

# Youth & Conflict

Although the war in Iraq may be over, and the protesters may have returned home to the comforts of suburban Australia, millions of people around the world remain trapped in cycles of conflict and violence. The majority of these people are children and youths. They are the combatants and the victims, pawns in larger power struggles taking place around the world.

We've gathered together thoughts from a few of the ipisi team to get you thinking, what do you think of conflict and how we're affected by it. We're looking for your thoughts on the matter, which you can get to us via the ipisi website. Over the coming weeks, we'll also be posting more details of how you can take action to reduce the impact that violence and conflict have on young people around the world.

As a theme for taking action, conflict may seem overwhelming; one wonders how can we impact on the power politics of remote countries. The simple answer is that we can't; but we can do our bit to understand the causes of conflict so that we can work towards reducing the impact it has on people while also helping those in need of humanitarian assistance brought about by war.



Here are two groups dealing with the consequences of conflict, more appearing on the ipisi site soon;

**International Committee of the Red Cross**

<http://www.icrc.org>

**Oxfam Community Aid Abroad**

<http://www.caa.org.au>

To talk about the causes of conflict and how youth are impacted by it, see **TakingITglobal's Peace & Conflict theme page**

<http://d.takingitglobal.org/themes/pac/>

comment

## What's your take?

Lewis Best



It would take a brave person indeed to label the current world situation as anything but uncertain. Even living in a city like Sydney, isolated in international terms, things seem to change, however imperceptibly.

I was walking down to the Opera House just after the war finished, and things seemed to be normal. There was the usual throng of tourists taking photos, the cafés were full, and everyone appeared a little less nervous. But as I walked past the tourists and locals alike, there seemed to be an unease between people. The uncertainties of SARS, war and terrorism adding to the already massive problems that this world has. Moving further into the crowds, I even saw one group of tourists wearing surgical masks to protect themselves from SARS; this in a city that hasn't yet had a confirmed case. It left me thinking how we have come to live in such unstable times.

When war seemed inevitable, daily protests were common. Instability in the world urged people to voice their opinions, many through protesting. Sydney saw the biggest protests since the Vietnam Era, even bigger protests taking place all over the world. And then came the student protests in Sydney. They were meant to be peace marches, but turned out to be a fight between students and police. The city seemed to be enveloped in an eerie atmosphere, no one seemed to know what to think about it. And then, amidst a hail of speculation and attention, the April 2 student protest turned out to be peaceful.

In spite of all the protests the world could offer, war still broke out, with US forces taking control of Baghdad within 23 days. Back in Sydney, people were glued to their televisions and radios. Anxieties surfaced in the inescapable environment of war coverage, people on edge as they moved quickly along the streets, leaving the cafés empty.

With the war over, certainty returned to Sydney and people began to become relaxed, as good Australians are meant to be. But now, with the North Korean crisis, SARS and the validity of the US campaign against Iraq, conflict and anxiety return, leading me to wonder, what will the future hold for young Australians and the world at large?