



*"and they shall beat their
swords into ploughshares,
and spears into pruning
hooks; nation shall not lift
up sword against nation;
neither shall they learn war
any more." (Isaiah 2:4)*

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For immediate release

30 wars greet the 2008 "day of global ceasefire"

Waterloo, September 18, 2008 - The United Nations has designated September 21 as the International Day of Peace – to be observed annually as “a day of global ceasefire and non-violence.” This year, according to Project Ploughshares’ *Armed Conflicts Report 2008*, the world will face one more war than it did a year ago, and a total of 30 in all.

This year’s increase in total armed conflicts interrupts a multi-year trend of slow but steady decline in conflicts worldwide. At the turn of the millennium there were 41 conflicts in 35 countries; by 2006 it was 29 conflicts in 25 countries. The new report tabulates the armed conflicts of 2007, when two new wars emerged and one ended.

The 2006 34-day war between Israel and Lebanon (Hezbollah), which resulted in the deaths of over 1,000 Lebanese and 150 Israelis, is removed from the report on 2007 conflicts, but two new conflicts, in Yemen and Turkey respectively, are added.

The current conflict in Yemen actually began in 2004 with the emergence of a new rebel group, the Shabab al-Moumineen or Youthful Believers, which opposes the pro-western position of the government, but the report designates conflicts as wars or armed conflicts only after cumulative combat deaths have crossed a threshold of 1000 – which in this case happened in 2007.

The conflict in Turkey is the re-emergence of the war against Kurdish rebels in the southeast. In 1999 Kurdish rebels of the Partia Karkaren Kurdistan (PKK) declared a ceasefire when their leader Abdullah Ocalan was captured. But by 2004 the PKK had established new bases in northern Iraq and, in the absence of an amnesty from the Government of Turkey, fighting has re-emerged in recent years with conflict fatalities passing the 1,000 mark in 2007.

Africa and Asia are most affected by war (see Table 1 below), hosting 12 and 11 armed conflicts respectively, or about three-quarters of the world’s total. There continues to be a heavy concentration of armed conflict in the Middle East, with almost a third of the countries in the region hosting war on their territories.

In introducing the 2008 report, Maureen O’Neil, the former President of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), and currently President and CEO of the Canadian Health Services Research Foundation, pays tribute to the international community’s efforts in research, diplomacy, and peacebuilding in gradually reducing the incidence of war over the past decade,

but she also warns that “resolving the 30 current conflicts that remain will require a deeper commitment and a fuller understanding of what drives conflict in each situation.”

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s Day of Peace message links ongoing war to continuing violations of human rights throughout much of the world and to chronic underdevelopment. “Reaching the Millennium Development Goals is also essential to peace. Yet many countries in Africa are not on track to reach a single one of the goals by the deadline of 2015....On 21 September, the International Day of Peace, I call on world leaders and peoples around the world to join forces against conflict, poverty and hunger, and for all human rights for all.”

Full descriptions of all armed conflicts of 2007, as well as those recently ended, are available under Armed Conflicts Report in the “Library” section of the Project Ploughshares website (www.ploughshares.ca). Project Ploughshares has reported annually on armed conflicts since 1987.

For more details on the International Day of Peace visit the UN’s peace day site at <http://www.un.org/events/peaceday/2008/index.shtml>.

Table 1: Geographic distributions of armed conflicts in 2007

Region	# of countries in region	# of conflicts in region	# of countries hosting conflicts	% of countries in region hosting conflicts	% of world conflicts
Africa	50	12	11	22	40
Asia	42	11	8	19	36.7
Europe	42	1	1	2.4	3.3
The Americas	44	2	2	5	6.7
Middle East	14	4	4	29	13.3
<i>World Totals</i>	<i>192</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>13.5</i>	<i>100</i>

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Founded in 1976, Project Ploughshares works with churches and related organizations, as well as governments and nongovernmental organizations, in Canada and internationally, to identify, develop, and advance approaches that build peace and prevent war, and promote the peaceful resolution of political conflict.