



Dr. Mona Qasim El-Farra: Keeping Hope Alive While All Gaza's Children Are Under Siege

by Lucia Wilkes Smith

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Dr. Mona El Farra with some of Gaza's children

FOCUS ON GAZA *Imagine this scene: Young children, horrified by the continuous sound of drones (unmanned aerial vehicles), dash to hide under a table in the family home.*

As peace activists in the U.S., we might think of children frightened by hovering drones in the skies above Afghanistan, Syria or Yemen. And, those certainly would be real scenarios. However, the particular children described by Dr. Mona El-Farra huddle tearfully beneath tables in the Gaza Strip, and the drones are dispatched from Israel. The ominous buzzing sound of surveillance drones continues, ebbing and surging over Gaza, 24 hours a day.

On a Sunday afternoon in November, Dr. Mona El-Farra spoke with an audience in Minneapolis via Skype from Manchester, England, where she is visiting one of her adult daughters. The event was sponsored by the Middle East Committee of Women Against Military Madness (WAMM).

Dr. Mona was born in Khan Younis, Gaza, and is committed to enduring the hardships of life in Gaza because, as she said, "I have a small family in the United Kingdom, but my larger family is in Gaza. That is my home." She especially is dedicated to caring for all children inside Gaza, which has remained a land under brutal siege by

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The statements and opinions reflected in this newsletter are the views of the author and not necessarily official positions of WAMM. We encourage a diversity of opinion to represent the range of perspectives that coexist under the banner of WAMM's mission statement.

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Women Against Military Madness

is a nonviolent, feminist organization, founded in 1982, that works in solidarity with others to create a system of social equality, self-determination and justice through education, action and the empowerment of women. WAMM's purpose is to dismantle systems of militarism, economic exploitation and global oppression.

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PM: Listening to Our Better Angels



No Non-human Combatants

Is there a group of human beings so evil that they don't deserve human rights? The International Red Cross [ICRC] does not think so. In an October 27 *New York Times* article, ICRC Deputy Director for Middle East Patrick Hamilton is quoted as saying that even ISIS members (known also as ISIL, IS, and Daesh) are entitled to human rights: "There are emotive, difficult issues but the law does provide a sober mechanism for dealing with all this."

If you look at the International Red Cross blog, you will see that the organization is highly concerned about "rhetoric that 'dehumanizes' and 'demonizes' the enemy or suggests that a particular adversary is 'outside the bounds of humanity' and can be treated 'as if humanitarian law doesn't apply.'" On the issue of foreign fighters and their families leaving Iraq and Syria, the ICRC director said: "Such language, which could appear to justify war crimes or illegal treatment of detainees, has become more common on all sides of the conflicts in Iraq and Syria." He went on to state that this situation "had gotten so common that the Red Cross felt it necessary to remind all combatants that international humanitarian law requires due process and humane treatment of detainees without exception."

The ICRC addressed the United Nations General Assembly with the message.

To see that all are treated fairly and humanely, the Red Cross visited 44,000 detainees in Iraq in 2017. And, what of the hapless persons accused of guilt by association with suspects? The Red Cross is currently providing humanitarian assistance to 1,300 women and children from around 20 nationalities detained in Mosul as suspected relatives of ISIL fighters. The Red Cross is also setting up an office in northeastern Syria to work on such issues.

People from Nuclear Nations Protest Bombs

Beginning last March 26th, nuclear disarmament activists protested for 20 weeks against the presence of the 20 U.S. thermonuclear gravity bombs at the Luftwaffe's Büchel Air Base in Germany. In July, U.S. peace activists from seven states and Washington, D.C., joined an international coalition which included citizens from Russia, China, Britain, France, the Netherlands, and Germany, as well as Mexico (Mexico being the only one in this list not to host nuclear weapons). The U.S. is pursuing production of a new bomb core, the B61-12, to replace the 20 B61 that already exist. The new weapons are far more powerful than those unleashed on Japan in World War II. The Pentagon calls the planned program "modernization" in order to skirt the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty's prohibitions against new nuclear weapons. But antinuclear activists will not give up and are planning another protest at Büchel in 2018. ☮

Polly Mann is a co-founder of WAMM and frequent contributor to the WAMM Newsletter.

Father Time Flies, Leaving Challenges for the New Year

by Newsletter Staff



ISIS in Southeast Asia: The Sequel

It would appear that terrorism has spread into Southeast Asia with no signs of warning. However, the sudden uptick in violence comes at a time when America's so-called "pivot to Asia" has ground to a complete halt, providing the United States with an all-too-convenient pretext to reengage and establish itself across the region in a much more insidious manner... Most recently Washington found its relationship with Manila unraveling irrevocably in favor of Manila's increasing ties with Beijing. This was until the fortuitous arrival of militants from the so-called "Islamic State" on the nation's shores... "U.S. to Fight U.S.-Saudi Sponsored Terrorism in Asia," *New Eastern Outlook*, Tony Cartalucci, September 8, 2017

It Was Only a Technical Issue?

U.S. Special Forces are helping the Philippine Military retake the southern city of Marawi from IS-linked militants, the Philippine army says. The forces are providing technical help and are not fighting. *BBC News*, June 10, 2017

The Rohingya: There Had to Be More to the Story Eighty percent of China's needed oil and much of

its trade passes through the Malacca Straits—a narrow choke-point between Indonesia and Singapore—and into the increasingly tense South China Sea. U.S. aircraft carrier battle groups stationed there could easily blockade this movement of needed resources... China's development programs are aimed at diversifying and finding ways around a direct confrontation with U.S. military power. China is building a deep-sea port, industrial park, and gas and oil pipelines at Kyauk Pyu in Myanmar on the Bay of Bengal. This would provide China with an alternative route for energy imports from the Middle East that avoids the Malacca Straits... All countries of the region, including Bangladesh, Myanmar, and China have every interest in a peaceful reconciliation for the Rohingya people. The region needs coordinated development, not the enormous disruption of war.—"Why U.S. and Saudi Arabia back Rohingya in Myanmar," Sara Flounders, *Workers World*, October 30, 2017

Hands Off These Lands! Following President Trump's unlawful attempt to repeal Grand Staircase-Escalante and Bears Ears National Monuments, the federal public lands and significant cultural, paleontological, and wilderness resources in those monuments will be left exposed to oil, gas, and coal leasing and development, as well as the location and development of new hard rock mining claims (e.g., uranium).—Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance, *suwa.org*, December 4, 2017

Russia: Will It Be Rapprochement?

A constructive relationship with Russia is very much needed to address many international problems, including but

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WAMM Committees

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- Book Club
- End War Committee
- Middle East
- St. Joan of Arc/
WAMM Peacemakers
- Ground All Drones Committee
- Tackling Torture at the Top
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Dr. Mona Qasim El-Farra

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the government and military practices of Israel during the past 11 years. Eight refugee camps still operate within Gaza to provide housing for refugees forced from their familial homes in 1948, when war established the state of Israel. [Note: In 1988, during the “first Intifada,” I participated in a study tour including Israel, the militarily Occupied West Bank and the Gaza Strip. In Gaza I met with Palestinian people inside the Bureji refugee camp and saw the Jabalia camp from a distance. At that time I couldn’t understand why restrictive conditions would keep refugee families in camps over a 40-year period. That was nearly 30 years ago!—Lucia Smith]

As a physician, Dr. Mona sees patients in the clinics that serve the populations of the refugee camps. Her activities on behalf of children are enhanced through her role as director for Gaza of Projects of the Middle East Children’s Alliance and the Vice President of the Palestinian Red Crescent Society of the Gaza Strip. The self-governing territory that came under Israeli occupation after the Six-Day War in 1967 is home to nearly two million Palestinians and one of the most densely-populated areas in the world. Located on the Mediterranean coast, and bordered by Israel and Egypt, the Strip is about 140 square miles, the size of the U.S. city of Detroit (pop. 700,000).

The Skype conversation with Dr. Mona was possible only because she had managed the rare and difficult process of temporarily

leaving Gaza. She emphasized that people in Gaza do not exit for luxury travel. A family necessity demanded Dr. Mona’s attention, and she was delayed by Israeli technicalities for nine months before she could begin the journey to her final destination in England by first exiting Gaza and entering Egypt. The actual crossing of the border from Gaza to Egypt took 45 hours. Most people trapped in Gaza do not embark on such a hard and dangerous crossing of the border unless they must travel for medical care—such as chemotherapy for cancer treatment—that is not available to them in Gaza. Still their travels often are stalled or even denied by authorities.

Dr. Mona related the ordeal of a friend. The woman was expecting a baby in 2014, during a time of intense Israeli military attacks against Gaza [Israel’s Operation Protective Edge, which lasted for 51 days in July and August of 2014]. No ambulances were available because they were in use transporting injured people in the attacks, so instead a family member drove the woman to a nearby hospital, which was then hit by bombs. The mother and her baby survived. Dr. Mona said, “But, why should any woman and newborn infant have to go through this experience?”

According to Dr. Mona, hospitals throughout Gaza undergo awfully difficult conditions: necessary medications are unavailable; medical equipment cannot be



“In Gaza, only the birds are free.”—Farah Baker, resident of Gaza, blogger, age 19. Photo: Palestine Wildlife Society

purchased, repaired or replaced; electrical gaps occur when regular electrical systems fail and the hospital emergency generators must be activated.

Overall, living conditions in Gaza are dismal. Predictions are that Gaza will be uninhabitable by 2020—or sooner. Electrical power operates only two to four hours each day. Up to 95 percent of water systems are polluted—some are salty, some are contaminated by filth. Incidences of water-borne diseases and renal diseases have increased in recent years. Sewer systems are inoperable or erratic. An Italian researcher and professor found some illnesses of children in Gaza that he attributes to contact with white phosphorus in the air or water. [“Military may legally possess and use white phosphorus, except when loaded into munitions used in populated areas, which is prohibited under international law. The U.S.-led coalition in Syria has been accused of using munitions loaded with white phosphorus.”—Anne Barnard, *New York Times*, 06/10/2017.]

Still, Dr. Mona describes herself as “cautious, but hopeful.” She views South Africa’s emergence from its apartheid system as a feasible model for the establishment of a single, egalitarian, democratic state for Israeli Jews and Palestinian Muslims and Christians (as opposed to a “two-state solution” that seems unat-

tainable). She is hopeful about the future of Gaza because she witnesses continuing struggle against oppression and hardship and in support of peace. Dr. Mona is inspired by the sense of social solidarity within Gaza. Her evidence is that “people still are willing to volunteer.”

Examples of volunteer commitment emerge through projects of the Middle East Children’s Alliance (MECA). Dr. Mona’s group oversees fundraising and construction of water purification systems for kindergartens (pre-schools) and for schools so that children will, at least, have clean water when they come to school. Seventy-five of the smaller purification systems have been installed, to date, at the cost of \$5,000 per unit. Dr. Mona reports that MECA also solicits funds for donating books to schools, “because reading is so important!” Professionals and volunteers alike have observed that an unusually high percentage of children tend to practice violence against one another when they experience harsh conditions and poverty in their daily lives. These adults have determined that children find comfort and support through stories, games and music. MECA works to provide these seemingly simple pleasures for children so they may have a sense of easier, more normal and peaceful lives.

Certainly the children, and all people of Gaza, live on a daily basis with the aftermath of the 2014 bombings by Israel—the latest of three major attacks in recent years plus many lower-intensity destructions, along with continued repression and constant threats of future violence. A majority of destroyed homes still need to be rebuilt. People do not have freedom of movement within

Gaza or to and from other parts of Palestine or neighboring countries where their extended families might live. According to Dr. Mona, mental health experts estimate that individuals need eight to ten years to heal from such trauma as the bombings of their homes. She understands that 450,000 children in Gaza are suffering mental health aftereffects evidenced by inability to sleep, nightmares, and bedwetting. Among adults, similar symptoms occur: anxiety, depression, sleeplessness, domestic aggression, and increases in relationship breakdown and divorce. Therefore, MECA programs directed to the well-being of children are extended to their parents for education regarding trauma and anxiety.

MECA encourages all the children of Gaza to receive an education because the psychological health of children improves as their education improves. [The organization provides college scholarships for older students. Through its Teach Palestine program younger children learn about Palestinian culture and history.] MECA also promotes play. Participation in sports, especially for girls, is important because within some traditional households the girls are relatively homebound. When they play sports and even join teams, the girls often feel more empowered. Children are also taken to the seashore for swimming and play. Though the Gaza coast stretches about 25 miles along the Mediterranean Sea, many children have not seen the sea previously because of travel restrictions and safety concerns. [The Palestinian Environmental Quality Authority has designated more than half of the seaside water as polluted by sewage due to persistent electrical outages

that incapacitate Gaza’s treatment of waste water, which is discharged into the sea.]

Young girls kicking a soccer ball or boys splashing in the Mediterranean present more optimistic images than kids hiding under the dining room table as drones swoop in the skies above them. Dr. Mona told her Minneapolis audience, “Let the children play and heal!” Those who heard her words sincerely wish to join Dr. Mona in her cautiously hopeful perspective. ☺

Lucia Wilkes Smith is active on WAMM’s Middle East Committee, Board of Directors and Ground All Drones Committee.

To learn more about the Middle East Children’s Alliance and Dr. Mona Qasim El-Farra: go to MECAforpeace.org.

ACTION: Join the weekly Vigil to End the Occupation of Palestine. Every Friday, 4:30 to 5:30 p.m., at the corner of Summit and Snelling, St. Paul.

Crows and Scarecrows: The Destroyers and the Defenders of the Philippines

by Newsletter Staff



Every year the people in the Philippine agricultural center of Bayagay hold a festival celebrating their hero, the scarecrow, who chases away the farmers' enemy, the crow or Maya bird.

Every February an extraordinary festival takes place in the city of Bayawan, an agricultural center in the

Philippine province of Negros Oriental, where rice, corn, sugar cane, coffee, and other crops are grown. The festival enacts the story of a struggle between crows, or Maya birds, and farmers. At one time, the legend goes, crows destroyed and stole the farmers' harvest, causing a great famine in which many people died. The people found a way to drive the crows away by setting up scarecrows in their fields.

The scarecrows were so successful in defeating the crows that the result was a bountiful harvest. To express their joy and gratitude, the people celebrated with what became known as the Tawo-Tawo Festival (åtawo-

tawo means scarecrow). Today, the people of Bayawan celebrate the scarecrows that saved their crops. They dance in the streets in gorgeous costumes incorporating straw in their designs. Pretending to ward off the menace of the crows, they conduct theatrical performances so exuberant and elaborate that the festival has become a tourist attraction.

While the festivities it gave birth to are delightful, the story of crows and scarecrows could serve as a metaphor for the struggle of the people and the heroes who stand against the predators destroying the land and trying to steal the fruit of the people's labors in the Philippines today. ☺

Recent Twists on Human Rights in a Troubled Land: The Philippines Under Duterte

by Gary King



Gary King, member of the Philippine Study Group of Minnesota

and the Ecumenical Advocacy Network on the Philippines, has lobbied the U.S. Congress and State Department about the dangers of sending U.S. arms and military aid to the Philippines, especially the murder and mayhem it buys. These groups have promoted three hearings in Congress on killings in the Philippines, including last July 20 on the massive drug killings under Philippine President Duterte.

Since the end of WWII, and particularly after the regime and martial law of Ferdinand Marcos, Philippine police and military have received added payments from wealthy oligarchs and corporations as enforcers

of capitalism in this Third World country, where daily income for over half of the workers is still only about \$3 to \$5 per day. Labor union activism and farmers' organizations have been labeled "communist," enabling their oppressors to get ever more military aid from the U.S. A major Philippine NGO, Karapatan, that reports on disappearances, extrajudicial killings, torture, and political imprisonment, has documented 1,000 cases each year, for over two decades. Each year, as new hardware arrives from the U.S., the older weapons are given or sold to private armies and paramilitary groups.

During his first year in office, the current leader, President Rodrigo Duterte, is setting new records for murders. He was the mayor of a

major city, Davao City in Mindanao, for 20 years, and he bragged that his sanctioned "Davao Death Squad" of mostly police killed over 800 street kids, punks, and drug dealers. He is now a national tyrant, and rants in rambling, vindictive, and expletive-laced style about how he will continue killing. His main campaign pledge was to kill a million drug users and pushers, and fatten the fish in Manila Bay with their bodies. (Our President Donald Trump likes his style and has applauded such harsh measures).

Further, Duterte said that if Hitler could kill three million Jews in a Holocaust, he, Duterte, could kill as many drug addicts in the Philippines. In his first year in office, over 12,000 suspects have been

murdered by Philippine police officers and motorcycling assassins. Both groups get paid a bounty for shootings, so bodies are always found with cheap pistols and samples of drugs nearby. But judging from eyewitnesses, often family, the victims plead for their lives before being killed. If the Philippines was as populous as the U.S., this would exceed our shameful annual loss of life by guns, a world record.

An Amnesty International 2017 investigation is entitled “If You Are Poor, You Are Killed.” There is rampant impunity for murders by police, just as there was impunity historically for military killings and mayhem. Duterte has said that any civilians or NGO members who hinder the police should be shot as well.

So there are real, dangerous threats against civilians, like Tinay Palabay, the head of the Karapatan Alliance for the Advancement of Human Rights, whom I have worked with for ten years. Duterte says human rights activists and members of their organizations should be killed—beheaded, if they interfere with police actions. The constitutionally mandated Philippine Human Rights Commission (PHRC) should be burnt to the ground. He applauded when his Congress tried to cut PHRC’s funding by 99 percent. His killings and claims have led Amnesty International and Philippine congressmen and lawyers to ask the International Criminal Court to investigate him for crimes against humanity, since the Philippine government is unable to rein him in.

Although Duterte has enjoyed great popularity, in part due to a few encouraging statements about respecting indigenous peoples and farmers, in



Map of the Philippines

fact there has been next to no positive action since he took office.

And now Duterte has called off all peace talks with the leftists in rebellion, the NDF (National Democratic Front), and the NPA (New People’s Army), which blossomed to lead the resistance against former President Marcos, his crony capitalists, and all subsequent presidents. In December 2017, he gave his military license to murder them at will, in conflict or not. His military has closed schools for the indigenous people, because it says only “communists” want to learn to read and write. Death squads, even some composed of indigenous people, have been given guns and are paid for killing leaders of indigenous people and farmers—about four each week—a similar rate as that under the last two presidents of the Philippines, Benigno Aquino Jr. and Gloria Macapagal Arroyo. Since Novem-

ber 2017, eight T’boli and Dulangan Manobo tribespeople were murdered by the military in an incident related to grabbing of their ancestral lands to expand a coffee plantation; in various places, hundreds of families (including 406 indigenous students and 59 teachers) were evacuated due to military offensives. Popular clergy, Pastor Lovelito Quiñones in Mindoro and Fr. Marcelito Paez in Negros, were killed.

Duterte also promotes federalism: changing the constitution to have six more autonomous regions of the country. If this happens, his clan can focus its rule to forever dominate most of the large, resource-rich island of Mindanao.

Our Amnesty International (AI) chapter in Minneapolis has worked since we started in 1976 on over 30

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Recent Twists on Human Rights in a Troubled Land: The Philippines Under Duterte

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FOCUS ON THE PHILIPPINES

cases of political prisoners, always urging a fair, rapid, and speedy trial with justice. We say: “Release them if no crimes are proven!” The Philippine government uses the euphemism that the prisoners are only “detained.” Courts are way too tolerant of tortured confessions and trumped-up evidence. All the cases we worked on, from the adminis-

tration of Marcos through to that of Duterte, strongly resemble what AI calls “prisoners of conscience”: abducted, tortured, murdered, or imprisoned for their nonviolent activities in pursuit of justice for workers, farmers, the poor, the displaced, and indigenous people. We don’t give up until prisoners are released. When I visit the Philippines, almost every year since 1975, I have a lot of great people—union organizers, human rights activists, lawyers, priests—to celebrate with—if they are not killed, that is.

imprisonment and torture themselves, or had loved ones who had already been killed in extra-judicial state killings, or “disappearances.”

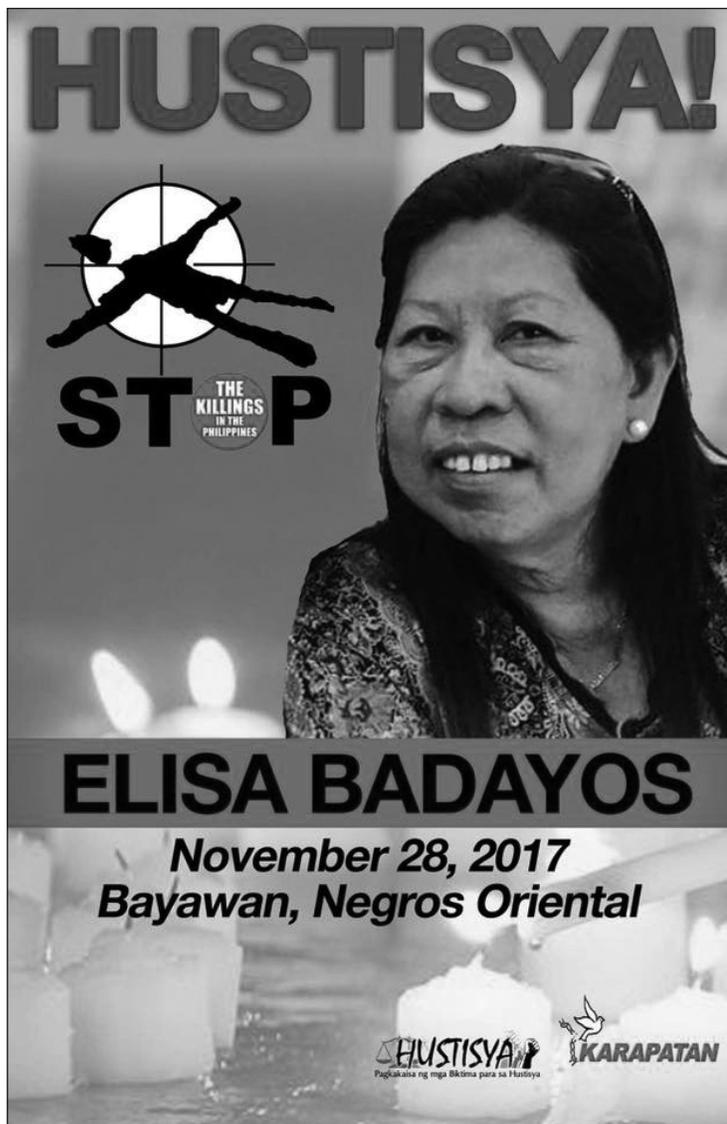
Nene headed a group of families of victims called FIND (Find those INvoluntarily Disappeared), because her husband, Jimmy Badayos, had been murdered by disappearance in 1990, after being abducted by Cebu Metrodiscom (the Metropolitan District Command of the Philippine National Police in Cebu). He was a leader of the Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU) in Cebu Province and had been working to help a labor union at the Visayas Glass Factory in the Guadalupe area of Cebu City hold a picket line for livable wages. Police and goons often are paid to make “labor relations” easier for corporations in the Philippines. Nene explained the plights of families of the murdered and disappeared: a lost parent, a lost wage-earner, hunger, anxiety of having a missing relative, a disrupted community, fear and terror. And nightmares for all.

One of the problems that prisoners’ families experienced was that the children could not afford to continue going to school. They lacked textbooks, acceptable clothing and shoes, inoculations, uniforms, lunches, and motorbike rides or the jeepney (a form of public transportation like a jeep but that accommodates multiple passengers) to take them to school. If they must wait until the parent is released, they are so far behind that most never again will go to school.

My family in Minnesota began providing financial support so Nene and her four kids could eat. We helped the oldest daughter finish a secretarial school. Eventually,

A Human Rights Victim and Heroine: Elisa “Nene” Badayos

I first met Nene Badayos in 1992, while fact-finding at the office of Task Force Detainees in Cebu City. This office was full of volunteer workers to assist victims and families of terrible human rights abuses. People there would assist me to interview people, meet lawyers and judges, attend trials, and visit political prisoners in their cells to gather data to share with AI. Many of the human rights workers had suffered



Hustisya! (Justice!) Poster demanding justice for a woman who was murdered while defending the human rights of the Philippine people, to whom she had dedicated her life.

we helped Nene's son Jerry attend college. Nene left Cebu in 2007 to avoid harassment and threats against her from military intelligence. She went to a neighboring island, Bohol, to help organize urban and rural poor communities to defend themselves.

Jerry, exposed to the people's struggle for justice all his life, abandoned college and joined her. Nene returned to Cebu, but Jerry stayed longer in Bohol, fighting for the rights of farmers. He finally returned to Cebu with a wife, and settled down. One night, about nine years ago, military soldiers came to his house, strafed it, and killed him. A lot of people marched in his funeral procession. They appreciated that he was committed to the struggles of the poor.

I ran into Nene a number of times over the years, and she helped me get around Cebu to do AI work. She kept visiting prisoners in jail, helping them, their families, and poor communities. She was probably known by all the police and military in the Visayas region because of her activism. Working with Karapatan Alliance for the Advancement of People's Rights in Negros Occidental, a province in the western Visayas, she coordinated fact-finding missions concerning a host of farmer organizations. On November 26–28, 2017, she led a team of 30 persons who went to the San Ramon area in Bayawan City (the "Agricultural Capital of Negros Oriental") to investigate and report on human rights violations alleged to have been perpetrated against farmer groups by members of a private army of Pryde Henry Teves, Bayawan's mayor, who is backed by a political clan called the Gaudiels. These guys use armed

goons to squash farmer assertions of land rights, and do land-grabbing. Armed men stopped the bus transporting the fact-finding team, and demanded to know their destination and the purpose of the mission, while aiming shotguns at the bus. Local drivers hired by the mission team negotiated with the guards, and eventually the bus was allowed to pass. From noon to 2:30 p.m. on November 28, the team conducted interviews with rural farmers.

Then Nene; Patrick Torres of the Farmers Development Center; a village watchman named Eleuterio Moises who was a member of Mantapi Ebwan Farmers Association; Angel Trocio of the Women's Resource Center of Visayas; and Carmen Matarlo of Kabataan Partylist, a representative of youth in the Philippine Congress, got ready to travel by motorbike to the Bayawan City Hall for a courtesy call, after which they planned to go to the police station to file a blotter report about an earlier harassment incident.

The five left the main group, riding two persons on the first bike, and three on the second. Within 20 minutes, they noticed a third motorbike following them, driven by men wearing black jackets, and holding handguns. The assailants overtook the second bike, and six shots later, three persons fell. Many people started flocking to the scene, and the assailants fled. Nene and Eleuterio were DOA at the hospital, and Carmen is surviving in critical condition.



Nene was my seventh friend to die in the struggle for peace and justice in the Philippines. All of them knew the dangers but were committed to help the poor and victims of injustice.

I think not only her remaining children and grandchildren, but the farmers of Negros Oriental and all Filipinos who believe in human rights have a very deep appreciation of why she died and how she lived. Mabuhay! Long live her memory and her causes! ☺

Gary King is a retired neuroscientist living in Minneapolis, Minnesota. He is active in the Filipino community. A conscientious objector during the Vietnam War, he has worked for peace and justice all his adult life. He helped start a chapter of Amnesty International (AI) in Minneapolis in 1976, and in 30 subsequent trips to the Philippines he has visited prisoners and collected data for AI. While the facts related to AI in this report are accurate, the opinions expressed are his and do not represent an official Amnesty International view.

ACTION: See Philippines, Amnesty International amnesty.org

As Father Time Flies, Leaving Challenges for 2018

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not limited to terrorism, securing nuclear materials, and resolving long-running conflicts. We have seen hints of what that cooperation can achieve in recent years with the Iran nuclear deal and the new arms reduction treaty with Russia, both of which required sustained diplomatic engagement. In order to repair ties with Russia, our government will need to make a similar effort over the long term, with Washington refraining from taking further provocative actions... A good place for the Trump administration to start would be to reject the plan to send arms to Ukraine. Such a policy would be unwise in itself—and disastrous for any chance at improving America’s relationship with Russia.—“Is Rapprochement Still Possible?” Daniel Larison, *The American Conservative*, December 7, 2017

Or Russiaphobia? The bill passed by Congress contains several provisions specifically targeting Russia. It restricts military cooperation with Russia, prohibits the United States from recognizing Russia’s legal right to the disputed Crimea peninsula, and requires the military to “develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to counter threats by the Russian Federation.” “Imperfecto: Trump objects to Russia provisions as he signs \$700 billion defense bill,” Gregory Korte, *USA Today*, December 12, 2017

Stop Vultures Preying on Puerto Rico Long before the hurricane, Puerto Rico was in crisis. For more than a decade, the island has been under enormous economic pressure. Puerto Rico has been at the mercy of so-called “vulture funds”—Wall Street hedge funds that wait until a borrower is in trouble to buy up their debt at a steep discount... We’re using every tool in the toolbox to push the Trump Administration

and Congress to step up. And we’re working with Puerto Rican leaders to do everything we can to hold back the creditors and make sure the federal relief aid goes to the people—not the hedge funds.—Senator Elizabeth Warren who has been calling for the discharge of Puerto Rico’s debt from 2015 through 2017 ☺



ACTION: Join the WAMM Campaign to Ban Nuclear Weapons! You can help by asking your friends, relatives, neighbors, book club, religious or community organization to

sign a petition and then return it to the WAMM office so that we can deliver them to Minnesota congressional representatives. Petitions available from the WAMM office. Call 612-827-5364 or write to wamm@mtn.org, or (by U.S. mail): 4200 Cedar Avenue S., Suite 3, Minneapolis, MN 55407 to have one or more copies mailed to you.

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(Ongoing contributions throughout the year)
\$ _____ Monthly \$ _____ Quarterly
(WAMM will send a coupon book, if by check)

WAMM Calendar

Please note that WAMM's provision of information on other groups' events is not meant to convey or endorse any action contrary to public policy that would be inconsistent with exempt purposes under Internal Revenue Code Section 501(c)(3), i.e., charitable purposes.

Ongoing Vigils for Peace

Vigil to End War

Every Wednesday, From 4:30 to 5:30 p.m. Lake Street/Marshall Avenue Bridge. Signs available on St. Paul side. Brief circle up for announcements after the vigil on St. Paul side. FFI: Call WAMM 612-827-5364.

Vigil to End the Occupation of Palestine

Every Friday, 4:30 to 5:30 p.m. corner of Summit Avenue and Snelling Avenue, St. Paul. FFI: Call WAMM 612-827-5364.

Peace Vigil

Every Tuesday, 5:00 to 6:00 p.m. on the east side of the Franklin Avenue Bridge, Minneapolis. Sponsored by: Prospect Hill Neighbors for Peace. FFI: Call 612-379-7398.

Grandmothers for Peace Vigil

Every Wednesday, 4:45 to 5:45 p.m. 50th Street and Halifax (1 block west of France), Edina. FFI: Call Marian Wright 612-927-7607.

WAMM Committee Meetings

Board Meeting

Third Tuesday of every month, 6:00 p.m. 4200 Cedar Avenue South, Minneapolis. FFI: Call WAMM 612-827-5364.

Book Club

Episcopal Senior Living Complex, Welcome Center, 1860 University Avenue West, St. Paul. Call WAMM for meeting time and date. FFI: Call 612-827-5364.

End War

First Monday of every month, 6:00 p.m. 4200 Cedar Avenue South, Minneapolis. FFI: Call WAMM 612-827-5364.

Ground All Drones

Second Thursday of every month, 10:00 to 11:30 a.m. 4200 Cedar Avenue South, Minneapolis. FFI: Call WAMM 612-827-5364.

Middle East

Second Monday of every month, 10:00 a.m. at WAMM, 4200 Cedar Avenue South, Suite 3, Minneapolis. FFI: Call WAMM 612-827-5364.

St. Joan of Arc/WAMM Peacemakers

Fourth Tuesday of every month, 7:00 to 8:00 p.m. St. Joan of Arc Church, Parish Center, 4537 Third Avenue South, Minneapolis. FFI: Call Barbara 612-722-4444.

Tackling Torture at the Top (T3)

Second Wednesday of every month, 10:00 a.m. 4200 Cedar Avenue South, Minneapolis. FFI: Call WAMM 612-827-5364.

Ongoing Events Committee to Stop FBI Repression

Stand with the people subpoenaed in a witch hunt, defend civil liberties. Learn what you can do. FFI: Visit stopfbi.net and mnStopFBI.wordpress.com.

People of Faith Peacemakers Breakfast

Second and fourth Wednesdays of every month, 8:00 to 9:30 a.m. African Development Center, Riverside and 20th Avenues South, Minneapolis. Peace with justice resource, support group. FFI: Visit justviewpoint.org or call 612-333-4772.

Grandmothers for Peace

First Wednesday of every month, 12:45 p.m. Edina Public Library, 5280 Grandview Square, Edina. Justice issue programs for understanding our role in changing systems. FFI: Call 952-929-1566.

Pax Salons

Every Tuesday, call for details and location. Small donations accepted. FFI: Call 651-227-3228.

Middle East Peace Now

Usually second or third Saturday. Refreshments 9:30 a.m. Program 10:00 a.m. Location varies. FFI: Visit mepn.org.

WAMM Second Monday Movies

Second Monday of every month, 7:00 p.m. 4200 Cedar Avenue South (enter on 42nd St.), Minneapolis. Projected on big screen. Free admission, popcorn. All welcome. Discussion follows film. FFI: Call WAMM 612-827-5364. or email wamm@mtn.org.

Requiem for the American Dream January 8, 2018. Noam Chomsky interviews unpack what brought us to unprecedented inequality, wealth and power concentration. Required viewing for all who maintain hope in a shared stake in the future.

Shadow World: the Shocking Inside Story of the Global Arms Trade, February 12, 2018. The business that counts its profits in billions, its losses in human lives. PBS Independent Lens documentary based on a book by Andrew Feinstein. How governments, militaries, intel agencies, defense contractors, arms dealers are intertwined with the national trade in weapons and foster corruption; economic and foreign policies; undermine democracies; create suffering.

Miss a movie? DVD collection from WAMM Second Monday Movies is available for check-out in the WAMM office.

Special Events

Trump Out Now! No Wars! No Muslim Ban!

Saturday, January 20, 2018 7:00 to 8:30 a.m., Mayday Plaza, 301 Cedar Ave. W., Minneapolis. Protest the one-year anniversary of Trump's inauguration. Say NO to the racist Trump agenda. Sponsored by the Antiwar Committee-MN.

Take a Knee National Conference, Super Bowl time

Saturday, February 3 to Sunday, February 4. (Protest, rally on Sunday), Minneapolis. Opportunity for students, athletes, cheerleaders who have taken a knee to protest police violence and racism to join families of police violence victims, activists, and others in the struggle. Workshops to enhance knowledge about history, role of police in U.S. society, right of people to protest. Organize, strategize the way forward. Details: TBA. FFI: takeakneenation.com



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WAMM Presents an Evening with Lorna Landvik:



On Writing, Acting and Laughter

Thursday, February 1, 2018

6:30 pm Gather 7:15 pm Program

St. Joan of Arc Hospitality Hall

4537 Third Ave. S., Minneapolis 55419

Lorna Landvik is author of 11 novels including *Patty Jane's House of Curl* (in which one character does legal work "pro bono" for WAMM) and *Once in a Blue Moon Lodge*, which includes this scene:

"Get a job!" yelled a man slowly driving by in an SUV.

The group responded, as they did to all hecklers, by giving the peace sign...The Lake Street/Marshall Avenue Bridge Peace Vigil had been a long-standing Wednesday date...

Lorna promises to regale us with stories from her life as a writer, actor, comic, wife, mother, and peace marcher.

A benefit for Women Against Military Madness!

Suggested donation: \$10-\$25. All welcome! Refreshments, plus opportunities to bid on silent auction items and gift certificates.

FFI: www.womenagainstmilitarymadness.org or 612-827-5364