

BOUNDARY PEACE INITIATIVE

Correction: International Day of Peace 2022:

We are sorry for the error in the below sentence:

Martin shared a phrase by Rumi as he was translating documents in Turkey that stuck with him: you are the ocean in a drop; we are the sum of everything in the Universe.

The quote should read: “You are not a drop in the ocean, but the ocean in a drop “.

‘Attack on freedom’: Israel moves to claw back state funds from critical films

By: **Noa Yachot** (Jan 2023): From: *The Guardian UK Culture minister’s attack on two documentaries set in Palestinian territories part of campaign to silence dissent, film-makers say*

Israel’s culture minister is attempting to revoke state funding from two documentary films dealing with the occupation of the Palestinian territories, increasing concerns that **the country’s new hard-right government** will follow through on promises to crack down on dissenting voices.

The minister, Miki Zohar, of Benjamin Netanyahu’s ruling Likud party, has pledged to “revoke funding that promotes our enemy’s narrative” and withhold grants from films that “present Israeli soldiers as murderers”. He has also said he will require film-makers to sign a declaration they will not use state funds to create content that “harms the state of Israel or IDF soldiers”.

The minister says he wants the producers of two films, both currently screening in festivals and viewable on Israeli cable networks, to return government-funded grants. One, called H2: Occupation Lab, tracks the history of Israeli control over the West Bank city of **Hebron**. The second, *Two Kids a Day*, explores the arrests and interrogations of Palestinian children.

Israeli cinema, including its high-profile documentary industry, is heavily reliant on the state through grants administered by a group of government-paid film funds.

David Wachsmann, the director of *Two Kids a Day*, said: “These two films are in the eye of the storm, but this is an attack on freedom of expression in Israel, on culture and on every Israeli artist.”

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The film explores the arrests and interrogations of four children from the Aida refugee camp who were held – in one case for four years – on accusations of stone-throwing. Human rights organisations have **documented** hundreds such arrests annually. Most take place in the middle of the night when the children are sleeping.

“Israel has decided to turn culture into propaganda,” said Noam Sheizaf, who directed H2: The Occupation Lab along with Idit Avrahami. Their film tracks the history of Hebron, where military rule and a far-right takeover by Jewish settlers have turned the once-bustling centre of the Palestinian city into a dystopian ghost town.

It argues that the mechanisms of control first developed in Hebron – “Jewish supremacy in its most blatant and unapologetic form”, says Sheizaf – are replicated throughout the **Palestinian territories** and will increasingly reach Israel.

Both films drew the ire of **Shai Glick**, a far-right activist known for targeting artists and cultural institutions he believes sully Israel’s reputation. His organisation, Betsalmo, launched pressure campaigns to get local authorities to cancel screenings – succeeding on one occasion when a public screening of H2 was canceled by the Israeli town of Pardes Hanna.

Glick’s efforts reached the culture minister, who has asked the finance minister, Bezalel Smotrich, to investigate whether the government can retroactively revoke grants made to the films.

“Our film argues that not only the [Palestinian] territories, but also Israel is going through a process of ‘Hebronization’,” Sheizaf said. “What’s crazy is that the process that’s at the heart of the film happened to the film itself.”

The culture ministry did not respond to a request for comment.

This is not the first time an Israeli culture minister has targeted Israeli productions dealing with the occupation. Miri Regev, the firebrand politician who held the post from 2015-2020, **worked to withdraw state support from critical productions**. She also created the “Samaria Film Fund” for Jewish settlers to counter what she claimed was a leftwing bias in the industry. However, her bill that would have made state funding conditional on “loyalty” to the state, died in parliament.

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But under the current government – the most right wing in Israel’s history – artists worry that the guardrails that existed just a few years ago are about to come down. A proposed legal overhaul would **gut the independence of the judiciary and of legal advisers**, who have occasionally served as a check on similar efforts. The reforms to the judiciary have been the subject of mass protests in Israeli cities in recent weeks.

At the same time, the government’s communications minister has **vowed** to dismantle the country’s public broadcaster, which, alongside its news operation, funds scores of television and documentary productions.

“The feeling is that this is happening in the context of a watershed moment,” Sheizaf said. “If all of these things come to pass, this will be a very different country, overnight.”

Wachsmann said that the controversy had resulted in more public discussion of Israel’s practices. “That’s the plus in all of this – there’s been a focus on Palestinian children. They’re the issue here.”

Volker Türk: the man charged with protecting the world’s human rights

By: **Lizzy Davies** (Jan. 2023) From: The Guardian UK
Mild-mannered, but with a tough message to convey, the new UN high commissioner pledges a return to ‘the basics’ of the Universal Declaration laid down 75 years ago

Nearly three months into his job as the new human rights chief at the UN, Volker Türk has a lot on his plate.

A career UN official and human rights lawyer, mild-mannered, dapper and bespectacled, he has less name recognition than his predecessor, the former president of Chile, **Michelle Bachelet**. When he saw her before he started, he says, “she was very worried, and I share her worry, about how divisive human rights has become.”

Türk takes on the trickiest of jobs in an era marked by widespread concern over authoritarian governments, the climate crisis, protracted conflicts, invasive digital tools and the global cost-of-living crisis. All of which are dealing setbacks to human rights, and none of which are problems with an easy solution.

At the start of 2023, Türk is particularly worried about widespread flouting of **international humanitarian law**, the practical rules of the battlefield that were set out in the Geneva conventions.

Of leading concern, he says, are Yemen, South Sudan, Syria (still) and Ethiopia, where – despite a truce between government forces and Tigrayan rebels – the region of **Oromia** is now engulfed in violence.

Then, of course, there’s Ukraine, where the war sparked by Russia’s invasion looks set to grind on for years. Last month, the UN’s human rights monitoring mission, which reports to Türk’s office, accused Russian forces of **carrying out summary executions** across the regions of Kyiv, Chernihiv and Sumy earlier this year that it said may constitute a war crime.

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(From last column) Volker Türk:

“In any conflict situation, the longer it lasts, the more you disrespect the other, and that goes to the heart of international humanitarian law,” says Türk. “The fact that in winter time in **Ukraine** you have critical civilian infrastructure bombarded, where people then end up with no heating or electricity ... is an indication of that.”

On a **recent visit** to Kyiv, Türk was forced to hold a meeting with human rights defenders in an underground shelter as the sirens sounded. The people he was with told him: “Oh, this is the new normal for us.” Türk says now: “The fact that something that is utterly abnormal becomes normal is frightening. You get used to a situation that no one should get used to.”

In Ukraine, he was struck – as he says he always is in war zones – by “the destruction ... the senselessness of it”. “I can never get used to the fact that war brings out the worst everywhere,” he says.

As a child growing up in Austria, he was baffled by how the second world war had done just that. “I was wondering: why is it that there was almost an indifference [to the suffering of others] that became violent?”

Türk, who has spent most of his career at the UN’s refugee agency in countries such as Malaysia, Kosovo and the Democratic Republic of Congo, seems to have retained this aversion to indifference, except now he thinks of it on a global scale. Perhaps as a result of Ukraine, many other crises, he notes, are being forgotten – or, at least, not given the attention they deserve. From Myanmar and Sri Lanka to Haiti and Somalia, he fears, those curtailing the rights of others will be emboldened if the world looks the other way.

“If [these situations] continue to be forgotten, those who benefit from it probably feel encouraged. So it is important that we keep the spotlight on [them],” he says.

One thorny human rights issue that Türk’s office could not forget, even if it wanted to, is China’s treatment of the **Uyghurs** and other ethnic and Muslim minorities in the western region of Xinjiang. After a long delay, during which Bachelet was accused of bowing to pressure from Beijing, she published **the OHCHR report** in the summer, **just 11 minutes** before she left the job.

A damning review, it found that Uyghur Muslims were suffering “serious human rights violations”, possibly amounting to crimes against humanity. But the relief felt by activists that the UN had not minced its words was soured soon afterwards when its human rights council – an inter-governmental body made up of 47 rotating member states – **voted in October against** holding a debate on the issue after intense lobbying by Beijing.

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Our Mission

The Boundary Peace Initiative represents people of diverse backgrounds officially brought together in 2002 because of our mutual concern for the rise in world conflict. Our mandate is to participate in multilateral non-violent conflict resolution in support of global human rights, ecological and environmental sustainability and international law through education, sharing of information, dialogue and activism locally and globally. We encourage and seek your participation in our mutual work for true peace based on social justice, equality, accountability, integrity, honour, respect, etc in order to build a better world today and future generations.

BPI web site: www.boundarypeaceinitiative.org

For info contact Laura at (250) 444-0524 or (250) 442-0434 or email: L4peace@telus.net.

UN International Days

- Feb. 1:** World Interfaith Harmony Week
- Feb. 4:** International Day of Human Fraternity
- Feb. 6:** International Day of Zero Tolerance to Female Genital Mutilations
- Feb. 11:** International Day of Women and Girls in Science
- Feb. 12:** International Day for the Prevention of Violent Extremism as and when Conducive to Terrorism
- Feb. 20:** World Day of Social Justice
- Feb. 21:** International Mother Language Day

(From page 2) Volker Türk:

Agnès Callamard, secretary general of Amnesty International, said the move made “a mockery of everything the ... council is supposed to stand for”.

Is there a credibility problem here? Türk insists that a distinction must be made between the bodies of the UN – including the security council, which, he says, has proved “pretty dysfunctional” on a number of issues, **not least Ukraine** – and offices such as his own. “For me, despite the fact that the human rights council has decided not to go ahead with it ... it is a report that I feel duty bound to follow up on,” he says.

Doing so will require “continued dialogue” with the Chinese authorities, he adds, and on this he knows he must tread carefully. The Xinjiang issue came to dominate Bachelet’s time in office, culminating in a **heavily criticised visit** to the country, which critics branded a PR coup for Beijing.

If invited, would he go to talk to the Chinese about the contents of the 46-page OHCHR assessment? “If I can discuss the report, and if that’s absolutely clear, yes, I would,” he says.

This year will mark the 75th anniversary of the signing of the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**.

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(From last column) Volker Türk:

Türk imbibed the text as an idealistic teenager in Linz, Austria, and has carried round his now battered copy throughout his career.

The UN is planning a year-long campaign to showcase the declaration, focusing on its legacy and relevance.

Türk hopes that, amid the turmoil and division of recent years, it will help “bring us back to some of the basics”.

“[The declaration] is underpinned by fundamental human values that cut across the whole world: all continents, all religions, all faith groups, all belief systems, all culture. They are nourished by these fundamental human values, and the human rights norms emanate from them,” he says. “I think we need to bring [the human rights conversation] back to it.”

“Midnight is upon us”—the Cuban Missile Crisis as seen at the time, in one person’s words

By Harrison Brown | October 16, 2022

From: The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists

(Bulletin Editor’s note: On the anniversary of the start of the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists is reprinting this guest editorial from our archives, word-for-word as it was written during the height of the 13-day stand-off.)

OCTOBER 24, 1962: I am writing on a plane en route from Los Angeles to Washington and for all I know this editorial, honoring the twentieth anniversary of the first controlled release of nuclear energy by man, may never be published. This morning, the governments of the United States and Soviet Union were moving relentlessly toward armed conflict in the Caribbean. Missiles and planes stand poised on both sides, read to deliver their deadly weapons to their targets. By tomorrow, if inflexibility persists or someone in the Soviet Union or in Cuba or in our own government makes the wrong decision, the great all-out nuclear war, which we have discussed and feared for twenty years, may be triggered. Never in history have people and nations been so close to death and destruction on such a vast scale. Midnight is upon us.

As I look back over the events of the past twenty years, I feel frustrated and tired, sorrowful and angry. My anger is directed broadly. It is directed at a substantial number of Americans who have been in positions of political power during the last twenty years and who failed to use that power wisely. It is directed even more strongly at fewer, but individually more powerful, Russians. It is directed in particular at all persons who, partly through ignorance and partly through failure to look at these problems in true perspective, have brought us to the brink of nuclear war.

Looking back over Soviet and American actions since that historic day under the stands of Stag Field, the greatest compliment one can pay the two powers is that at least until the present a major nuclear war has been avoided.

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WHAT'S UP?

Doomsday Clock Set on January 24 to 90 Seconds to Midnight. Check out the statement and the video on the website for the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists at: <https://thebulletin.org/>

The history of the underdevelopment of Latin America makes up the history of the development of world capitalism. Our defeat was always implicit in another's victory; our wealth has always generated our poverty, in order to feed the prosperity of others."

Eduardo Geleano

Voice your opinion to the Prime Minister and all MPs. Free postage: {Name of MP}, Parliament Buildings, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0A6
Go to the Government of Canada website for MP email and phone contact at: <http://www.canada.gc.ca>

The BPI welcomes your input. Articles may not be common consensus of members. To submit articles contact Laura at **250-444-0524** or **250-442-0434** or email L4peace@telus.net.

The BPI is an affiliate of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, Peace Pledge Union, Abolition 2000 & CNANW and works with local and many global peace, social justice and environmental groups.

(From page 3) "Midnight is upon us

This has been no mean accomplishment. But virtually all persons who think about these problems recognize that the status quo cannot be perpetuated indefinitely. In the absence of meaningful agreements between the United States and the Soviet Union we are destined to blow each other out of existence. Perhaps tomorrow will be the day. Or perhaps we will survive this crisis, and in another year a new one will precipitate the conflict.

In looking back, one cannot help but wonder what the situation would be today had decisions been made differently. What would our present position be if we had not used the bomb in the first place? What would it be if we had not placed a substantial part of our post-war policy on the estimate that the Soviet Union would require many years or even decades to develop her own nuclear weapons? What would it be if we had behaved differently at the London disarmament conference or at the early nuclear test suspension discussions? What would our situation be if the Russians had not pushed their own system so strongly and so ruthlessly following the war or had they behaved less intransigently during the past years? What would it be had we taken a more active and positive interest in problems of Cuban economic development fifteen or even ten years ago? Somehow, Russians and Americans have compounded decisions which in the aggregate, from the point of view of humanity, have been wrong. We have permitted ourselves to become locked in a vicious circle from which there will be no automatic release. If we are to break out we must think in political terms which are as large relative to our present political actions as H-bombs are large relative to World War II blockbusters.

The twentieth year of the birth of controlled nuclear energy is a black one but fortunately, if we survive it, there are at least some signs of hope. There is much more sophistication in our government today concerning the dangers of nuclear war and the problems of arms control and disarmament than there was a few years ago. The Russians, whose thinking about these problems was superficial until recently, now appear to be making some serious studies. There is an increasing tendency on both sides to think beyond the immediate goal or the emergency brush fire and to examine longer range consequences of contemplated actions. Our Congress has established an agency which is charged with the responsibility of studying the special problems of arms control and disarmament.

These are small though important beginnings, but Russians and Americans alike must recognize that we are not moving rapidly enough. As a friend of mine who is connected with the United States Arms Control and Disarmament Agency said recently, "The main trouble with the agency is that we have a pup tent where we ought to have a skyscraper."

Let us hope that we build a skyscraper rapidly and that the Russians, recognizing our common dangers, build a similar one.

They say that equality is not possible, because some people will always be stronger or smarter than others. But it is exactly because of this, said Lichtenberg, precisely because some people are stronger and smarter than others, that the principle of equality is necessary. The advantages of the rich over the poor demonstrate not only inequality of force and intellect, but inequality of civil rights.

Leo Tolstoy

If you do good and ask for a reward, you weaken the force of your goodness.

From the Book of Divine Thoughts