiving it through a cold press bulletin, and then a journalist who is already there, asking questions, without even giving you the time to cope with your inner ordeal. It takes only a few moments before you realise how much the loss of a dear person, even though not of your blood, has made your few certainties shake from their very basis. You go back to your memories, not many, of the moments shared and you think of your common efforts to share signs of hope with others. You would like to find someone to blame for all of this, but then you see too many are already uttering their harsh words of condemnation. You understand, then, that

the real challenge is to be able to run away from all forms of extremism in judging responsibilities, as well as in viewing the religious or lay contrasts. You are left with a deep wish to “make memory” of the one passed away, to do all you can so that the things he lived for will not get lost. You are faced with your daily challenges: meeting the others, fighting against fear, poverty, loneliness, lack of values. These are the enemies we must defeat in order to promote a peaceful co-existence of all human beings. That is why, since that 5th of February, Andrea has become even closer to me: he is the companion of my journey. He is here, in Istanbul, to keep alive his dream of a possible co-existence of believers in different faiths, through my/your poor witnessing of our Christian faith. At the same time, Andrea enlarges the universal family of our brothers and sisters who have preceded us in the final encounter, for them already come to its fulfilment. The upsetting farewell becomes an “A-Dieu”: a renewed appointment for an unbreakable brotherhood.

USA/AUSTRALIA

My son and daughter-in-law worked at the World Trade Center for just over a year. My son, Ross, wanted to return to New York and when that did not happen they decided to come home and live in Australia.

On that fatal day of terrorism, we were all asleep. The phone rang in the early hours of the morning; it was Kate's sister, phoning from Greece. She told me that a plane had hit one of the towers. A small plane, I thought. On hearing the news, Ross telephoned his best New York friend, Ken. He could not get through on his mobile but managed to get through to his home, to be told that Ken was safe – he was running late for a meeting at World Trade, missed the train connection, caught the ferry and was walking towards the towers when the plane hit.

We turned the television on and the look on my child's and his wife's face was one of pure horror. They sat holding one another

in total disbelief. Ross could not stop watching the television. They had worked on the 84th floor of the second building to be hit – the first one to come down. He sat on the floor, rocking to and fro, saying "I should have been there".

It was so hard to watch this man/child try to come to terms with realising that so many of the people he had worked with were dead. There were mornings when I would hear him get out of bed at about 2am and so I would too, to be with him. Some time after 9/11, the New York office sent a beautifully bound book, complete with colour pictures and the history of all who had perished. Ross sat reading the book, touching the faces of people he knew, not even trying to hold back the tears. As parents, both I and his father felt helpless. If we said that we were grateful that they were not working there at the time, it was

greeted with, "That does not help, Mum".

Eventually Ross and Kate revisited New York. Their friend, Ken, and his family now live in Philadelphia. When Ken's little son asked his father, "How many people do you know will die today, Daddy?" and was daily begging Ken not to go into the city, they decided they had to move. I had never given any serious thought as to how our whole family suffered as a result of that terror. Ross recently told us that he lives with 9/11 each day. Looking back, I can only hope that we tried to help him and Kate through the pain that they felt. We are grateful that they were not at their desks on that awful day, and now we can say it.

USA

September 11th 2001 changed the lives of all Americans and how we view our safety. Along with nearly 3,000 other families, my husband and I suffered the unimaginable loss of our precious 24-year-old son Brad in the attacks on the World Trade Center.

My son's death changed my life profoundly – personally, spiritually and professionally. I now view my life in two chapters, before September 11th and after September 11th. Before 9/11, I worked as a clinical social worker and, like most mothers, I was focused on the everyday needs of my family, unaware of the threat of terrorism and unfamiliar with the political world. After 9/11, I co-founded Voices of September 11th, an organisation created to provide information to those impacted. Almost immediately, I joined other 9/11 families attending meetings in New York City and

Washington, D.C. Our presence put a face on the victims' families and our moral authority provided a voice. Initially I was reluctant to speak out publicly, due to the public nature of our loss and the debates surrounding it. But I felt a moral responsibility to prevent other mothers from walking in my shoes.

Since 9/11, my time has been devoted to leading Voices of September 11th. Our efforts continue today as we advocate for the creation of a respectful memorial/museum at Ground Zero to commemorate those lives lost and tell the story of 9/11. In addition, we are advocating for implementation of the 9/11 Commission recommendations and educating the public about preparedness. VOICES international outreach has evolved to include programmes that provide support to other

victims of terrorism and foster mutual respect and understanding of cultures and religions.

As I reflect on the past five years, I feel blessed with many gifts – my faith, the support of my family and friends and individuals from around the world who reached out to support our family. Their compassion and generosity carried us through our darkest hours. I am also grateful for the friendships I have made within our 9/11 community. We share an unspoken bond and are a source of strength and inspiration for each other.

Although I will always have a void in my life due to the loss of my wonderful son, Brad has a special place in my heart that is always reserved for him. I feel his presence every day which gives me strength and courage to continue on. His beautiful smile, sense of humour and thoughtful, understated manner are forever etched in my mind. In his memory I have intentionally chosen to focus on his life and his belief – that good can overcome evil, love is stronger than hate and when you change one heart you change many.

We must work together to create a safer world for our children for generations to come.

Every day we are given stones,
But what do we build?
Is it a bridge or is it a wall?
I believe we must build bridges.

WEST PAPUA

Few people in the outside world have even heard of West Papua. But this remote and beautiful land is the scene of a vicious but largely hidden military occupation, which is taking a terrible toll on the family life of an entire civilisation.

West Papua is the western half of New Guinea, the world's second-largest island. Home to the world's second-largest expanse of tropical rainforest, it is also home to an ancient tribal civilisation. Its people live in 300 different tribes, each with their own language and distinct culture. Traditional family life is focused on the village and the extended family. Respect for both dead ancestors and living "elders" is at the heart of family life and Papuan culture.

But West Papua is a land under a shroud. Previously part of the Dutch East Indies, it declared independence in 1961, only to be invaded by neighbouring Indonesia the following year. Ever since, West Papua has been illegally occupied by the Indonesian government, which is profiting from its rich natural resources. A vast military presence keeps watch over the Papuan people every day. Their traditions are suppressed, and raising their national flag is a crime punishable by a decade in jail. Rape, murder and torture are everyday occurrences, meted out to anyone suspected of "disloyalty" to the Indonesian state. At least 1,000,000 Papuans have been killed since the Indonesian occupation began over 40 years ago.

The effect of this state-led terrorism on family life has been horrific. In every village there are children who have seen their relatives tortured, threatened or even killed by soldiers. Families are deliberately broken up by soldiers in order to destroy the cohesiveness of the tribe, and the families of known dissidents are often abused themselves as revenge or punishment.

Some West Papuans are lucky enough to escape to tell the world what is happening to their people. One of them is Benny Wenda. Benny is the leader of Demmak, a peaceful, pan-tribal coalition calling for independence for West Papua. When Benny was four years old, many of his family, including his father, were killed by an Indonesian bombing raid on their highland village. Benny's leg was broken and has never properly healed. In 2001, Benny was arrested for his campaigning, taken to a police station, tortured and threatened with death. He managed to escape and flee to the UK, where he applied for political asylum. A few months later his wife and child followed him, despite the Indonesians having targeted them as members of his family.

Benny's story is horrific, but he is one of the lucky ones. He escaped and is founder of the Free West Papua Campaign, which works to raise awareness of the hidden horrors being perpetrated on his people. "I am worried that my people will not even exist in 20 years time", he says. "We need the world's help."

PRAYER

Lord Jesus Christ,
Lord of love – and yet Lord
who suffered the extreme cruelty
and brutal injustice of mankind:
hear our prayer for all who are terrorised;
give wisdom in reaction to destructive attack;
spare and protect families who are victimised;
heal families afflicted by memory, injury or loss;
turn the heart of the extremist and of the terrorist;
reform all who use terror as a means of power,
or as a route to supposed personal reward;
uphold the upright in political life, and
assist all who seek to overcome
darkness with grace and truth.
We ask this in your Name.

Amen

Revd John Bradford

IAFN International Anglican Family Network

IAFN OFFICE

IAFN Office, PO Box 54,
Minehead, Somerset TA24 7WD
ENGLAND
Tel/Fax: (+44) (0) 1643 841 500
email: mail@iafn.net

THE NEXT FAMILY NETWORK NEWSLETTER

is to be on the theme of
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