



Fresh A. I. R.

An International Review



SECURITY

What is Fresh A.I.R.?

If you haven't already put it together, AIR stands for An International Review, and that is exactly what this newspaper is. A review, according to the Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary, is "a periodical containing critical essays upon matters of interest" and what makes this one international is that the critical essays upon matters of interest are written by young people from all over the world.

This allows those who take the time to read Fresh AIR a glimpse at the plethora of perspectives young people from different countries have and may help to bring about a new imagining of the possibilities for our planet.

In this first issue of Fresh AIR you will find the perspectives of students from Canada, the USA, Mexico, Argentina, Hungary, Jordan/Sweden, Israel and India. The topic of interest for this issue is security. When I circulated the topic to my various contacts, I

asked these questions: "What does security mean to you?" "What does security mean to your country/society?" and "What are the most pressing security issues your country faces these days?" I think that the points of views expressed in this first issue, may enlighten us about how much the perspectives and issues vary from nation to nation.

I hope you will take the time to read the entire review. I think it is very important for young people to become aware of current issues of importance and to begin bridging cultural gaps to reduce misunderstandings and to build upon the values and concerns we do share. I know there is a serious problem with apathy in many places. I think a lot of the time it is due to needless isolation. Let's break out of these bubbles and bring in some fresh air with new perspectives and ideas from around the globe.

Theo Di Castri, *Editor*



“In the making of Israel, millions of people were left without a homeland.”



Security - a Jordanian/Swedish perspective

You are moving to a country, which has Iraq to the east, Israel to the west, Syria to the north and Saudi Arabia to the south, are you MAD????

Geographically seen, Jordan might not exactly seem like the most secure country in the world as it is situated in between so many conflicts and areas of instability, however, this cannot be noticed from within the country, where friendly faces are everywhere, children play in the streets and tourists visit the historical places. Being quite new in Jordan (I have only been here for three weeks) I don't know what the people here feel are the biggest issues of security, I do know that job security is one issue. The number of students graduating from Universities are a lot more numerous than the new jobs that are being created. I know that tradition is seen as something secure, and that, although some people fully embrace the modernity that is coming in, others are constantly battling between finding a compromise between the security of tradition, and the tempting modern.

Because of my lack of knowledge of these issues, I will instead choose to write about a security that a lot of people over here don't have, and what is constantly on the agenda. It is the security of a homeland. With over 60 % of the people in Jordan being of Palestinian origin the Israel/Palestine question is always on the agenda. A lot of these people have received a Jordanian citizenship and full rights, but a lot of them are refugees despite the fact that they have lived here for years and years

In 1948, when the UN allowed the Jews to create Israel, a lot of Palestinians felt threatened and fled to nearby countries. The situation became a lot worse when, in 1967, Israel occupied the Palestinian areas of West Bank and the

Gaza strip, which created even greater amounts of Palestinians to flee. Refugee camps in Lebanon, Syria and Jordan were massive, and the poverty extreme. In some countries like Jordan, the refugees were given certain opportunities such as schools and work permits, in others such as Lebanon, the refugees had much less opportunities. Some refugee camps such as Sheila and Sabra in Lebanon even grew to be cities.

Israel fulfilled the function of creating a homeland for those millions of Jews, who, for thousands of years, had been refugees, had been discriminated against, ostracized, and of course, had been put to labourcamps and systematically killed. Israel was made to create security for those who didn't have any. But in the making of Israel, millions of people were left without a homeland.

I will not go in any further in the Israel/Palestine conflict, as it would require a lot of background facts, and I would need a lot more than one page. I am also not an expert (and my time at the Internet cafe is running out in 10 minutes) But I want to raise some questions, just something that I think we all should think about, because, I don't know how it feels not to have a homeland, I always had one. What does homeland mean and what does it mean to have one? How big a part does history and ancestry play in our sense of homeland, or is home simply where the heart is?

Sofia Lord,

from Sweden but currently a student of Arabic and middle eastern studies in Jordan University, Amman, Jordan.

Just a dream – an Argentinean perspective

It is an honor for me to have the opportunity of taking part of this International Newspaper. I am María Laura Sanchez from Mendoza, Argentina. I am 20 years old and at the moment I am studying at Andrés University in Buenos Aires (Argentina). Two years ago, I won a scholarship and studied for two years at The Mahindra United World College of India. That is a multicultural community where I learnt to share and to exchange opinions, ideas and to be part of an interchange with students from all over the world. I am happy to hear that you have had the initiative to start this newspaper. I truly think it is going to open up a whole new perspective of the reality that others are facing, as the one that was opened for me, during my experience in India.

Before talking about security, I will introduce you to my country, Argentina. It is located in the south of South America with an area of 2 780 400 km² and a population of 37 812 817 inhabitants¹. According to the statistics, the GDP is 284.960 millions US\$ and the most important economic activities are agriculture and livestock farming. The budget for government expenditure is 48 081 millions US\$, and it is important to mention that 36% of the families are poor and 15.1% of those lives under the poverty line.

Moreover in 2001 Argentina faced an enormous economic slump and an institutional crisis which provoked serious consequences in the life of the Nation. After December 2001, Argentina showed its fragile government characterized by corruption and lack of interest in the social welfare. This crisis helped to distance *security* from the Argentines, creating an atmosphere of uncertainty and fear.

I personally considered *security* as a fundamental human's right thanks to which a man/woman can enjoy his/her freedom. It is a right that removes fears and lets us plan for the future. Furthermore in a society it is the role of all its members to build a community with responsibility where everyone is conscious of the common welfare.

Also an administrative body that represents the community (the government) should guarantee the dignity of a person. This involves social security, that is represented by a health care system, unemployment subsidies, public plans, retirements, education and aid for families with kids among other factors. It is hard to summarize what is happening with security in Argentina. But just for you to know, nowadays hardly any of the aforementioned factors are implemented in the country. A very small proportion of the population has access to proper health care systems. A pensioner does not receive what he deserves and there is a huge percentage of them living under poor conditions. Most of the poor families do not get any kind of help, public plans are done just to benefit those in power. However an issue that is worrying all the Argentines today is the violence and aggressive atmosphere that appeared with the social discontent caused by the political instability. I will refer to this notion of insecurity as "first hand".

Every day there are lots of robberies, assaults, huge and aggressive strikes, rapes. One month ago (28th September 2004), the country was shocked when a 14 years old boy went to school and started shooting to kill his classmates. A scene that we just see on TV turned into a reality. Additionally, kidnappings have become so frequent that Argentina is the third country in the kidnappings ranking after Colombia and Brazil. The kidnappers attack anyone (rich, poor, adolescents, kids, mothers...) with extortion and in many cases, killing their victims.

For all those reasons, security is lacking in such a way, that people are worried about survival, about how to go out of the home because not even at school one is safe. The police have been the accomplice of some incidents and there is hardly trust in someone. [SIC] In addition it is important to mention that the government has been trying



"[Security] is a right that removes fears and lets us plan for the future."

to implement important plans to reduce insecurity together with the neighboring countries. Because it has come to a point that insecurity is internationalizing in South America it is right that the fight for security is a joint effort. But I personally think a nation should find the causes of insecurity that in many cases is poverty. All in all I would like to mention that the importance of social security that most first world countries might be thinking of, has been replaced by the "first hand security". I really would like to keep the hope that we will go through this and provide equal opportunities to everyone. People have been mobilized in the fight against insecurity and in the seeking for trust and respect of their dignity. And this could be the beginning for this just dreamed word: security.

Security- a Mexican perspective

Three weeks ago, Theo Di Castri sent me an e-mail asking me to find someone to be part of a global net of young people writing about global affairs. The idea sounded quite interesting, so I agreed to get somebody in Mexico to write about international concerns. My name is Yver Alonso, and I am still trying to get more people involved.

Some people tend to live isolated in their communities, forgetting about the rest of the world's existence. Nevertheless, nowadays it is possible to communicate to someone who is on the other side of world. No matter how far away we could be it is quite easy to make a phone call or type an e-mail. I think we should use technology to break down the walls of isolation, and make our own world bigger and bigger, having the endless cosmos as the only limit.

A very important part of knowing the world is to be informed about other people's problems. Insecurity is a very big issue in Mexico, especially in the cities. As a Mexican you get used to taking care of yourself and your belongings. Mexicans get surprised, when they are abroad, when they see people parking their bikes outside a market without locking them.

I decided to ask high school students, what they think about security in Mexico, most of them answer that insecurity is a trouble, but it is not isolated from other problems. Every single one is related to each other: corruption, crime, poverty, unemployment and the lack of education create an insecure place.

It is important to think about the causes of the problem; whatever is creating them is linked to other reasons. Maybe, in other countries, talking about security means talking about terrorism and international threats, however the roots of any problem is within the nation's borders, not outside them; blaming the others for what happens to you is not a solution.

Yver Alonso,
Mexico.

M. Laura Sánchez

mlauri_sanchez@yahoo.com.ar

ARGENTINA



Security – an American perspective

David Dye was raised in Kansas, far from the Land of Oz. Growing up in a semi-rural environment, he learned to love the outdoors, and abhor the city. (He is now stuck in St. Louis. Uck.) One fine day in KS, he got a package in the mail that sent him on a whirlwind trip all over the globe. A graduate of The Mahindra United World College of Bharat (India by British spelling...), he now studies at Washington University in St. Louis, and is trying to educate the masses in the ways of thought and open mindedness. For the moment, it seems a losing venture, but hope lingers on.

For me, security is intrinsically linked with happiness. Pretty damn hard to be happy without it, though it is very easy to be secure but unhappy. Following the destruction of the World Trade Center in 2001, security became the issue of the time. Somehow, through prolonged conflict, this issue has stayed foremost in the minds of most Americans; but that's another rant for another time. It seems that now, nothing is sacrosanct in the path of furthered security. In a single month, 31 days, the house passed the USA PATRIOT ACT, almost unanimously. At 342 pages, it should have taken at least that long to draft properly, and endured much debate and reshaping before being enacted. Sadly, no one marked its passing, though they will likely protest its passing in 2005. (When the bill sunsets) The whole debacle reminds me of something Ben Franklin said long ago, "Those who would give up essential liberty for temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety." He had it figured out like 200 years ago. Why are we so stupid today; to think that these measures taken at the ticket counter will really secure us?

Having traveled far, and far, and wide recently, I know firsthand what a pain in the ass it is trying to pass customs anymore. I also am aware that it stops nothing.

There are still far too many loopholes to secure. Instead, let's focus on a different type of security. Rather than spending billions on Homeland Security, let's see some job security in the homeland. Sure the government gave thousands of jobs to people....in Afghanistan and Iraq; well I know I didn't want those jobs. Unemployment is at its highest levels of the century (so what if it's only a few years old? it's still not good.). People the world over hate us simply for being American. Hell, even our neighbors get pissed; attempting to amend that to read "US American". All I really want is to be left alone; to do as I please, without constantly being accosted for my nationality. To not have to worry whether my friends and family will be home for Christmas, or at all. To just be happy, and feel that my future is not a question unless I wish...

In terms of actual security, and most of you will disagree with me on this, it is best left up to the individual. All cops do is issue traffic tickets and take reports. You had better be able to protect yourself; "from enemies both foreign and domestic," from civilians and from the state. I doubt that many reading this share my particular freedoms, and therefore experiences and opinions, with regard to firearms and weapons in general. In the hands of law abiding citizens, it is incredibly rare that anything bad comes of possession of such. In places that allow concealed carry, violent crime is reduced for fear of being shot. Ever hear someone say, "everyone has a gun in Texas?" Truth is, no one knows, criminals included. I can only speak for myself, but if I thought I might be shot, it's highly unlikely I would do anything to provoke that. Since I'm sure you would all love to crucify me, feel free. Send your regards to thedietdrpepperofevil@hotmail.com

David Dye, USA

"[Security] is best left up to the individual"



Self-Security – an Israeli perspective

A brief look at the uses of the term "security" in Hebrew can easily demonstrate the extent to which it is fundamentally enrooted in the language. For instance, the words for security related terms such as "safe", or "insurance" – for which English has created separate words – are swallowed up in Hebrew by variations on the root of the word "bitachon" – security. Not only does the use of the root replace directly related words, it also fully replaces many other terms, which in English are completely autonomous to "security". For example, the direct translation of the Hebrew term for "self-confidence" is "self-security". Such is the case with the use of "sure" (as in, "I am sure of it"), and even "trust". With practically no way of getting around it, the Hebrew speaking consciousness is consumed with "security".

The conditions of present day Israel, combined with this solid linguistic foundation, have brought the "security" terminology to new inflated extremes. The revival of the Intifada four years ago, which unleashed a new wave of all-out violence and counter-violence, has caused the mass media to expose its consumers to an ongoing bombardment of headlines, stories and reports, all dealing with "urgent, unprecedented, and groundbreaking" "security" issues. Of course, the media's infatuation with "security" extends far beyond just news. For example, the phenomenon of armed men and woman rummaging through one's bag and body at entrances to nearly any public space imaginable, has transcended into a highly media-attracting sub-culture of the "security guard". No self respecting newspaper or channel, as major or as small as they may be, has missed out on the opportunity to present its consumers with just another photo-journal, or daily "interview with security guard" corner. It is quite reasonable to assume that one who is constantly under actual threat would seek to minimize its place and affect on his consciousness to the bare necessity. And yet the media, with a ferocity and determination which could even be interpreted as having harmful intention, serve the complete opposite.

Whether with or without harm intended, the "security guard" issue serves as a good example of the endless flow of mindless blabber generated by the Israeli media around the issue of "security". Such futile indulgence not only overcrowds our minds' symbolic spaces with useless noise, it props up the issue of "security" in places where there is no real foundation for it.

Yet the public discussion concerning "security", with its vague and distracted nature, has been carried into areas much less trivial than that of the no-harm-intended headlines and page-fillers. "Security" has made its way into the terminology used, especially in politics, to blindly justify, or on the other hand de-legitimize, one issue or another. In a sense, "security" has become a sacred cow, especially in the political realm. In fact, the Israeli political lingo has coined an independent term for those consistently uttering such arguments: a "bitc'onist" – a "securitist", sympathizer of "securitism", in free translation. A classic example of one who boldly carries this title is the ex IDF chief-of-staff and current minister of defense (which of course is called in Hebrew "minister of security"), Shaul Mofaz. Mofaz's popular securitist approach to withholding national security, in brief, is the application of pure force against indistinct targets, classified as threats, with the vaguely thought-out goal of disposing of these threats by overpowering "their" force with "ours". With minimal and repetitive means of justification, depending solely on "security threat", "security issue", and "in the name of security" (and so on), such "securitist" techniques are met with an overwhelming consensus in the Israeli public.

Israel's political map is known to be one dominated by military men turned politicians. In that sense, Mofaz is just the temporary "securitist" roll-filler. Another good example, and one rooted much deeper, is Israel's current prime-minister, Ariel Sharon. Recognized both for his rich military past and vicious ideological battles as a politician, the figure of Sharon has



always been thought of, both by his allies and enemies, as a “pillar of national security” – in its absolute and indisputable sense. Using this to his advantage, Sharon, in his current (and probably last) episode of his long career, has provided us with a demonstration of what could be considered the ultimate manipulation capable by the Israeli concept of “security”. Four years ago, Sharon launched a massive prime-minstrel elections campaign, focusing-in and revolving solely around a determined and powerful concept of “security”, well defined in its elusive vagueness. “I have security {also ‘confidence’} in Ariel Sharon’s peace”, and “Ariel Sharon, leader for peace and security”, the campaign’s two slogans, led Sharon to a major victory in the elections, and have continued accompanying him since. No matter to what degree the reality of the past four years has contradicted the relevance of this ongoing campaign, the two slogans – at this point burned well into the collective Israeli consciousness and sub-consciousness – never seemed to lose from their untouchable air of indisputable truth. And so is the grim reality: any poll, interview, or even casual conversation one might stumble upon will prove most Israelis still regard Sharon as the ultimate leader and successful promoter of “security” – even though, statistically, the Sharon years have been some of the bloodiest, most violent, and highest casualty causing years the country has ever known.

It is important to keep in mind the delicacy and complexity of the reality on which the one-dimensional and blunt concept of security is imposed. Only then can all the factors that “securitism” disguises, covers up, and sweeps under the carpet, come to light. Only then can one grasp the many other dimensions the issue of security in Israel has: the threat posed by the slow but sure dismantling of the welfare state; the threat posed by the implementation and upholding of religious laws and ruling to the secular Israeli identity; the harsh segregation and discrimination of the Arab minority, posing threat to Israel root sense of democratic equality; and the occupation as a “security threat” to Israel’s inner strength and solidarity, no less significant than any “security threat” posed by Palestinian generated violence.

As an 18 year old Israeli, the blunt nature of the “security” discussion has struck me several times. With the military service hovering over ones head, the level of exposure to the demagogic “security” terminology at this age is intensified. As time goes by, I am given the chance to explore the true reasons behind my feelings of insecurity in my environment, society and country. And as I probe deeper, the “security” discussion, lingo and façade seem more and more like the inner workings of an enormous mechanism – constantly working to conceal a gradually widening abyss from those who stand on its edge.

Security – an Indian perspective

My name is Ajit, I am from India, and I went to Mahindra UWC in India. I come from a small city called Pune. It is known as the educational and cultural capital of Maharashtra (a state of India). It’s nice to write to all of you about my small identity. I would like to tell you that India is a very diverse country with all the major religions of the world and more than a thousand languages and their dialects ect., so I won’t be able to represent all of India here, but would like to represent a part of it.

When I heard that the first essay topic was security, I asked the question “why would he pick the first essay topic on security?” I thought that there would be more important things than that. I am a student, and I have an elder brother who has high confidence in himself and believes that he will become very successful in future. We used to plan together that he would make money and I would take care of all our family at home. Basically I would be understanding and nice, and care for his family, our parents, his family, our cousins and their families etc. (yes, you are right if you are thinking that we have HUGE families living together). A normal student would care about his career as there are very few jobs but people like me who have a family to support don’t care about being



independent. It is more important being with the family and sticking with relations.

Security means something different to each member of my society. We do though have some things in our priorities to secure. They are culture and Indian values, having enough to eat, religion, and education. Our agriculture is very dependent on Monsoon rain, so a common man would also be looking most for security from the unreliable Manson. As you might know, that Monsoon is very unpredictable.

That’s just for my society, but when it comes to country I know the issue that presses the security of my country the most. India has a state on its border, called Jammu and

Yonatan Kunda,

currently the member of an Arab-Jewish commune situated in Jaffa, working to promote equality and coexistence between Jewish and Arab youth in Israel

yonatan_kunda@hotmail.com

Kashmir. Pakistan (India's neighbor and enemy state) sends terrorists in that territory, to liberate that state. They say that they want to liberate that state because they think it is occupied by India. India says that it's a part of the country and nobody can separate that state. Looking at the current situation, it doesn't seem like India will lose Kashmir but if they do lose it at some point of time, there is a chance that some other states in the country will start asking for freedom. Because India is very diverse, the people living in different states don't share a long and common history except fighting against the British who colonized us. There is a state in India called Assam, which is also going through similar attacks, by terrorists (local) and the threat to our security seems to be increasing. This state wants to get freedom. Now here I know that these people are local and they are asking for freedom but I don't know if the things that are going on in Kashmir are for "freedom". Pakistan and India have different opinions on this issue. India has some other concerns as well, such as political leadership. India has many corrupt and dishonest politicians. There are many problems like unemployment, growing Hindu fundamentalism with which we need to deal with, but for that we need good leaders. In the recent elections, the Hindu Fundamentalist party was heavily defeated. People seemed much more against fanaticism than ever before. This fundamentalism could have broken India into pieces, but it didn't happen. India is much more secure in that aspect now.

Ajit Balkawade, India



YOUR VIEWS

Your opinion counts. Let's hear *your* perspective. Please send in any comments or letters. A selection of the responses will be published in future issues.

Suggestions for future topics or for establishing any other contacts? All (reasonable) ideas are welcome.

Would you like to receive an email alert when the next issue of Fresh A.I.R. is published online? Please send a request stating your email and from which country you are from.

*** Send any of the above to freshair_yourviews@yahoo.ca***

Security-a Hungarian perspective

Hello,

My name is Fanni Keresztes and I am a 17 year old Hungarian student. I am interested in languages, communication and design studies, art, music, literature and in sports. I spent a year in Canada as an international student in the 2003/2004 school year. I was very busy with studying the language and activities after school such as cross country skiing, which I learnt in Canada. I had a wonderful time in St. Albert and I am planning to return soon for a visit.

As a student, security for me is just as important as for anyone else in the world. I spend most of my days at school, at home or downtown. Therefore, there should be a safe and secure environment everywhere I go.



At our high school here in Budapest, they put a big emphasis on security. There are people at the entrance who are responsible for people coming in or going out from the building. They will not let you out during school hours. If you come back later on, you have to have a special reason, or else they will not let you in. You can also ask for help from them, if you lost something, for example, because they store the lost and found items. Our school is monitored by cameras, and it is watched and recorded at the front by the security guard.

At home we have an alarm system, which we turn on when we leave the house for a longer time.

Our front door is very thick, partly made out of steel. Many people have three or more locks on their doors.

The streets are quite safe, although it depends on where you go. A general advice: try to avoid walking in the dark by yourself. Downtown is not a problem, but it is better to be with a group of people. Always keep your bag with you even watch it when using public transportation, because it is quite crowded. People mostly use buses, trains, trams and underground as the fastest way of transportation. In my opinion, safety and security varies by districts, towns, neighbourhood. You will find these problems in any big city anywhere basically.

Hungary is a small country in the middle of Europe. A big advantage (partly) due to its size is, that it is not considered as a target. However, as a small nation we have little voice in the global politics.

A pressing security issue is the security of our natural treasures. The laws are not strict enough yet to protect the environment. A few years ago, pollution was let in the Tisza River, a major, highly endangered area in the country. Many fish died and people living there suffered as well. This is a problem, which we have already faced then, but it needs more time.

Fanni Keresztes
Hungary



Security – a Canadian perspective

My name is Theo Di Castri and I am from a small city called St. Albert. I am in grade 11 and attend a French immersion school. Because Canada is such a vast and diverse nation, I can only represent a very small part of the Canadian perspective.

Having grown up in the affluent suburban city of St. Albert, the security issues my society faces are much less critical when compared to those of many other countries. I have always known security. The majority of crime that takes place in my city – vandalism, small robberies and other property crimes – is perhaps due to too many teenagers with much too much time and/or money on their hands. Children generally may play without any major worries, people can walk alone at night and security measures in public places are very minimal.

The major security concerns we face are those of personal security: financial security, security of property, social security to name a few. In the crime section of our newspaper, vandalism, small thefts and drug busts are headline news. The threats of war, extreme mass poverty and other issues of a critical degree seem worlds away, and it is for this reason that we take our security so much for granted. Because there is no imminent physical threat to our society as a whole, we tend to concentrate on ourselves.

In terms of nation wide security, I think the same applies to a certain degree. Of course in the larger cities, crime issues are more of a factor, but that is

something that comes with all big cities. Canada rarely faces major threats, and consequently, our security concerns are much less critical than those of other countries. Matters of concern become issues such as economic security, border security, and social security. The conventional military aspect of security is also of interest to most Canadians but mainly because our government has neglected it for so long. Since 9/11 and given the current status of the world, Canadians have been putting pressure on the government to give adequate funding for military services. Canada has always played a role in international affairs in the domain of peace keeping, and these funds are needed to insure our continued involvement as a world player.

I am very proud to be a Canadian and experience such a high degree of security. I know that I am extremely lucky to live in a country where my rights and my security are guaranteed and protected by a national charter of rights. However, I think it is very important not to take this security for granted and to recognize the fact that so many people living in other countries do not experience the freedom we have. Rather than always turning to ourselves when it comes to issues of security, perhaps we should make more of an effort to reach out and help other less fortunate countries, and strive for the ultimate goal of global security.

Theo Di Castri, Canada



“...we take our security for granted.”
