

Tough Choices
in a Tough World:
peace, security and human rights

Irene Khan

2006 City of Sydney Peace Prize Lecture

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2006 City of Sydney Peace Prize Lecture
Author: Irene Khan

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City of Sydney Peace Prize Lecture 2006
Irene Khan
Secretary General Amnesty International

Tough Choices in a Tough World: peace, security and human rights

I congratulate Irene Khan, the Secretary General of Amnesty International, who received the 2006 Sydney Peace Prize on Thursday night at a ceremony in the Great Hall of The University of Sydney. Awarded each year by the Sydney Peace Foundation, it is the only international peace prize in Australia.

In selecting Irene Khan, the Peace Prize jury acknowledged her "leadership as a courageous advocate of universal respect for human rights, and her skills in identifying violence against women as a massive injustice and therefore a priority in campaigning for peace".

The Foundation brings together people from business, media, the public sector, universities and the community, who aim to influence public interest in and understanding of the meaning of peace.

As well as administering the Sydney Peace Prize, the Foundation organises the annual City of Sydney Peace Prize Lecture and is developing a school peace initiative, which encourages students from years ten, eleven and twelve to develop projects which contribute to peace with justice in their schools and communities.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Clover Moore". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish underneath the name.

Clover Moore, MP
Lord Mayor of Sydney
3 November 2006

For further information, please contact the Sydney Peace Foundation at www.spf.arts.usyd.edu.au

Tough Choices in a Tough World: peace, security and human rights

Irene Khan

Secretary General Amnesty International

It is a great honour to deliver the 2006 Sydney Peace Prize Lecture.

I am humbled to receive this Award because I know I have done nothing to match the achievements of past recipients. I am not Nobel Peace Prize material like Mohammed Yunus. I didn't lead a moral struggle against apartheid like Archbishop Tutu. Nor have I written any prize-winning novels like Arundhati Roy.

With neither fame nor infamy attached to my name, I see this award as a tribute, not to me but to my colleagues, friends and fellow activists in Amnesty International who choose to protest rather than be silent, to stand up and be counted, to act rather than be indifferent.

Defining peace: a man's victory, a woman's dream

The Sydney Peace Foundation's citation makes particular mention of women's human rights. So, let me begin today with how women see peace.

It's December 2001. I am in a hot and dusty Afghan refugee camp in Pakistan. The Taleban have been defeated and there is jubilation among the Afghan refugees. Refugee women are climbing into the buses that will drive them home. I clamber onto the bus with them in order to listen to their stories. Shah Gul tells me her husband has been killed by the Taleban. Bano says her two sons have been conscripted by the United Front to fight the Taleban and she has not heard of them since. Laila lost three children aged between seven and two in the recent bombings.

These women understand only too well the real horror of war but they also know that peace is much more than merely an end to fighting. Sitting on the bus next to Zubaida I ask, "What will you do when you return home?" She does not hesitate for a second. Clutching her baby close, she looks me straight in the eye, and says "I want to go to school. Some day I will be a scientist."

What an amazing answer! Here is this woman discreetly covered from head to foot in a blue burqah, but there is nothing hidden about her message. She is telling me that peace is not a matter of military victories; it is about equality, justice and freedom for women as well as men. It is about creating the possibility for every human being to reach their full potential. And it is about hope.

Fast forward two years to July 2003. I am in Kabul now but I can't find Zubaida or, for that matter, any woman studying science. Instead I find a fortress town guarded by American troops: a country caught in the grip of warlords and drug barons, torn by insecurity, afflicted by extreme poverty. I sense the fear in women activists as they tell me of the abduction of young girls from homes and schools, and of rampant sexual violence.

Later I am taken to a prison in Kabul, crowded with women and girls accused of adultery, or of wanting to marry the man of their choice or of running away from brutal husbands. There I meet Jamila, a beautiful young girl of sixteen. She tells me she was abducted from her parents' home a year ago by a man who was linked to one of the warlords, and wanted to marry her. When she refused, he nevertheless forced her to go through a wedding ceremony, kept her captive in his home, and raped and abused her. She eventually managed to run away but was caught by the police and brought to this prison. Jamila knows nothing of war or peace or of human rights. She knows only that she would like to return home to her parents, but is afraid that her father will kill her because she has destroyed the family's honour. Jamila's fear is not unfounded. Earlier that year President Karzai had granted amnesty to twenty such women, and released them from prison. Almost immediately several of them then disappeared, probably murdered by their families.

The following day I meet with President Karzai in his heavily guarded palace. From the highly sophisticated security scanning equipment to the presence of heavy armaments and US troops, the pervasive feeling is one of fear and insecurity. Perhaps it is because President Karzai is so obsessed with his own security that he brushes aside Jamila's fears. He tells me I don't understand the protection that women in his society enjoy. He refuses to acknowledge the need to prosecute his cronies for war crimes. He waxes eloquent about girls' education and women's employment but nothing he says matches anything I have seen.

That evening, in the tranquil gardens of the residence of the British Ambassador in Kabul, eager diplomats in their well-pressed suits tell me what their governments are doing to restore peace and security in Afghanistan. They talk about the deployment of NATO

troops in the outlying provinces, and about being pragmatic – that, I discover, is code for doing deals with warlords and ignoring their atrocities. No one is interested in Jamila.

Threatening peace: fear and failed leadership

I am telling you this story about Afghanistan because what I saw in Kabul is, in a microcosm, what I see happening across our world today; a world in which *peace* is being redefined, in the interests of the powerful and the privileged, at the expense of the poor and the marginalized.

A new agenda is in the making in which the rules are being rewritten for the greater security of a few, while the actual sources of insecurity that affect the lives of many more are ignored. The “war on terror” dominates while sexual terror is ignored, even though it affects millions of women and girls around the world, in bedrooms, on battlefields, and in workplaces.

The driving force of this agenda is fear. After the attacks of 9/11, and the bombings of Bali, Madrid and London, people in rich and powerful countries have discovered that they can be as vulnerable to senseless violence, sudden death and wanton destruction as the people living in remote and dangerous places such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine and Darfur.

When the powerful feel threatened, the world becomes a dangerous place. “The gloves are off,” says President Bush. “The rules of the game have changed,” says Prime Minister Blair. “We have to settle down to a very long struggle,” says Prime Minister Howard.

History is replete with examples of how fear provides a power structure for unprincipled leadership. It is no different today. After 9/11, President Bush evoked the fear of terrorism and became a popular leader. In 2001 the Howard government depicted desperate asylum seekers in leaky boats as a threat to the national security of Australia and won an election.

History also provides us with many instances in which fear has been exploited by leaders to justify wars and to maintain and expand the power of governments. In our time too we see fear being manipulated through use of the language of war. We are told we are fighting a “war on terror”. We are told this is a war so dangerous that it knows no geographical, temporal or legal boundaries. The excuse of this “war on terror” is then used

to extend the power of the executive by diverse means, through law, policy and practice, and to launch misbegotten military adventures like Iraq.

Today the biggest threat to peace is not war, but fear and the failure of leadership. Fear that increases intolerance, threatens diversity and justifies the erosion of human rights. And leadership that has lost its moral compass.

But I believe that even in this climate of fear, action by individuals can bring hope and help to set a different course. Today I would like to talk about the dangerous impact of this climate of fear, how the failure of leadership is increasing the risks and what we as individuals can do to change the course.

Security: eroding human rights

Human rights embody common values of human decency and dignity, equality and justice. As such they are an essential, indivisible part of peace, but today, in the name of security, governments are eroding human rights, undermining international law and evading accountability.

There is of course nothing new in the argument that liberty has to be sacrificed for security. That is what the communist regimes in Eastern Europe said. That is what the military dictators in Latin America said. It is what many governments in Asia say.

However, what is new is that Western democracies, like the US, UK and Australia are also claiming now that people can be locked up without charge or trial; that torture and ill treatment are acceptable means of interrogation; that secret trials are justified in the cause of counter-terrorism. And of course, terrorism itself is defined so loosely that it can catch all those ideologies and political views that make us uneasy. In England last year the Prevention of Terrorism Act was used by the police to eject an 80-year-old man from the Labour Party Conference because he heckled the Foreign Secretary!

Not surprisingly, those who have been in the business of repression for a long time – like the regimes in China, north Africa and central Asia – feel totally vindicated and have redoubled their efforts to clamp down on political dissidents and minorities. When I raised the issue of *incommunicado* detention in Chechnya with President Putin, he immediately drew a parallel with Guantánamo: if the Americans can lock up terrorist suspects in secret prisons, why is it wrong for the Russians to do the same? When I raised the human rights crisis in

Darfur with the Sudanese Minister of Interior, his answer to me was “Go and tell the Americans about Guantánamo.”

In a climate of fear, even fundamental principles such as the prohibition of torture and ill treatment are no longer sacrosanct. Torture, like terrorism, is the ultimate corruption of humanity. Both are equally abhorrent, and can never be justified. There are some lines that no society, no nation, no matter what cause, should ever cross.

But far from prosecuting those responsible for torture in places like Abu Ghraib, Bagram and Guantánamo, the US and its allies have tried to circumvent the ban on torture. One method has been to sub-contract torture – a practice otherwise known as “rendition”. You fly terrorist suspects to another country, like Syria or Egypt, where torture is commonly used, and, hey presto, your dirty work is done for you by others.

The Australian Mamdouh Habib was arrested in Pakistan in October 2001, and transferred secretly to Egypt, where he claims he was tortured before being flown to Afghanistan. From there he was taken to Guantánamo, detained for almost three years and allegedly tortured and ill-treated, before suddenly being released and allowed to return to Australia in January 2005. Instead of protesting against his ill-treatment, the Australian government has sought to discredit his allegations of torture. Habib is now suing the Australian government on the ground that it had cooperated in his illegal transfer to Egypt where he was tortured.

Reports by Amnesty International and investigations by the Council of Europe show that a number of Western governments have colluded with the CIA, or at least feigned ignorance about the use of their airports or airspace to transport prisoners to countries where they faced torture.

Torture was abolished in the English legal system some five hundred years ago. To see it being revived in the twenty first century is reprehensible. To see Western governments colluding or cooperating in its revival is shocking. To see a country like Australia which played a key role in developing the international ban on torture, remain so silent now is deplorable.

In a climate of fear, accountability, transparency and judicial scrutiny, which are the cornerstones of democracy have also suffered. There has been no full and independent inquiry into the atrocities of Abu Ghraib. The prisoners in Guantánamo continue to be incarcerated without charge or trial despite two successive decisions by the US Supreme Court that they have a right to judicial review (*Rasul v. Bush*) and the right to a fair trial

(*Hamdan v. Bush*). I am deeply disappointed that Australia as one of the closest allies of the US has failed to protest against the way in which the US is attempting to put prisoners outside the protection of the law, and to place itself outside the reach of the law.

In September this year, President Bush finally admitted what some of us have long known – that the CIA has been running secret detention centres in circumstances that amount to international crimes. Far from regretting it, the President sought and obtained legislation from the US Congress to allow the CIA to continue to detain people in these secret prisons, and to use interrogation techniques that amount to torture and ill treatment. The detainees are denied recourse to US courts and will be tried by military tribunals that do not meet international standards.

I have no doubt that this law too will be challenged in the US courts and found wanting. But until then, the prisoners in Guantánamo must remain in legal limbo. Among them is David Hicks, an Australian citizen who has spent almost five years in detention. The Australian government's treatment of Hicks has been shameful. It agreed that Hicks could be tried by a US military commission which one British judge described as a "kangaroo court", and which was later declared unlawful by the US Supreme Court. In fact, Australia is the only western government to have reached such an agreement with the US government! Hicks is unlikely to get a fair trial from the US Administration under the new law. Last week, I addressed an open letter to Prime Minister Howard asking him to bring Hicks home to Australia to face justice. If there is no ground on which to prosecute him here, then he should be released. Live up to Australian values then, Mr. Howard. Give Hicks a fair go.

Tonight Amnesty International is launching a global action calling on Prime Minister Howard to bring David Hicks home and prosecute or release him. I encourage all of you here tonight, when you go home, to visit Amnesty's website at www.amnesty.org.au and sign up to our action.

Human rights are for the best of us and the worst of us, the guilty as well as the innocent. If we are not willing to protect the rights of those we believe to be guilty, we weaken our ability to protect those who are innocent.

Islam: challenging multiculturalism

Compromising human rights does not serve the struggle against terrorism. Compromising human rights feeds fear and mistrust. It fuels suspicion between communities. It threatens multiculturalism, and undermines tolerance and diversity.

Discrimination and racial profiling have become an accepted element of anti-terrorism strategies in many countries, undermining both human rights and trust between communities. According to the British Transport Police statistics, as an Asian I am five times more likely to be stopped and searched than a white person in England. When *your* security is at the expense of *my* liberty, how can you expect me to feel that we share a common stake in our society?

Politicians and media have fostered this sense of fear and alienation by deploying the language of “them and us”, “good and evil”, “conform or clear off”.

The isolation and anger felt by one side reinforces the fear and prejudice of the other. Each side turns inwards, seeking to protect its own identity and values, rather than looking for bridges to build common understandings. Both become less tolerant and more hostile to the other.

Increasing polarization has strengthened the hands of extremists, reducing the space for dissent and tolerance as hardliners take over at both ends of the spectrum. We see the rise of fundamentalism affecting all major religions – whether Islamic fundamentalism among Muslims, or the rise of the Christian right in the United States or Hindutva in India. There is increasing Islamophobia and anti-Semitism, racism, racial attacks, xenophobia and outbursts of violence of the kind sparked by the Danish cartoons and on Cronulla beach here in Sydney.

There are many important lessons to be drawn from such incidents. One is that we should avoid simplifying multiple identities of people into a single religious one. When you identify me only by my faith, you exclude all my other identities. I am not only Muslim. I am also a woman, a mother, a lawyer, an ethnic Bengali, a citizen of Bangladesh, a resident of London, an avid reader of world literature, a lover of French cuisine and English theatre, a jam-maker.

Recognizing each other’s multiple identities, you and I can better understand not just what differentiates us but also what brings us together. We can respect our common humanity, and build the bridges of understanding, awareness and respect that are the

foundation of a deep respectful multiculturalism. The plurality and not the singularity of our identities is the way in which to overcome fear and create social harmony in a troubled world.

The other risk of a religion-centred approach to social identity is that it strengthens the voices of religious authorities while downgrading the importance of secular movements, like the human rights movement. Fear and prejudice are allowed to override reason and rational thinking which are the basis of human rights. Religious leaders such as Sheikh Al Hilali are given legitimacy as the spokespersons of large religious communities within which there are many people with many different views whose voices are not heard. Many Muslims in Australia do not feel that Sheikh Al Hilali represents their views any more than Pauline Hanson represented the views of all Australians.

In the interests of diversity and tolerance, more space must be given to the plurality of voices, including, in particular those of women.

Women's human rights: the battleground for cultures

I believe women's human rights have suffered greatly in this climate of fear and fundamentalism.

At the international level, an unholy alliance between the Vatican, the US Administration and conservative Muslim countries has served to block progress on women's human rights, including on issues of sexual and reproductive rights. The Christian right in the US has supported the so-called "gag rule" – a rule that stops funding to organisations working on HIV/AIDS if they in any way promote abortion. In a number of Muslim countries, including my own country Bangladesh, Muslim fundamentalist groups threaten the women's movement for equality. Far from being shunned by Western governments, many of these fundamentalist Islamic groups are actually being patronized by them as the so-called "moderate voice of Islam". Once again, through a misguided emphasis on religion, Western governments appear to be giving legitimacy to those who do not represent the voices of people, certainly not of women, but do make convenient partners for the West in the pursuit of their foreign policy. There was universal outrage against racial apartheid in South Africa – where is the outrage against gender apartheid in Saudi Arabia?

The timidity of some governments in protesting against the abuse of women's human rights, no matter where they occur, emboldens Muslim clerics like Sheik Al-Hilali to attack

women's human rights. He claimed that women invite rape and sexual assault by not wearing the veil or headscarf. I'd like to ask him why in Afghanistan the veil fails to protect girls like Jamila from rape and assault. Sheikh Al Hilali is not disingenuous but outrageous.

Violence against women is pervasive in both Muslim and non-Muslim societies. It has less to do with how women dress and far more to do with the inequality of women, the impunity of those who commit gender crimes, and the apathy of state and society, that condone and encourage attitudes that facilitate gender violence. In too many countries, laws, policies and practices discriminate against women, or the police and the judiciary fail to apply them properly. In too many societies, social roles reinforce the power of men over women's lives and their bodies. Too often, religious practices, tradition and custom are used as a cover to tolerate or encourage violence against women. Few perpetrators are brought to justice and even fewer convicted. Rape has the lowest conviction rate among serious crimes: worldwide it is only 10%.

That should be of great concern to both Muslim and non-Muslim leaders. Even in an egalitarian society like Australia, a recent survey on personal safety conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics showed that 17% of women had experienced sexual violence. In some Indigenous communities, women are up to 45 times more likely to suffer family violence as compared to other women in Australia, and many do not have access to support services. Many activists blame a culture of tolerance and silence for this high rate of abuse.

I find Sheikh al-Hilali's statement about women's clothing deeply insulting to both men and women, but also I find the call by British and Australian politicians for Muslim women to discard their veil unhelpful. They claim to feel uneasy speaking to a woman whose face they cannot see. Well, I feel uncomfortable talking to Scotsmen in kilts. They don't like to see female faces covered – I don't like to look at male legs uncovered. They feel women in veils are alienating. I feel men in kilts are intimidating. They fear what is hidden beneath the veil. Well, I am pretty scared of what might be behind the kilt. And so, if they think it is right to ask Muslim women to take off their veils, should I ask the next Scotsman I meet to take off his kilt?

So, let's get some perspective into this issue. It is wrong for women in Saudi Arabia or Iran to be forced to put on the veil. It is equally wrong in Turkey or France for women to be forced not to wear the headscarf. Women have the right to freedom of expression, and that includes what they choose to wear. Governments have a duty to create a safe environment in which every woman can make that choice without fear of violence or

coercion. Religious leaders have the responsibility to ensure that the choices of women are respected.

In my view the debate about headscarves and veils is a red herring. Let's not pretend that a simple feminine garment is the main barrier to multiculturalism and social harmony. Let's look at real grievances of discrimination and alienation. Let's be alert to the ways in which racism and xenophobia are being fanned. Let's not stoke fears about loss of cultural identity, or claim supremacy for our own culture over others.

To those who believe the era of multiculturalism is over, let me say that in my view, multiculturalism is not a policy choice of governments but a reality thrust upon us by a globalized world. The question is not whether we should replace multiculturalism but how well we manage it.

Multiculturalism needs the fertile soil of global values to flourish – and human rights provide those global values. The universality of human rights means that they apply equally to all men and women of every community. This universality of human rights is our most powerful tool – against gender violence, against intolerance, racism, and xenophobia, and against terrorism – universality in our understanding of human rights and universality in our application of human rights. By emphasizing our common humanity, human rights impose on us mutual respect and understanding of the rights of others. Respect for my right to religion is not a license to restrict your freedom of expression; nor is your right to expression so absolute that you can use it to incite racial hatred or gender crimes.

More human rights education would be good for all of us. But as teachers and parents know well, it is not what we say but what we do that children learn. Take the example of Australia. When the Australian government fails to criticise human rights abuses by the US and does not condemn the bombing of women and children in Lebanon, when the Australian government subjects asylum seekers to harsh incarceration and refuses to recognise the wrongs done to Indigenous Australians, when it introduces and enforces discriminatory counter-terrorism laws, it undermines its credibility and legitimacy to promote human rights – and that is dangerous.

Remember that famous statement of Thomas Moore to Henry VIII: “Laws are like the trees in the forest, if you cut them down one by one, where will you hide when the devil turns on you?” One could apply the same analogy to human rights and say to governments: “Human rights are the common thread that holds together a diverse, multicultural society,

but if you snip away at that thread until it gives way and falls apart, then what will you use to hold the pieces together when the cracks appear in your society?”

Inspiring leadership: replacing fear with hope

The implications of the climate of fear on human rights and multiculturalism are neither abstract nor limited to distant places. They have major implications for Australia too. They raise fundamental questions for Australians. What kind of Australia would you like to see? Is yours an image of a gated community of high walls, fearful and inward-looking or do you foresee an open community, proud of its legacy of international engagement and confident of its enduring commitment to global values and multilateralism? Which of these two Australia's would be more true to Australian values?

Australia has had a long tradition of supporting human rights and multilateralism. It made a vital contribution to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and to the formation of important human rights treaties as well as international institutions like the International Criminal Court.

But more recently some of the shine on Australia's reputation as a country of the fair-go is becoming tarnished. It has failed to use its influence on the US on issues of torture and fair trial. It has betrayed its own citizens in Guantánamo. It has contributed to the climate of fear and mistrust through its discriminatory and restrictive policies on refugees and asylum seekers. Its mandatory detention policy has been one of the harshest in the world.

A government that promotes “mateship” as a key Australian value appears less than keen to commit itself to “mateship” at the international level. Australia no longer accepts the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice over boundary issues. It will not sign the Kyoto Protocol, despite growing concern among Australians about global warming. It has decided not to ratify the Optional Protocol against Torture. Not only has Australia rejected UN reports on its treatment of Indigenous Australians, at the current session of the UN General Assembly Australia is actively opposing the adoption of a UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Australia is one of a handful of countries undermining this recognition of the distinct needs and aspirations of Indigenous peoples.

Respect for human rights, international law and international solidarity are lifelines for all members of the international community. Australia needs those lifelines as much as

anyone else, and the world needs an engaged and principled Australia that is ready to play its part in the region and globally.

Throughout history great social changes, from the abolition of slavery to the struggle for women's equality, have begun not with governments but with ordinary people. It is within your power – as ordinary Australians committed to human rights, fairness and justice – to make the difference. Call on the Australian government to speak out against the erosion of fundamental human rights, and against the unfair treatment of its own citizen and others in Guantánamo.

As Australians who believe in a “fair go”, call on your government to recognize the wrongs done to Indigenous Australians. Call on your government to show greater generosity to refugees.

On the 50th anniversary of the Hungarian uprising, Australia rightly took pride in the way it had opened its doors to Hungarian refugees. But what would have happened if today's laws had been in place then? Would they have been sent off to a Pacific Island or put into detention in Baxter? And if those refugees had been turned away, Australia would have been the poorer without the likes of entrepreneur and philanthropist Frank Lowy, artist Judy Cassab, former New South Wales Premier Nick Greiner, and sports commentator Les Murray, plus a multitude of lower profile but equally valuable individuals. What is the difference between Hungarian refugees of that time and today's refugees? Both groups fled repression in search of safer, better life for themselves and their families. So, is it fair to treat them differently?

Let us not allow ourselves to be overwhelmed by the politics of fear. Let us not ignore the risks emanating from unethical globalization and unrestrained consumption patterns. For the vast majority of the people in this world, the main concern is not terrorism but poverty, disease, unemployment and homelessness. The bigger threat to the world is global warming, not suicide bombings. Thousands more people have died in the last few years from wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Darfur and Lebanon than from terrorist bombs in affluent countries. The real weapons of mass destruction are not nuclear, biological or chemical weapons but the proliferation of small arms which kill more than 350,000 people every year.

Last week the United Nations took the first step towards a global Arms Trade Treaty to control small arms. Australia to its credit took a leading role in this historic decision.

I have spoken a lot today of fear as a divider – let me also mention that just as there are dividers of fear, there are also connectors of hope.

One great connector is human rights – the other great connector is sports. Some of you may still be smarting because of Sydney’s recent loss of the Grand Final by just one point! So excuse my insensitivity in mentioning the AFL – but it has shown exemplary leadership on two key human rights problems. It recently adopted policies against sexual harassment and sexual discrimination and is working with Vichealth (Victorian Health Promotion Foundation) to create a safe, inclusive and supportive environment for women. Ten years ago, the AFL introduced new rules and procedures to deal with on-field racism and religious vilification. It’s these kinds of practical, principled initiatives that we need in order to fight the inertia of fear and failed leadership.

Today, in Johannesburg Amnesty International is bestowing its Ambassador of Conscience Award on Nelson Mandela for his inspirational leadership on human rights and justice. A former victim of apartheid, he rejected revenge, and sought reconciliation. He inspired a new vision of justice in which poverty is as egregious wrong today as was apartheid in the past. We in Amnesty International are inspired by Nelson Mandela’s leadership and are committed to working not only to free prisoners of conscience but also prisoners of poverty, prisoners of prejudice and prisoners of violence: to demand justice for the people of Darfur, for women and girls suffering violence, for those living with HIV/AIDS.

Kofi Annan, the UN Secretary-General, once said that, “Genocide begins with the killing of one person.” I believe that peace begins with the dream of one person. Let me end with the story of one such person, an Israeli man. His 16-year-old daughter had been killed by a Palestinian suicide bomber. He told me, “I could have made my grief a tool for revenge but I chose to make it a platform for change.” He founded the Forum for Bereaved Families which brings together Palestinians and Israelis who believe in peace.

We too have a choice. We could choose to live in fear. Or we could make that other choice: the choice of a fair go for all; the choice of being true blue to universal freedoms. Are you ready to make that tough choice?