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The Destruction of Dissent
First Amendment Rights in the Post-September 11th Period

HEIDI BOGHOSIAN

Allies, marches, sit-ins, pickets, vigils, leafleting, and street theater. For decades, labor unions, educational, arts and immigrants' rights groups have relied on these forms of lawful expression to share their viewpoints with the public at large. Yet in the span of six months the climate in which cause-oriented organizations can carry out this public part of their mission has been significantly altered. After the events of September 11, 2001, the federal government and many states enacted new legislation that will have an overarching impact on the nonprofit sector. Local police departments, often in cooperation with the FBI or other branches of federal government, are using a heavier hand to deal with organizations wanting to take dissent to the streets.

Nonprofit groups are experiencing, first-hand, several crackdowns on their First Amendment rights to lawful expressive activity. Recent trends include preemptive strikes to curb First Amendment activity such as the denial of demonstration permits based on content, harsher treatment of protestors (including the use of pepper spray and potentially lethal force), enhanced sentences for low-level offenses, and interrogation based on political viewpoint. Additionally, local police departments follow local regulations when issuing permits. The application process typically tries to identify characteristics that may require increased police security measures—such as the gathering's expected size. It is usually a clear and simple process.

In several cities since September 11 police have said that they are no longer issuing permits at all or are doing so on a case-by-case basis. Many cities are cracking down on organizers of demonstrations who do not obtain permits when previously they may have simply allowed demonstrations to occur without permits.

Months after September 11, for example, the city of Cambridge, Massachusetts, raised obstacles for Harvard Living Wage campaign organizers to obtain a demonstration permit. The group contacted the city manager and was told that he was not issuing any permits until further notice because a September 20 demonstration had, as he described it, “gotten out of hand.” Inquiry calls from others revealed that permits would be issued on a case-by-case basis. When representatives from the ACLU, Cambridge Women's Commission, National Lawyers Guild and Abortion Access Project later met with the city manager, police commissioner and other city officials to clarify the application process, they were told that the city was using a “special events permit” procedure that would require $500 surety bonds for demonstrations.

In New York, members of the National Lawyers Guild observed firsthand that many small, spontaneous peace actions were treated more harshly than before September 11. Representatives of the New York City Police Department denied a permit for a group of Afghan women. Police subsequently told the women that they would continue on page two
not deploy police officers to the scene of the protest and that the demonstration participants would therefore be in danger from opposing political groups. Such actions may intimidate groups that have not had previous experience negotiating with the police.

In another instance of changed police attitudes toward protestors, 18 people were arrested at a peace rally in Hartford, Connecticut. Several of the “Hartford 18” were charged with conspiracy to incite a riot, even though protestors claim that they were targeted and were merely mediating a discussion after initial arrests were made. At the peace rally the police used pepper spray on the crowd. The media reported that Hartford residents who had attended a larger rally in April 2001, that also did not have a permit, noted that the police’s reactions were noticeably different in the wake of September 11.

Ramped Up Charges

Anti-globalization protesters have documented cases of enhanced penalties and increased police scrutiny for the past two years. For example, an unprecedented $1 million bail was set for one demonstrator at the Philadelphia Democratic Convention whom police had identified as a “leader.” Now, post-September 11, there have been even more instances of charges for low-level offenses being ramped up. One of the Hartford 18, peace activist Adam Hurter, was charged with inciting a riot and faces a 10-year sentence if the Hartford prosecutor has his way. The police report called him a “ringleader” who was trying to recruit “radicals” to join him in his “violent plot” to attack an officer. Hurter and witnesses say that he sat in the middle of a circle of demonstrators on a sidewalk and led discussion about what to do after the police started arresting people.

In what was clearly an enhanced penalty based on the content of the offense, four protestors in San Francisco were arrested on felony charges for “wheat-pasting” dumpsters with posters of the Twin Towers with a plane flying into them, captioned “The Evil Empire.” Two of the offenders were each charged with felonies and held on $5,000 bail. In the rare instances in which anti-fliering ordinances are enforced, wheat-pasters are typically charged with a violation or misdemeanor, receive a citation and are released—since the property damage (usually a lamppost or wall) is not large enough for a felony.

Arrestees at the February 2002 World Economic Forum anti-globalization demonstrations in New York were extensively questioned about their politics while in custody. Women have been singled out for particularly harsh treatment, and many were held on a bus for up to nine hours or more, apparently without access to water, bathrooms, food, attorneys or medical treatment. “Such detention is strictly punitive and illustrates the state’s attitude toward dissent in the post 9-11 climate,” said Marina Sitrin, a member of the New York-based People’s Law Collective. “Questioning about political views is unconstitutional and shows that people are being singled out for their viewpoints.”

Overzealous Law Enforcement

Local police have worked in tandem with the federal government prior to September 11 but tended to keep their cooperation quiet. Now, local officials are openly asking protestors to share personal information with federal officials—possibly to intimidate them. Protesters at the recent World Economic Forum (WEF) demonstrations in New York were put through the system for low-level violations and misdemeanors. “While in detention, police tried to forcibly remove them and told them it was for the purpose of being interrogated by the FBI,” said Sitrin. “Since 9-11, more activists have been stopped on the street and visited in their homes by FBI agents wanting to question them about their political views and affiliations,” she continued.

Political activists who criticize the government or maintain ties with international political movements are targets for being charged with the new crime of domestic terrorism created by the USA PATRIOT Act—especially anti-globalization movements that had already been the target of enormous police zealousness since 1999. The Act defines terrorism so broadly that anyone who may have at some time participated in civil disobedience, or even a labor picket, may be targeted.

In addition to the federal anti-terrorism legislation, local laws similar to the USA PATRIOT Act are being passed. A pending bio-terrorism law in New York State would criminalize the throwing of certain liquids. Mandatory life would be the lowest penalty for acts such as animal rights activists
The recent spate of anti-terrorism laws and the resulting policies—both official and unofficial—greatly exacerbate the national trend of chilling First Amendment expression. The right to form alliances with other groups is essential to coalition building and the right to organize. These new practices add to the continuing erosion of the fundamental right to free expression and free association that is a cornerstone of our democracy.

Heidi Boghosian is executive director of the National Lawyers Guild (www.nlgl.org). This article is reprinted with permission from Third Sector New England, Boston, MA (Volume 8, Issue 4). The Nonprofit Quarterly features innovative thinking and management practices in the nonprofit sector. For information please call 1-800-281-7770.

Hell No, I Won't Go

Personal Testimony of an Israeli Refusenik

ASAF ORON

Editor’s Note: RESIST formed in 1967 with a “Call to RESIST Illegitimate Authority,” urging support of those refusing to serve in the Vietnam War. RESIST’s founders modeled their efforts on what had taken place in France during the Algerian War. There, a group of intellectuals, writers and others (The Committee of a Hundred) signed a public statement declaring they would help anyone who refused to serve in the war in Algiers, or who deserted from that war. RESIST’s founders adapted this model as a way of confronting the war in Vietnam. The original “Call” (see www.resistinc.org) circulated in public and private ways, was signed by some 20,000 people.

The statement below, written by an Israeli refusenik, seems to be a continuation of this type of struggle. This document is presented below in the spirit of history and challenge to illegitimate authority.

Asaf Oron, a Sergeant Major in the Giv’ati Brigade, is one of the original 53 Israeli soldiers who signed the “Fighters’ Letter” in January 2002, declaring that from now on they will refuse to serve in the Occupied Territories. He is signer #8 and one of the first in the list to include a statement explaining his action. Excerpted below is part of Oron’s statement translated by Amichai Kronfeld of Jewish Peace News. Translator’s notes are designated [AK].

On February 5, 1985, I got up, left my home, went to the Compulsory Service Center on Rashi Street in Jerusalem, said good-bye to my parents, boarded the rickety old bus going to the Military Absorption Station and turned into a soldier. Exactly 17 years later, I find myself in a head-to-head confrontation with the army, while the public at large is jeering and mocking me from the sidelines. Right-wingers see me as a traitor who’s done the same thing?

racy and politicizing the army. And the left? The square, establishment, “moderate” left that only yesterday was courting my vote now turns its back on me as well.

Everyone blabbers about what is and what is not legitimate . . . Almost no one asks the main question: why would a regular guy get up one morning in the middle of life, work, the kids and decide he’s not playing the game anymore? And how come he is not alone but there are 50... I beg your pardon, 100... beg your pardon again, now almost 200 regular, run-of-the-mill guys like him who’ve done the same thing?

Our parents’ generation lets out a sigh: we’ve embarrassed them yet again. But isn’t it all your fault? What did you raise us on? Universal ethics and universal justice, on the one hand: peace, liberty and equality to all. And on the other hand: “the Arabs want to throw us into the sea,” and, “They are all crafty and primitive. You can’t trust them.” On the one hand, the songs of John Lennon, Pete Seeger, Bob Dylan, Bob Marley, Pink Floyd. Songs of peace and love and against militarism and war.

On the other hand, songs about a sweetheart riding the tank after sunset in the field: “The tank is yours and you are ours.” [alusions to popular Israeli songs - AK]. I was raised on two value systems: one was the ethical code and the other the tribal code, and I naively believed that the two could coexist.

This is the way I was when I was drafted. Not enthusiastic, but as if embarking on a sacred mission of courage and sacrifice for
Personal Testimony of an Israeli Refusenik

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the benefit of society. But when, instead of a sacred mission, a 19-year-old finds himself performing the sacrilege of violating human beings’ dignity and freedom, he doesn’t dare ask—even himself—if it’s OK or not. He simply acts like everyone else and tries to blend in.

You get used to it in a hurry, and many even learn to like it. Where else can you go out on patrol—that is, walk the streets like a king, harass and humiliate pedestrians to your heart’s content, and get into mischief with your buddies—and at the same time feel like a big hero defending your country? The Gaza Exploits became heroic tales, a source of pride for Giv’ati, then a relatively new brigade suffering from low self-esteem.

For a long time, I could not relate to the whole “heroism” thing. But when, as a sergeant, I found myself in charge, something cracked inside me. Without thinking, I turned into the perfect occupation enforcer. I settled accounts with “upstarts” who didn’t show enough respect. I tore up the personal documents of men my father’s age. I hit, cracked inside me. Without thinking, I turned into the perfect occupation enforcer. I settled accounts with “upstarts” who didn’t show enough respect. I tore up the personal documents of men my father’s age. I hit,

Intifada began (how many more await us?)

...In the meantime, I was becoming more of a civilian. A copy of The Yellow Wind [a book on life in the Occupied Territories by Israeli writer David Grossman, available in English. -AK] which had just come out, crossed my path. I read it, and suddenly it hit me. I finally understood what I had done over there. What I had been over there.

I began to see that they had cheated me. Worse still, I understood that I was raised on two contradictory value systems. I think most people discover even at an earlier age they must choose between two value systems: an abstract, demanding one that is no fun at all and that is very difficult to verify, and another which calls to you from every corner—determining who is up and who is down, who is king and who pariah, who is one of us and who is our enemy. Contrary to basic common sense, I picked the first. Because in this country the cost-effective analysis comparing one system to another is so lopsided, I can’t blame those who choose the second.

I picked the first road, and found myself volunteering in a small, smoke-filled office in East Jerusalem, digging up files about deaths, brutality, bureaucratic viciousness or simply daily harassments. I felt I was atoning, to some extent, for my actions during my days with the Giv’ati brigade.

But it also felt as if I was trying to empty the ocean out with a teaspoon.

Out of the blue, I was called up for the very first time for reserve duty in the Occupied Territories. Hysterically, I contacted my company commander. He calmed me down: We will be staying at an outpost overlooking the Jordan river. No contact with the local population is expected. And that indeed was what I did.

[That changed] three years later, when I spent three weeks with a celebrated reconnaissance company in the confiscating ruins of a villa at the outskirts of the Abasans. On the bus ride to the Gaza strip, the soldiers were competing with each other: whose “heroic” tales of murderous beatings during the Intifada were better (in case you missed this point: the beatings were literally murderous: beating to death). Going on patrol duty with these guys once was all that I could take. I went up to the placement officer and requested to be given guard duty only. Placement officers like people like me: most soldiers can’t tolerate staying inside the base longer than a couple of hours.

Thus began the nausea and shame routine, a routine that lasted three tours of reserve duty in the Occupied Territories: 1993, 1995, and 1997. For several weeks at a time I would turn into a hidden “prisoner of conscience,” guarding an outpost or a godforsaken transmitter on top of some mountain, a recluse. I was ashamed to tell most of my friends why I chose to serve this way. I didn’t have the energy to hear them get on my case for being such a “wishy washy” softy.

I was also ashamed of myself: This was the easy way out. I did “save my own soul.” I was not directly engaged in wrongdoing—I only made it possible for others to do so while I kept guard. Why didn’t I refuse outright? I don’t know. It was partly the pressure to conform, partly the political process that gave us a glimmer of hope that the whole occupation business would be over soon. More than anything, it was my curiosity to see actually what was going on over there.

And precisely because I knew from years of experience what was going on over there, I had no trouble seeing through the fog of war and the curtain of lies, what has been taking place since the very first days of the second Intifada. For years, the army had been feeding on lines like “We were...” continued on page five

Fighters’ Letter

• We, reserve combat officers and soldiers of the Israel Defense Forces, who were raised upon the principles of Zionism, sacrifice and giving to the people of Israel and to the State of Israel, who have always served in the front lines, and who were the first to carry out any mission, light or heavy, in order to protect the State of Israel and strengthen it.

• We, combat officers and soldiers who have served the State of Israel for long weeks every year, in spite of the dear cost to our personal lives, have been on reserve duty all over the Occupied Territories, and were issued commands and directives that had nothing to do with the security of our country, and that had the sole purpose of perpetuating our control over the Palestinian people. We, whose eyes have seen the bloody toll this Occupation exacts from both sides.

• We, who sensed how the commands issued to us in the Territories, destroy all the values we had absorbed while growing up in this country.

• We, who understand now that the price of Occupation is the loss of IDF’s human character and the corruption of the entire Israeli society.

• We, who know that the Territories are not Israel, and that all settlements are bound to be evacuated in the end.

• We hereby declare that we shall not continue to fight this War of the Settlements.

• We shall not continue to fight beyond the 1967 borders in order to dominate, expel, starve and humiliate an entire people.

• We hereby declare that we shall continue serving in the Israel Defense Forces in any mission that serves Israel’s defense.

• The missions of occupation and oppression do not serve this purpose—and we shall take no part in them.

continued on page five
too nice in the first Intifada,” and “If we had only killed a hundred in the very first days, everything would have been different.” Now the army was given license to do things its way. I knew full well that [former Prime Minister] Ehud Barak was giving the army free hand, and that [current Chief of Staff] Shaul Mofaz was taking full advantage of this to maximize the bloodshed.

By then, I had two little kids, boys, and I knew from experience that no one—not a single person in the entire world—will ever make sure that my sons won’t have to serve in the Occupied Territories when they reach 18. No one, that is, except me. And no one but me will have to look them in the eye when they’re all grown up and tell them where dad was when all that happened. It was clear to me: this time I was not going.

Initially, this was a quiet decision…. But as time went by, as the level of insanity, hatred, and incitement kept rising, as the generals were turning the Israeli Defense Forces into a terror organization, the decision was turning into an outcry: “If you can’t see that this is one big crime leading us to the brink of annihilation, then something is terribly wrong with you!”

And then I discovered that I was not alone. It was like discovering life on another planet.

The truth is that I understand why everyone is mad at us. We spoiled the neat little order of things. The holy Status Quo states that the Right holds the exclusive rights to celebrate the blood and ask for vengeance. Derrill Bodley, a music professor from Pennsylvania, had lost his daughter Deora in the US bombing that began October 7th. And Derill was deterred by his parents’ fears about flying, and about the safety of their loved ones once in Kabul. Moreover, the basic premise of their trip—the human equality of the loss of loved ones—flew in the face of the US government’s demonization of Afghanistan, and its repeated denials that bombing had caused substantial casualties among civilian non-combatants.

In addition to their grief and shock at the terrorist attacks, delegation members had had to overcome other obstacles to make the trip. The first attempted trip had to be postponed, as some potential members were deterred by their parents’ fears about flying, and about the safety of their loved ones once in Kabul. Moreover, the basic premise of their trip—the human equality of the loss of loved ones—flew in the face of the US government’s demonization of Afghanistan, and its repeated denials that bombing had caused substantial casualties among civilian non-combatants. Despite detailed estimates showing that by mid-December thousands of Afghani civilians had been killed by US bombs, US government spokespeople repeatedly called into question not only the accuracy of such statements, but the pa-
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...trotism of those who made them.

The meetings in Afghanistan took place over 10 days. Through interpreters, the Americans shared their stories with the Afghan hosts. An early meeting was in a poor neighborhood in Kabul, where a bomb destroyed five houses, killing six civilians. Abdul Azizullah, who lost four family members, said: "We have the same pain. I expressed my sorrow to the Americans, because they also lost family members." At another meeting, Derrill Bodley and Abdul Basir shared photos of their daughters, and Bodley played a CD with a song, "Steps to Peace," that he composed for his daughter two days after her death. In a house where repair work had not erased signs of bomb damage, Rita Lasar and Amin Said had a moment of silence to honor Abe Zelmanowitz of Brooklyn and Iqbal and Zarlasis Said of Kabul, Said's brother and sister-in-law.

"Peaceful Tomorrows"

Formally launched at a press conference at the UN on February 14th, September 11th Families for Peaceful Tomorrows poses three fundamental challenges to the "War on Terrorism." The first challenge denies that war and violence are effective in achieving the supposed goal of making Americans safe. They are "poor chisels," in Martin Luther King, Jr.'s words, "for carving out peaceful tomorrows." With the ambiguous ending of the war against Afghanistan, perhaps more Americans than ever are open to alternatives to endless war against the world's poor as a strategy to make us safer.

The second challenge denies that the victims of violence or terrorism want or require revenge to right their wrongs. As Peaceful Tomorrows member Amber Amundson wrote in a letter to the Chicago Tribune in late September, "If you choose to respond to this incomprehensible brutality by perpetuating violence against other innocent human beings, you may not do so in the name of justice for my husband."

And the third challenge denies the foundation of so much of US foreign policy, that Americans are somehow more worthy than other human beings, and that the sufferings of poorer and (usually) darker skinned people far away are insignificant. Each of these challenges, though vigorously opposed by official opinion and (thus) the mass media, resonates strongly with millions of Americans.

What makes September 11th Families for Peaceful Tomorrows a powerful carrier of these challenges is the moral authority of its members. This is readily apparent in the news accounts of members' speaking engagements posted on the organization's web site. At a meeting at my local library, Rita Lasar riveted the interest of her audience, simply by telling her story and by asserting that war in the name of her dead brother was wrong. Yet the group's main strength—its ability to personalize issues of responsibility and moral choice in an increasingly violent world—also places a heavy burden on grieving family members to tell their story over and over again. This problem is compounded by dwindling media interest, as the "war on terrorism" moves on from Afghanistan to other targets. Much will depend on whether Peaceful Tomorrows can find new speakers and leaders to supplement the strength of the original, founding core.

To meet this challenge Peaceful Tomorrows has set up a national organizational structure with four regional, full-time organizers. The group's main programmatic initiatives—pressure the US government for compensation of civilian victims of bombing in Afghanistan, and the establishment of a grassroots fund to do just that—are increasingly relevant as news stories of unmet reconstruction needs in Afghanistan reach US audiences.

A summer retreat is planned to integrate the several dozen new members and develop speaking and other skills, and to plan future activities and direction. Roles are also being carved out for the hundreds of supporters who have expressed solidarity and offered assistance.

Just as September 11th was a unique event in our history, September 11th Families for Peaceful Tomorrows is an unprecedented mobilization of personal courage in the cause for peace. It is a resource for all opponents of war to nurture and support.

Frank Brodhead is a member of RESIST's Board of Advisors and an activist in New York. For more information, see www.peacefultomorrows.org.

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Picking Our Enemies

US Doesn't Mind Terrorists in Colombia

AMERICAS.ORG

There's a new group on the State Department's official list of terrorist organizations. But unlike the ones calling for an Islamic jihad against the United States, this group says it supports US goals. And it works closely with the government that is the Western Hemisphere's largest recipient of US military aid.

The rightwing paramilitary United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) also happens to be responsible for the bulk of massacres, assassinations and threats that have forced more than two million rural Colombians to flee their homes since the late 1980s. Secretary of State Colin Powell said September 10 that designating the AUC as terrorist should "leave no doubt that the United States considers terrorism to be unacceptable, regardless of the political or ideological purpose." Two leftwing guerilla groups, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN), have been
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on the list since its 1997 creation.

US disapproval of rightwing terrorism may surprise AUC leaders, who say they’re a crucial part of Plan Colombia, the antiguerrilla, antinarcotics military drive bankrolled by more than $1 billion from US taxpayers. In the southern province of Putumayo, where Plan Colombia is focused, an AUC chief known as “Commander Wilson” told reporters in April that the initiative “would be almost impossible” without paramilitary forces. Wilson, a former army soldier, told the San Francisco Chronicle that AUC leaders and military officials together mapped out Plan Colombia strategies and that he reports daily to the military about his units’ movements.

The AUC’s terrorist designation also will interest top Colombian military commanders, taught by US advisors over the years that paramilitary surrogates are highly effective against guerrillas. A 1996 report by Human Rights Watch described Colombia’s military-paramilitary partnership as “a sophisticated mechanism, in part supported by years of advice, training, weaponry and official silence by the United States, that allows the Colombian military to fight a dirty war and Colombian officialdom to deny it.”

The US role in that strategy dates back almost four decades. The Human Rights Watch report quotes a 1962 US Army Special Warfare School recommendation that Colombia “execute paramilitary, sabotage and/or terrorist activities against known communist proponents” and that the partnership with paramilitary groups “be backed by the United States.”

In the 1980s the paramilitary groups forged tight alliances with the heads of Colombia’s burgeoning drug industry, who snapped up huge rural tracts and joined cattle ranchers and other rural entrepreneurs in Colombia’s landholding elite. Leftwing guerrillas, especially the FARC, waged kidnapping and extortion campaigns in the same areas. Responding to this harassment, drug traffickers such as Pablo Escobar and Gonzalo Rodriguez Gacha showered funds on paramilitary networks. To enhance their firepower and skills, paramilitary chiefs recruited Israeli and British mercenaries.

In 1990 a team of representatives from the US Embassy’s Military Group, the US Southern Command, the Defense Intelligence Agency and the CIA helped reorganize Colombia’s “intelligence” networks, according to the Human Rights Watch report. The DIA attaché in Bogotá at the time admitted US officials knew from news accounts and military reports that Colombian military members “were still working with paramilitaries.” Based on recommendations from the US team, according to Human Rights Watch, the Colombian military ordered commanders to set up 41 secret networks and avoid leaving any paper trail.

In the 11 years since, paramilitary groups have grown to an estimated 8,000 members from less than 1,000. They engage more directly in battle with guerrillas for control of territory and drug profits. They travel freely by helicopter and plane. They have organized openly into a national association, complete with a Web site, and are demanding the ability to run in local elections and participate in national peace talks. In parts of Colombia, they have built broad support for the antiguerilla cause.

These paramilitary groups also routinely assassinate unionists, campesino leaders, human rights activists, judges, progressive politicians and journalists; attack residents of resource-rich or strategic rural areas; and slaughter and displace entire communities of unarmed civilians. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, paramilitaries obliterated the leftwing Patriotic Union party, systematically assassinating thousands of its candidates and members.

This year has been as bloody as ever. Paramilitary squads killed an average of 132 people per month between January and April, according to the Colombian government. Some of the worst violence came Easter week, when paramilitary attacks killed 128 people. In one of those attacks, government forces failed to stop 400 chainsaw-wielding paramilitary members from butchering 40 campesinos and indigenous people near the southwestern hamlet of Alto Naya. US and Colombian human rights groups have methodically documented the massacres, and Colombian judicial investigations have corroborated military complicity.

Yet US military aid to Colombia has ballooned from an average of $60 million a year between 1992 and 1995 to the $567 million President George W. Bush is requesting for 2002. That’s on top of the $1.3 billion for Plan Colombia that President Bill Clinton signed in 2000.

The US Congress did seek to pressure the Colombian military to sever its paramilitary links and curb their attacks, hinging the Plan Colombia aid on human rights protection. The Clinton administration waived the human rights conditions and disbursed the aid, citing US “national security” interests. Still, Colombian President Andrés Pastrana’s administration has felt compelled to take unprecedented steps against paramilitary networks. In the past year, his government has dismissed hundreds of members of security forces, arrested a retired general and lieutenant colonel for allegedly organizing paramilitary militias, captured dozens of paramilitary fighters and raided the offices and accounts of some northern ranchers believed to fund them.

The State Department designation of the AUC as terrorist could have pressured Colombia to go further, but we may never know. The equation changed on September 11. Now the Bush administration is pressing Congress to waive human rights restrictions on aid to countries allied with the US war against terrorism. If history is any guide, no matter how the State Department classifies the AUC, the United States won’t be forcing the Colombian government to cut its bloody paramilitary ties anytime soon.

This article is reprinted from the Resource Center of the Americas. For more information, contact them at 3019 Minnehaha Avenue, Minneapolis, MN 55406; www.americas.org.
RESIST awards grants six times a year to groups throughout the United States engaged in activism for social and economic justice. In this issue of the Newsletter we list a few grant recipients from our April 2002 allocation cycle, at which 31 grants (and one loan) totaling $75,100 were awarded. For information, contact the groups at the addresses below.

Vermont Workers’ Center
PO Box 833, Montpelier, VT 05601

In 1998 the Vermont Workers’ Center developed out of an organizing drive for a livable wage. The Center serves as a resource and organizing force to fight for economic justice through the protection and expansion of workers’ rights across Vermont. They provide support and guidance for both rank-and-file and unorganized workers through their community support mobilizations, organizing drives and Workers’ Rights Hotline.

RESIST awarded the Vermont Workers’ Center a $3,000 grant for their Justice for Health Care Workers campaign. This campaign will bring together organized and unorganized health care workers to build community support for the right to organize and form contract campaigns.

Cascadia Wildlands Project
PO Box 10455, Eugene, OR 97440
www.cascwild.org

In its short history, Cascadia Wildlands Project has been able to create a dynamic social movement for the protection of threatened ecosystems in the Cascade Mountains. Their Legacy Forest Campaign strives to mobilize community members to protest unsustainable governmental management of the remaining ancient forests in the Cascade Mountains.

RESIST awarded the Cascadia Wildlands Project a grant of $3,000 for the outreach component of their Legacy Forests Campaign.

SOA Watch/Northeast
6367 Overbrook Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19151

School of the Americas Watch (SOA Watch)/Northeast formed with the mission of working for social and economic justice by focusing primarily on changing US foreign policy in Latin America. Recently, SOA Watch/Northeast has been successful in articulating the relationship between those struggles against sweatshops, the prison industrial complex, corporate globalization and the US-sponsored military campaigns against the poor and working classes in Latin America. Currently they are working to update and distribute the manual “Solidarity in Action: A Grassroots Guide to Organizing to Close the SOA” to student activists.

RESIST awarded SOA Watch/Northeast a $3,000 grant from the Freda Friedman Salzman Memorial Fund, which is given to groups “dedicated to the purpose of supporting organized resistance to the institutions and practices that rob people of their dignity as full human beings...”

Peace Action New Mexico
226 Fiesta Street, Santa Fe, NM 87501

Immediately after the events of September 11th and subsequent US military actions, Peace Action New Mexico began organizing for peaceful alternatives and against encroachments on civil liberties. As an organization, they are committed to the abolition of nuclear weapons and global weapons trafficking by mobilizing their community around non-military solutions to international conflicts. Peace Action New Mexico has engaged in a successful ongoing campaign to prevent a proposed bio-weapons research facility at Los Alamos National Laboratory. They work with diverse organizations across New Mexico and rally large crowds for their annual Civil Action at the Los Alamos nuclear weapons testing site.

RESIST awarded Peace Action New Mexico $3,000 as the first year of general support in a three-year grant.

Join the Resist Pledge Program
We’d like you to consider becoming a Resist Pledge. Pledges account for over 30% of our income.

By becoming a pledge, you help support Resist a fixed and dependable source of income on which we can build our grant-making program. In return, we will send you a monthly pledge letter and reminder along with your newsletter. We will keep you up-to-date on the groups we have funded and the other work being done at Resist.

So take the plunge and become a Resist Pledge! We count on you, and the groups we fund count on us.

Donations to Resist are tax-deductible.

Yes! I’ll become a Resist Pledge.
I’ll send you my pledge of $ every month/quarter/six months/year (circle one).
[ ] Enclosed is an initial pledge contribution of $ .
[ ] I can’t join the pledge program now, but here’s a contribution of $ to support your work.

Name ___________________________________________
Address __________________________________________
City/State/Zip _____________________________________
Phone __________________________________________

Grantees Wanted!
RESIST actively seeks to fund radical and progressive groups engaged in struggles for social and economic justice and peace. At this time, Resist particularly wants to support groups working for peace and full human rights in the Middle East. For grant guidelines and information, see www.resistinc.org, or call RESIST’s office: 617-623-5110.