

# Northern news

BRINGING YOU THE LATEST NEWS  
FROM OUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS  
AROUND THE WORLD

DECEMBER 2009



# Editorial Ramblings

*Once again we are reminded of the fragility of our lives. We received news on 20 December 2009 that Jason Avelino passed away from a heart attack at work. Jason was one of Grace's cousins and died whilst still in his twenties. Our thoughts and prayers are extended to his family at this awful, tragic time.*

**Erratum:** Last month I published the figure of British personnel killed in 2009 in Afghanistan as 231. This, as my son, Paul, pointed out, was incorrect. It was the figure of British personnel lost since the start of the campaign in October 2001 (yes, it really is that long ago!) until the time I wrote the text in the newsletter. From 1 January 2009 until 28 December 2009 we have lost 107 of our people - bringing the total to 244 British personnel killed in this ungovernable land -. Apologies for this error. You can see the full list at URL: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/8260060.stm>. We should also remember that we lost 179 of our people in Iraq during the campaign there that started 20 March 2003 until we pulled out earlier this year. The full list may be viewed at URL: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/8040620.stm>.

You may remember that I asked you to remember ALL those in the Philippines who'd been devastated by the recent typhoons. Of course, it must be said that the Filipino people have brought much of this dreadful situation upon themselves because of a combination of corruption, greed, incompetence, ignorance and sheer stupidity. The reason? Deforestation. At one time, the whole country was covered in lush tropical rainforest. Now? Probably only about 5% - and declining. Grace and I used to live in an area that never flooded until recent times. Now it floods every year. Why? The surrounding hills were stripped of their trees. Now, the hillside is bare rock because the soil has been washed down into the river (now full of silt). The river, instead of flowing into the sea only a few hundred metres away, now overflows every time it rains (the water rushes straight off the bare rock of the hills instead of soaking into the soil and supplying all the trees and plants that are no longer in place) and floods all the homes in the area. Read more about this country of self-inflicted natural disasters - and the cause - in this edition.

We hope you will have a happy and prosperous year in 2010.



**Photograph above:**  
**Front Cover photographs:**

Snow on St. Michael's and All Angels Church in Wolverhampton on 20 December 2009  
The Christmas lights go on in Wolverhampton.



Little Lad (right) as a shepherd at the nativity play at St. Michael's school, Wolverhampton.  
*Photograph by Grace using one of her telephones*

# *from Vonnie - in Hong Kong*

You could have been at the Cheung Sha beach market stall event last Sunday - see attached. It was tucked up in the hills behind the beach so very few people seemed to know it was happening .. so we just had a fine old time talking to the few that did amble in - it was like a party really (Queen's garden party had nothing on it) and no-one seemed the slightest bit bothered that next to no business was done - and the weather cooperated in fine style... absolutely delightful way to spend a bit of time!



# Vonnie's web site

## The Zero Point Field Energy Meditation Network

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### THE FIELD - Be a Conscious Part of It

*"I thought I would never speak to my mother again... Plus I experienced a further totally unexpected, unintended benefit - suddenly I'm no longer a shopaholic. Everyone who knows me is astonished by that turnaround."* Jenny

*"I never imagined I would be fit and confident once more..."*

*Jonathan*

*"I had just accepted I would always be suffering from depression..."* Martin

*"Eternity, higher forces, intuition - I had no idea how they could help..."* Annie

*"I now have such a feeling of joy and linking with the world - I've not felt like it in years. I used to think I was totally alone and completely powerless to have any impact. I would never have believed I could change anything myself merely by tuning in for 30mins each day...and doing NOTHING!"* Peter

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URL: <http://www.zeropointfieldenergy.com/>

# *from Joseph - in Thailand*



Thanks for the news letter. Actually, it is sometimes hard to believe that the weather is so bad in UK, when you take such wonderful photographs in which the weather looks very inviting, and almost makes me homesick. except that, now that we have come through the all too short rainy period (we need the water) the sun is once again shining gloriously here. December is the best month to visit Thailand. Not too hot, but bright and sunny.

I am very moved by the picture of the memorial to Able Seaman D. N. Harris, which reminds me of another W.T. operator who gave his life heroically (as did many others of whom we know nothing). As a trainee wireless operator in the RAF, I was told how the fact that each operator has his own particular rhythm of sending which identifies him. This fact was used to deceive the Germans and to save the British fleet in the fjords of Norway. The Germans could trace the movements of the fleet through the unmistakable "signature" of the wireless operator on the flagship. Once the British commanders realised this, they took the operator

off his ship and set him up in a cave in a Norwegian fjord. The W.Op., whose name I do not know, continued to send bogus messages, and the German fleet continued to bombard the area that the messages were coming from. The British fleet escaped, but the brave operator died. The shells could not touch him as he was well protected by the cave, but the continuous bombardment shattered his nerves and he died of shell-shock.

Such tales makes me proud to have served in RAF Signals, even though, fortunately, apart from a very brief exposure to EOKA in Cyprus, the only enemy I encountered were bed bugs in the desert in El-Adam, Libya. My signature was easily identifiable, I was so heavy handed that the few times I was obliged to man a key, the Op at the other end immediately sent the Q-code for GET OFF, PUT A COMPETENT OPERATOR ON! So I was ignominiously relegated to the Met Office, to take met reports in high speed Morse: 20 wpm. No sending required only a nervous reaction of my right hand which immediately recorded the groups of 5 numbers or letters in which met info was coded.

The good part about that was, as met broadcasts were strictly timetabled, I had loads of free time between broadcasts to run a Tea/Coffee swindle. (as it was known). The rations we were issued were so bad: lousy chicory "coffee", poor quality tea and tasteless hard-tack biscuits. So, being the enterprising entrepreneur that I am, I bought decent coffee, tea and bis cuts and sold them round the 'Watch': (14 operators, a Met. Officer and 2 met assistants) at 6d a go (one mug and 2 biscuits). Even the Met Officers were glad of the service. At the end of my tour abroad (2.5 yrs) I left the service with 300 quid in the bank (annual salary 270 pounds stg.). I also taught myself Italian between broadcasts, which paid off in later life.



*Joseph enjoying his retirement in Thailand*

# *from Graham - in Indonesia*

Although depressing, I enjoyed Melanie Phillip's articles in your fine newsletter, they were very true, I was educated during the war years, experienced corporal punishment, regular testing, streaming according to ones IQ, and subjected to exams on a regular basis, all in state schools, and I did not suffer by it ! in fact the stricter the discipline the greater the atmosphere within the school!

I was a junior supervisor when the first waves of immigrants flooded in, and I suffered!, nobody can tell me they benefited this country one iota! I suspect the ministers who were behind this con trick will be retiring to their retirement homes overseas! and I am not a racist, I have worked the last forty years outside my country of birth.

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*A gathering in our home  
on Christmas Day*



# *from Marc and Tessa in the Philippines*

Christmas party in their home in Legazpi. Lower photograph shows Marc (left) with friends at the party.



*Christmas stocking opening time*



# Frankfurt/Christmas Market - Birmingham



The *Pretzel Lady* and some that are filled. Some of the famous German sausages and a waffle covered in a cherries in sauce and topped with cream. Below, are Chocolate covered fruit. And, YES, we did sample them all.









# HRH Queen Elizabeth II



## The Queen's Christmas Message 2009

"Each year that passes seems to have its own character. Some leave us with a feeling of satisfaction, others are best forgotten. 2009 was a difficult year for many, in particular those facing the continuing effects of the economic downturn.

I am sure that we have all been affected by events in Afghanistan and saddened by the casualties suffered by our forces serving there. Our thoughts go out to their relations and friends who have shown immense dignity in the face of great personal loss.

But, we can be proud of the positive contribution that our servicemen and women are making, in conjunction with our allies.

Well over 13,000 soldiers from the United Kingdom, and across the Commonwealth - Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Singapore - are currently serving in Afghanistan.

The debt of gratitude owed to these young men and women, and to their predecessors, is indeed profound.

It is 60 years since the Commonwealth was created and today, with more than a billion of its members under the age of 25, the organisation remains a strong and practical force for good.

Recently I attended the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Trinidad and Tobago and heard how important the Commonwealth is to young people.

New communication technologies allow them to reach out to the wider world and share their experiences and viewpoints. For many, the practical assistance and networks of the Commonwealth can give skills, lend advice and encourage enterprise.

It is inspiring to learn of some of the work being done by these young people, who bring creativity and innovation to the challenges they face.

It is important to keep discussing issues that concern us all - there can be no more valuable role for our family of nations. I have been closely associated with the Commonwealth through most of its existence.

The personal and living bond I have enjoyed with leaders, and with people the world over, has always been more important in promoting our unity than symbolism alone.

The Commonwealth is not an organisation with a mission. It is rather an opportunity for its people to work together to achieve practical solutions to problems.

In many aspects of our lives, whether in sport, the environment, business or culture, the Commonwealth connection remains vivid and enriching.

It is, in lots of ways, the face of the future. And with continuing support and dedication, I am confident that this diverse Commonwealth of nations can strengthen the common bond that transcends politics, religion, race and economic circumstances.

We know that Christmas is a time for celebration and family reunions; but it is also a time to reflect on what confronts those less fortunate than ourselves, at home and throughout the world.

Christians are taught to love their neighbours, having compassion and concern, and being ready to undertake charity and voluntary work to ease the burden of deprivation and disadvantage.

We may ourselves be confronted by a bewildering array of difficulties and challenges, but we must never cease to work for a better future for ourselves and for others.

I wish you all, wherever you may be, a very happy Christmas."

*Courtesy of URL: [http://news.sky.com/skynews/Home/UK-News/Queens-Xmas-Message-Read-The-Queens-Christmas-Day-Speech-In-Full/Article/200912415508060?lid=ARTICLE\\_15508060\\_QueensXmasMessage:ReadTheQueensChristmasDaySpeechInFull&lpos=searchresults](http://news.sky.com/skynews/Home/UK-News/Queens-Xmas-Message-Read-The-Queens-Christmas-Day-Speech-In-Full/Article/200912415508060?lid=ARTICLE_15508060_QueensXmasMessage:ReadTheQueensChristmasDaySpeechInFull&lpos=searchresults) (Crown Copyright).*

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*Our home after snow had fallen for the first time this year.*



# *First Sea Lord Speech - Beyond Afghanistan*

Admiral Sir Mark Stanhope KCB OBE ADC



Chatham House has been the home of the Royal Institute of International Affairs for nearly nine decades. Their mission is to be a world-leading source of independent analysis, informed debate and influential ideas on how to build a prosperous and secure world for all.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is always an honour to be invited to speak here at Chatham House and I am grateful for the opportunity. I should preface my remarks by saying that I am speaking this afternoon from my perspective as a member of the Defence Board, as well as being the First Sea Lord.

It is important that my comments to you today are seen in the context of, firstly, the Defence needs of this nation and then how Maritime Forces support these needs, rather than the other way around.

My theme is “Beyond Afghanistan” and my choice of subject reflects what I see as challenging times for the UK Armed Forces.

We in Defence are stretched, certainly, but I think we are also delivering across all of our business. The Navy’s immediate, unquestionable focus remains its long-standing commitment to supporting the Joint Campaign in Afghanistan. From last October to April this year, around 3,000 members of the Naval Service provided over 30% of the UK forces deployed to Helmand, including not only the Royal Marines of 3 Commando Brigade and the Harrier jets of the Naval Strike Wing, but also Naval Air Squadron helicopters and significant numbers of logistic, engineering, medical and HQ staff.

I pause to recognise the bravery of all those who have served and are serving in that Campaign. Indeed, as I speak, one of my sailors, Medical Assistant First Class Kate Nesbitt, is at Buckingham Palace to receive the Military Cross in recognition of her outstanding courage on the field of battle. I also pay tribute to those killed or injured in that fight, their selfless sacrifice and the courage of their families. The Navy's commitment to Afghanistan endures today with hundreds of individual sailors and marines in theatre supporting 11 Brigade. The future deployment of 40 Commando Royal Marines in 2010 as part of Operation HERRICK and of the remainder of 3 Commando Brigade planned during 2011 underscores the Navy's commitment to and engagement in this Campaign. Meanwhile, those elements of the Navy not in Afghanistan continue to undertake a vast range of other military tasks, providing the security needed to cover the UK's back while Defence focuses on Afghanistan. Naval ships, submarines, aircraft and personnel are currently deployed worldwide conducting national and multi-national operations which support the UK, promote its values and protect its interests and economic prosperity.

In the last 12 months alone, the range of tasks has been huge. Sailors and marines have been instrumental in intercepting major narcotic shipments in the Caribbean, off West Africa and in the Indian Ocean. Maritime security operations in the Mediterranean, the Arabian Sea and off the Horn of Africa continue to intercept illegal activity and reassure legitimate users of the high seas, enabling global trade to continue unhindered by pirates, traffickers and other criminals. Importantly, that activity also protects the sea lanes along which logistic support to the fight in Afghanistan is supplied, and along which this island nation's food, energy and goods are imported and exported. Naval units are permanently deployed in the South Atlantic in support of the Government's responsibilities to protect the Falkland Islands and our interests in Antarctica.

Capacity building in the Gulf, particularly in Iraq, continues - as does intelligence support to operations and hydrographic activity across 3 oceans. At the same time, Royal Navy ships and aircraft continue to safeguard the integrity of UK Territorial Waters and Airspace, to provide counter terrorism support to the Home Office, to protect shipping, ports and offshore energy platforms, undertake inspection and enforcement action on behalf of the Marine and Fisheries Agency and conduct Search and Rescue operations around our coast. We are very busy on the Queen's business.

Last, but far from least, the Royal Navy has for the last 40 years also been responsible for delivering the Nation's Nuclear Deterrent, arguably the ultimate guarantor of our country's security and sovereignty. While the UK remains nationally committed to retaining a Continuous At Sea Deterrent, the Royal Navy will continue to deliver it, 24/7, 365 days every year.

Given that context, and the imminent Defence Review, my responsibility as a Defence Board member is to argue

the case that the MoD's current prioritisation on the fight in Afghanistan should not lead to UK Armed Forces structured predominantly for a relatively narrow spectrum of land-locked, counter-insurgency operations and which lack the ability to conduct high-end war-fighting or indeed any of the vast array of operations in which the country's Armed Forces may be engaged in the future. Yet some have tried to argue that this is exactly the route we should be taking in Defence - that all future conflict will involve lengthy stabilisation operations, measured in years, with an emphasis on land forces fighting low-tech enemy insurgents.

I think that view ignores two things: firstly, the clear potential for future global inter-state conflict and secondly, the declining appetite politically, and within society, for interventionism. While the focus on Afghanistan, and the priority that has been placed on achieving a successful outcome is unquestionable, we have to appreciate that international frictions do persist elsewhere and the possibility of state-on-state conflict within the next 20 years (either directly involving the UK or, more likely, indirectly affecting our vital national interests) cannot, and must not, be ruled out.

This debate, as we all know, is taking place at a time of substantial resource challenges, both in the UK and elsewhere. Although we enjoy a very high level of public support for most of what we do, the financial realities are such that the UK is considering adjustments in Defence whilst at the same time the ability of our allies to share the burden of defending our common values may also reduce. That creates an obvious tension, and any Defence strategy, whatever assumptions underpin it, must reconcile the competing demands of policy and resource. "Common values" are another important point of context. If we are to ensure that the UK's Armed Forces are used as effectively as possible to meet the security and defence challenges of today and tomorrow, we need to focus on values. We need a common understanding, across Government and with our coalition partners and allies of what the UK stands for and how the country's Armed Forces can and will be used to promote those values while also protecting our interests. An articulation of our national values can find its expression in foreign and security policy ambitions. These should in turn drive the strategy which shapes the Armed Forces' contribution to the defence and security of the Nation, at an affordable scale, in the most cost-effective and agile manner. This suggests that economic policy should take its place

alongside foreign and security policy as a driver of the UK's strategy for Defence.

I'm optimistic that the Defence Review promised by both the Government and the Opposition, provided it can remain pitched at the strategic level, should help us to get there - and I am committed to working with my fellow Service Chiefs and the Government to ensure that we do. Let me be absolutely clear about one thing. Success in Afghanistan -

however that success comes to be defined as the Campaign progresses - is vital to our national credibility and, hence, our national security. The Secretary of State in September espoused a policy of Afghanistan First, in which he made clear that it should be the Main Effort for Defence; this is a welcome development which builds on the Army's achievement, in last year getting operations there onto a true Campaign footing for the first time.

I fully support this new emphasis on Afghanistan, not least because, as I have explained, very many of my sailors and marines are fully engaged in the fight there, alongside Air Force and Army comrades. Importantly, and in contrast to the tone of resigned exasperation that seems to characterise so much press coverage of the Campaign, when I speak with those from all 3 Services who have returned from or who are still serving in Afghanistan, I am struck by their commitment to the mission, their unshakeable belief in what they are doing and the progress they are making. However, as I have stated, Afghanistan is not the only game in town, either now or in the future. As a member of the Defence Board, I am duty-bound to take a longer-term, strategic view of the challenges to the security and Defence of our Nation.

I am obliged to think Beyond Afghanistan. Beyond Afghanistan in terms of looking today at security challenges emanating from elsewhere in the world. And Beyond Afghanistan in terms of looking at the sort of threats and challenges we may be facing long after the fighting in Afghanistan has been consigned to history. We have to guard against Afghanistan becoming the template for a future UK Defence structure that can do nothing but more Afghanistans.

The range of threats to UK interests is greater than that. I say that because we live in an unpredictable world characterised by a rapid, often confounding, rate of change. This inevitably has an impact on the UK. Britain is an island nation, dependent on the free movement of maritime trade and highly reliant on the stability and security of the globalised world. The UK has worldwide interests and responsibilities; it benefits from being a hub for global activity and is an influential member of the UN Security Council Permanent 5, the G20, NATO and the EU. The UK is also responsible for the security of 14 overseas territories and its population is increasingly multi-ethnic, with a large number of UK nationals living abroad. Our national prosperity and freedoms are increasingly vulnerable to events across the globe and therefore UK domestic security, and the protection of our vital national interests, cannot be separated from the security and stability of the international system upon which we rely. The UK's National Security Strategy, updated in July, reminds us that the UK's prosperity and national wealth are founded upon, and continue to be enhanced by, our outward-facing participation in the global trading system.

When it comes to thinking about and planning for the security challenges of tomorrow – from a strategic perspective – you

might agree with an analysis that suggests that while an existential threat to the UK is pretty unlikely, this country's involvement in conflict somewhere on the planet is a distinct possibility. The proliferation of small wars as state and non-state actors jostle for their place in the new order of things, and the reliance of our economy on investment and trade across the international community, make this a reasonable assumption. Governments not directly involved in these smaller conflicts will – as ever – have to decide to what extent their national interests are engaged by them and decide on the extent they wish to respond militarily. That in turn depends on the military capability at their disposal. As always, the military needs to be configured to give maximum political freedom of choice to Government. Whether the military is used in a given situation is a matter for Government. How the military is used is also a matter for Government, taking advice from the Chiefs – but how the military is configured is very much the business of the Chiefs. When you think about it, what the Government really wants from Defence is the efficient delivery of one of the levers of national power – military force – in a way that maximises political freedom of choice.

I think that has always been the case, but the need to preserve political choice has been thrown into sharper relief by the experience of recent campaigns. In terms of maximising choice, I am a firm believer that prevention of conflict is always better than cure. A proactive policy of conflict prevention, using all the levers of national power but placing conventional military capabilities at its heart, should be central to our national efforts to defend the international system and the UK's place within it. This is a strategy that offers the Government choices in deciding how best to prevent conflict, while retaining the option of resort to combat force in the event that this proves necessary. An effective conflict prevention strategy calls for a range of activities, including diplomatic and economic action, which can simultaneously persuade, dissuade and if necessary deter a potential aggressor, in order to prevent the escalation of situations into conflict. Those activities do, however, ultimately depend on military capabilities to enable them or back them up.

For us in the military, conflict prevention strategies encompass non-kinetic activities such as capacity building, wider regional engagement, reassurance, the ability to conduct Non Combatant Evacuation Operations as we did in the Lebanon in 2006, the provision of humanitarian relief, and military-to-military cooperation and training. All of these military activities enable security threats to be tackled early and facilitate the promotion and protection of UK national interests globally.

Importantly, it is not solely about influencing potential aggressors. It's also about reassuring friends and developing alliances. This is vital for effective coalition security operations because although forces can surge when necessary to respond to crises, trust and co-operation with allies cannot be surged. It is particularly in this regard that

the UK's Armed Forces can be the standard-bearers for this nation and its values.

However, the ability to influence is also dependent on maintaining a capable and credible military which can operate in support of a wider Government strategy. If non-kinetic activity to contain or deter others is to be effective, it must be underpinned by the existence and proven success of credible, conventional military forces, capable of wielding a big stick and a willingness, if necessary, for Government to compel others to act in a desired manner.

It is precisely because the effective prevention of conflict in the future depends upon the continued credibility of our armed forces that the success of UK Armed Forces in the Afghanistan campaign is so important.

And what contribution can you expect from Maritime Forces? Appropriately structured, trained and resourced maritime forces afford the Government a highly cost-effective, military means by which political and diplomatic influence can be leveraged to prevent conflict.

When necessary, they can also apply decisive combat force in support of national objectives. The ships and submarines that guarantee the freedom of the seas also exploit those freedoms for strategic and operational effect, free from the constraints of host nation support or the need for access, basing and over-flight permissions from other countries.

Warships are incredibly versatile and can deploy for many months with a small logistic foot-print and very controllable political overheads. A single ship can do everything from diplomatic engagement, the delivery of humanitarian aid, capacity-building by training other forces, containment and coercion through embargo operations and the delivery of decisive combat power onto the land. A balanced maritime force can deliver amphibious forces, Carrier Strike, Naval Gun Fire and submarine-launched Tomahawk cruise missiles. That last bit – the ability to strike with precision – really matters. The case for conflict prevention activity is strong, but there can be no guarantees that it will be successful in every case.

As I said a moment ago, in the event that prevention activity fails, military forces with credible war-fighting capabilities will be required to coerce or confront a potential aggressor in order to limit or contain the conflict. In extremis, they may be called upon to intervene militarily, using their war-fighting capabilities to defeat the aggressor. Where force has to be used, it must be used precisely.

Maritime Forces can do all of this, and operate on land – as they are in Afghanistan – at sea and in the air. So, while Afghanistan is rightly the Main Effort, it should not be regarded as the Only Effort. The range of threats to UK interests is greater than that. In these challenging times, we will need to retain armed forces that are versatile and adaptable, flexible and resilient across the full spectrum

of operations, from conflict prevention to high-end war-fighting and back again, at range, from the UK.

Forces that possess these attributes will best equip Defence for its vital role in supporting Government in the future. Such forces can offer real policy choice to the Government in deciding whether and how to engage with others, how to respond to developing threats and crises while minimising entanglement and how best to protect the UK's national interests and promote its values in the wider world, Beyond Afghanistan.

*Courtesy of URL: [http://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/operations-and-support/operations/operations-in-afghanistan/news/first-sea-lord-speech-beyond-afghanistan/\\*/changeNav/6568](http://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/operations-and-support/operations/operations-in-afghanistan/news/first-sea-lord-speech-beyond-afghanistan/*/changeNav/6568)*





When the first humans arrived in the Philippines from adjacent Asia many thousands of years ago, they found an archipelago that was remarkably rich in natural resources. The seas were inhabited by the earth's most diverse marine communities on earth, providing an abundant source of food throughout the year. The land was covered almost entirely by rain forest that provided them with meat from wildlife, building materials, and seemingly everlasting supplies of clear, cool water.

Those natural resources have been squandered, so badly damaged by over-use, mismanagement, and greed that recovery is uncertain, and collapse seems to be a real possibility. The nation now faces stark alternatives: a decline from the biologically richest place on earth to environmental devastation, or recovery from the current brush with disaster to a point of stability. To understand the origin of this dramatic and terrible situation, we must begin with history, but must end with societal and personal choice.

## The Lost Forest

Few countries in the world were originally more thoroughly covered by rain forest than the Philippines. Brazil has extensive Savannah and brush; Indonesia has many dry islands; Kenya and Tanzania have only small patches of rain forest. A few hundred years ago, at least 95 percent of the Philippines was covered by rain forest; only a few patches of open woodland and seasonal forest, mostly on Luzon, broke the expanse of moist, verdant land.

By the time the Spanish arrived in the Philippines in the 16th century, scattered coastal areas had been cleared for agriculture and villages. The only domestic grazer was the water buffalo, and pastureland was very limited. Some forest had been cleared in the interior as well—particularly the terraced rice lands of the Central Cordillera of northern Luzon—but most coastal areas and the richest of the lowlands remained completely forested, broken only by the occasional cultivated clearings. By 1600, the human population of the Philippines probably numbered



©2002 (Photograph by L. Heaney)

**The moist tropical climate resulted in luxuriant rain forest that once covered at least 95 percent of the Philippines, harboring one of the highest densities of unique species anywhere on the earth. Lake Balinsasayo (above) is one of the most beautiful places on Negros Island.**

# *Philippine Deforestation*

## Philippine Deforestation

about 500,000, and old-growth rain forest over 90 percent of the land, home to thousands of plant and animal species interacting in the web of life that sustained the human population.

At the end of more than 300 years of Spanish colonial rule, rain forest still covered about 70 percent of the Philippines. Some islands had been heavily deforested, while others remained nearly untouched. Cebu was so badly deforested that ornithologists visiting the island in the 1890s reported that they could find no old-growth forest, and the neighboring islands of Bohol and Panay had less than half of their original forest. Although the fertile lowland plains of Luzon had largely been cleared, much of the highland rain forest remained intact. Mindoro's rain forest was protected by an especially virulent strain of malaria, Palawan's by its isolation, and Mindanao's was largely left untouched because of the aggressive independence of the Moro people. The plant and animal communities retained their integrity, readily able to provide resources to human populations in all but a few places.

In 1992, the date of the most recent forest survey, old-growth rain forest had declined to a shocking 8.6 percent. In late 1997 that percentage has probably dropped to seven percent, and perhaps further still. The extent of rain-forest destruction in the Philippines may represent another "first": In addition to probably having the highest density of both unique and endangered species in the world, its decline in old-growth forest from 70 percent to seven percent in less than a century is probably the most rapid and severe in the world. This destruction is a primary reason the Philippines is ranked as having the most severely endangered mammal and bird faunas in the world. The degradation is also responsible for the increasing floods and droughts in the country, as well as massive erosion, coral reef siltation, and groundwater depletion.

The once spectacular primary forests of the Philippines are now a relic of a bygone era. What little primary forest does remain exists on the island of Palawan, the last sanctuary for the Palawan eagle.

Between 1990 and 2005 the Philippines lost a third of its forest cover. While the current deforestation rate is around 2 percent per year, this represents a 20 percent drop from the rate of the 1990s.

Widespread logging was responsible for much of the historical forest loss in the Philippines. Despite government bans on timber harvesting following severe flooding in the late 1980s and early 1990s, illegal logging continues today. Illicit wood cut from secondary and primary forests is routinely smuggled to other Asian countries.

After temporarily lifting the log export ban in the late 1990s, the government has increasingly tried to crack down on timber smuggling and forest degradation, but with limited success. Additional threats to Philippine forests come from legal and illegal mining operations—which also cause pollution— agricultural fires, collection of fuelwood, and rural population expansion. In recent years, deforestation has been increasingly blamed for soil erosion, river siltation, flooding, and drought; environmental awareness is now rising in the country. Activists are quick to criticize government decisions that adversely affect the country's environment.

With less and less forest in the Philippines, locals are increasingly reliant on plantations to meet their timber needs. As a result, plantation cover has fallen 65 percent between 1990 and 2005.

The continuing disappearance of Filipino wildlands is of great concern to ecologists due to the high levels of endemic species. Of the 1,196 known species of amphibians, birds, mammals and reptiles in the country, nearly 46 percent are endemic. Among plants, the number is around 40 percent. Only about 5 percent of the Philippines land area is under some form of protection.

Courtesy of URL: <http://rainforests.mongabay.com/20philippines.htm>

The rate of deforestation in the country is among the highest in the world. According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, in 1934, 57 percent of the country or 42 million acres were forested, 26 million acres of which was primary or virgin forests. In a span of 50 years, almost two thirds of the forests was lost to deforestation as indicated in a study by Frances Korten of the Ford Foundation in 1990. It found out that the country's forest was down to only 16 million acres, 1 million of which was virgin forests.

But the worst deforestation happened during the period of 1990 to 1999 where 750,000 acres of virgin forest were lost. Last year, Senator Loren Legarda, past chairperson of the Senate committee on environment, bared in a senate committee report that only 1.75 million acres remain of the nation's virgin forests.

The loss is incredible, the rate of deforestation in that decade was almost 75,000 acres a year. It also came at a time when logging ban was imposed in some selected sites in the country.

As a result, flooding, soil erosion and degradation pegged at 100,000 tons of soil yearly, loss of species diversity and genetic material, loss of human lives and properties and aesthetic and recreational loss were at their worst.

The continuing loss of forests in the Philippines is a result of combined administrative mismanagement, corruption and social inequity. The value of forests, both as a resource base and as an environmental control, remains undervalued in the face of over-riding economic need.

Extracts from URL: <http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/54a/145.html>



# *Imposing Secularism in State Schools Isn't Religious Neutrality, but Religious Persecution*

'Now there's spiritual warfare and flesh and blood breaking down. Ya either got faith or ya got unbelief and there ain't no neutral ground.' So sang Bob Dylan.

I was put in mind of those lyrics by a recent decision of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR).

The Court found in favour of an atheistic Finnish-born immigrant to Italy who had complained that crucifixes displayed in classrooms of state schools there had violated her human right to educate her children in line with her convictions (Article 2 of Protocol 1), and the human rights of her children to freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Article 9).

The Court agreed. It ruled that 'the State... was required to observe confessional neutrality in the context of public education, where attending classes was compulsory irrespective of religion, and where the aim should be to foster critical thinking in pupils.'

This judgement has European-wide implications. If upheld on appeal, it could lead to the mandatory secularisation of publicly-funded schools throughout the European Union.

What seems not to have dawned on the judges who found in favour of the complainant was that the removal of all religious symbolism, ritual and teaching from classrooms is no more neutral a stance towards religion than is the adoption of some confessional stance.

Respecting the rights of conscience and of parents in a religiously and culturally pluralistic Europe is not best served by the mandatory secularisation of all its public spaces. It is best served by providing genuine choices to minorities, while upholding and preserving national traditions that necessarily reflect the outlook and predilections of the majority. In the case of Italy, those predilections are for Roman Catholicism.

One has to wonder if there is not a secularist hidden agenda behind a lot of the anti-religious rulings which are increasingly being handed down by European elites. On this matter, I am put in mind by a remark of the French philosopher Simone Weil in her marvellous 1949 book, *The Need for Roots*. She observed there that:

'Uprootedness is by far the most dangerous malady to which human societies... [can be] exposed, for it is a self-propagating one. For people who are really uprooted there remain only two possible sorts of behaviour: either to fall into a spiritual lethargy resembling death, like the majority of the slaves in the days of the Roman Empire, or to hurl themselves into some form of activity necessarily designed to uproot... those who are not yet uprooted, or only partly so.' (p.45)

How apt a description is that paragraph of Europe as it now is, as it rushes to commit cultural suicide and expunge all reference to its cultural roots.

Courtesy of URL: <http://www.civitas.org.uk/wordpress/?p=1703#more-1703>

## *Wisdom?*



# *Sleepwalking off the cultural cliff*

by Melanie Phillips

Daily Mail, 14 December 2009

*The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, comes in for a lot of stick — not least from columnists like me.*

*But in the past few days, he has said something important. He has criticised Government ministers for thinking that Christian beliefs are no longer relevant in modern Britain, and for looking at religion as a ‘problem’.*

*Many Government faith initiatives, he observed, assumed that religion was an eccentricity practised by oddballs, foreigners and minorities.*

*This is not just a seasonal exercise in special pleading by a Church leader. Dr Williams has put his finger on what should be a cause of extreme disquiet — the war of attrition being waged against Christian beliefs.*

*In recent times, there has been a string of cases in which it is no exaggeration to say that British Christians have been persecuted for expressing their faith.*

*In July, Duke Amachree, a Christian who for 18 years had been a Homelessness Prevention Officer for Wandsworth Council, encouraged a client with an incurable medical condition to believe in God.*

*As a result, Mr Amachree was marched off the premises, suspended and then dismissed from his job. It was a similar case to the Christian nurse who was suspended after offering to pray for a patient’s recovery.*

*Christians are being removed from adoption panels if they refuse to endorse placing children for adoption with same-sex couples.*

*Similarly, a Christian counsellor was sacked by the national counselling service Relate because he refused to give sex therapy sessions to gays.*

*What this amounts to is that for Christians, the freedom to live according to their religious beliefs — one of the most fundamental precepts of a liberal society — is fast becoming impossible. Indeed, merely professing traditional Christian beliefs can cause such offence that it is treated as a crime.*

*Take, for example, the case of Harry Hammond, an elderly and eccentric evangelical who was prosecuted for a public order offence after parading with a placard denouncing immorality and homosexuality — even though he was assaulted by the hostile crowd he was held to have offended.*

*Or look at the case of the Vogelenzangs, a hotelier*

*couple from Merseyside, who last week were cleared of a ‘religiously aggravated’ public order offence after being prosecuted for insulting a Muslim guest.*

*While their behaviour may have been offensive and unwarranted, it is nevertheless a source of wonderment that for the police, ‘hate crime’ doesn’t seem to occur whenever Christianity is pilloried, mocked and insulted — as happens routinely — but only when a minority faith is in the frame.*

*Indeed, the Archbishop’s complaint echoed an earlier Church-backed report that accused the Government of merely paying lip service to Christianity while focusing support on Muslims.*

*The curious fact is that Labour’s hostility to faith is highly selective. It does everything it can to protect and support minority creeds while appearing to do everything it can to attack Christianity.*

*The root of this double standard is the unpleasant prejudice that minority faiths hail from cultures where people are less well-educated and so cannot be blamed for their beliefs. This, of course, is a deeply racist attitude, and is commonly found on the Left.*

*As Dr Williams observed, one of the effects of the modern hostility to religion is to give the impression that faith is not really very British. But on the contrary, it is part of the national psyche — even among people who don’t go to church.*

*To stop the denigration of religion, the Archbishop has called on government ministers to be more willing to talk about their own faith. But since this is seen as the province of cranks, politicians are reluctant to do so because of the risk of public ridicule.*

*This well-nigh insuperable difficulty was acknowledged yesterday by Tony Blair in an interview about his religious beliefs. As his former spin doctor Alastair Campbell once famously observed: ‘We don’t do God.’*

*This is because among the intelligentsia, the animosity to religion runs even deeper than the upside-down value system of the multicultural agenda. It springs from the fixed view that reason and religion are in diametrically opposite camps.*

*Anyone who prays to God must therefore be anti-reason, anti-science and antifreedom - in other words, an objectionable, obscurantist nutcase.*

*But this is the very opposite of the truth. Rationality is actually underpinned by Judeo-Christian beliefs.*

*Without the Biblical narrative, which gave the world the revolutionary idea of an orderly universe that could therefore be investigated by the use of reason, science would never have developed in the first place.*

*And it was the Judeo-Christian belief that all individuals are made equal in the image of God that gave rise to human rights and democracy.*

*Of course, terrible things have also been done in the name of religion. And equally, people without religious faith can believe in freedom and equality, and lead moral lives.*

*But that's because they draw upon a culture that rests on religious foundations. Strip away those foundations and what's left would be a brutalised and chaotic society.*

*You don't have to be a religious believer to be mightily concerned by such a likely consequence. But anxiety over fundamentalism has resulted in rising hostility to all religion.*

*Notably, however, this is not the case in the U.S., which remains overwhelmingly an upfront Christian society. Its politicians are neither ashamed nor embarrassed to call upon God to bless America at every opportunity.*

*Unlike U.S. mainstream Churches which, as descendants from the English Puritans, remain deeply wedded to the Biblical tradition, the Church of England has always looked down on true Scriptural believers as half-wits.*

*With such a half-hearted foundation of religious belief, it has been more vulnerable than other Churches to the secular onslaught against religion.*

*Dr Williams exemplifies this weakness by trying to go with the flow of social change and is for ever apologising for Christianity.*

*Certainly, it did some terrible things in the past to people of other faiths. But it is also responsible for the astonishing achievements of western civilisation.*

*Rather than complaining about politicians, Dr Williams should use his office to teach the nation about the seminal importance of Christianity to this society. But to do that, he has to have faith in his own Church — a faith that too often appears to be lacking.*

*The key point about the U.S. is that it still believes in itself as a nation and in its values, which are rooted in religion. Loyalty to their churches follows from loyalty to the nation in a kind of benign cycle.*

*In Britain, however, religion and nation have formed a vicious cycle in which hostility to the country's identity and values reflects and feeds into hostility to the religion upon which they are based.*

*The Archbishop's anguish at the onslaught upon Christian faith is very real. But unless he starts promoting the Church as the transcendental custodian of a civilisation rather than the Guardian newspaper at prayer, the society to which it gave rise will continue to sleepwalk off the edge of a religious and cultural cliff.*

Courtesy of URL:

## Wisdom?



# *I wonder if Jesus would write a letter like this to us about Christmas*

*It has come to my attention that many of you are upset that folks are taking My name out of the season.*

*How I personally feel about this celebration can probably be most easily understood by those of you who have been blessed with children of your own. I don't care what you call the day. If you want to celebrate My birth, just **GET ALONG AND LOVE ONE ANOTHER.***

*Now, having said that let Me go on. If it bothers you that the town in which you live doesn't allow a scene depicting My birth, then just get rid of a couple of Santas and snowmen and put in a small Nativity scene on your own front lawn. If all My followers did that there wouldn't be any need for such a scene on the town square because there would be many of them all around town.*

*Stop worrying about the fact that people are calling the tree a holiday tree, instead of a Christmas tree. It was I who made all trees. You can remember Me anytime you see any tree. Decorate a grape vine if you wish: I actually spoke of that one in a teaching, explaining who I am in relation to you and what each of our tasks were. If you have forgotten that one, look up John 15: 1 - 8.*

*If you want to give Me a present in remembrance of My birth here is my wish list. Choose something from it:*

- 1. Instead of writing protest letters objecting to the way My birthday is being celebrated, write letters of love and hope to soldiers away from home. They are terribly afraid and lonely this time of year. I know, they tell Me all the time.*
- 2. Visit someone in a nursing home. You don't have to know them personally. They just need to know that someone cares about them.*
- 3. Instead of writing the President complaining about the wording on the cards his staff sent out this year, why don't you write and tell him that you'll be praying for him and his family this year. Then follow up... It will be nice hearing from you again.*

4. Instead of giving your children a lot of gifts you can't afford and they don't need, spend time with them. Tell them the story of My birth, and why I came to live with you down here. Hold them in your arms and remind them that I love them.

5 Pick someone that has hurt you in the past and forgive him or her.

6. Did you know that someone in your town will attempt to take their own life this season because they feel so alone and hopeless? Since you don't know who that person is, try giving everyone you meet a warm smile; it could make the difference.

7. Instead of nit picking about what the retailer in your town calls the holiday, be patient with the people who work there. Give them a warm smile and a kind word. Even if they aren't allowed to wish you a "Merry Christmas" that doesn't keep you from wishing them one. Then stop shopping there on Sunday. If the store didn't make so much money on that day they'd close and let their employees spend the day at home with their families

8. If you really want to make a difference, support a missionary - especially one who takes My love and Good News to those who have never heard My name.

9. Here's a good one. There are individuals and whole families in your town who not only will have no "Christmas" tree, but neither will they have any presents to give or receive. If you don't know them, buy some food and a few gifts and give them to the Salvation Army or some other charity which believes in Me and they will make the delivery for you.

10. Finally, if you want to make a statement about your belief in and loyalty to Me, then behave like a Christian. Don't do things in secret that you wouldn't do in My presence. Let people know by your actions that you are one of mine.

Don't forget; I am God and can take care of Myself. Just love Me and do what I have told you to do. I'll take care of all the rest. Check out the list above and get to work; time is short. I'll help you, but the ball is now in your court. And do have a most blessed Christmas with all those whom you love and remember :

I LOVE YOU,  
JESUS

with thanks to John Martin (USA).

*I know that many of you thought last month's 'joke' about the Immigration Fairy was just that, a joke. Read on (and this is only ONE example from many) .....*

# Mother gets £170,000 a year in benefits to live in £1.2m house

By Urmee Khan

8 October 2008 - Daily Telegraph

**A mother is receiving £170,000 a year in benefits so that she can live with her family in a seven bedroom house worth £1.2million**



Toorpakai Saindi (left), who has seven children, has been granted an estimated £400 a week in child and local tax benefits, while her landlord receives £12,458 a month because there is no other suitable property available.

Mrs Saindi, who has four sons and three daughters aged eight to 22, approached Ealing Council in west London in July after being made homeless. The authority has a legal obligation to find her a seven-bedroom home.

The mother, who came to the UK from Afghanistan seven years ago,

said: "I always thought the housing benefit was a lot, but I'm told that is what it is for homes like this here."

She added: "It's a lot of money, but the council pay it. This is their problem. I don't know why they pay so much."

The council says both the benefit and rent payouts are set by central government.

Her son Jawad Saindi, 20, said although it felt like they had won the lottery, his mother complains that the house is too big to clean.



"If someone gave you a lottery ticket would you leave it? No. You take what you get given," he said.

"It's not that we wanted this big house - my mum is not happy because she has to clean all of it. The first day we moved in here we got lost because it was so big."

The Local Housing Allowance, introduced across England on April 7, enables landlords to find out the maximum amount of money available before a price is agreed.

Estate agents Foxtons said similar properties command rents of only about £6,000 a month.

Landlord Ajit Panesar, who is acting within his rights, fixed a value for his Acton property so that the Rent Service – an executive agency of the Department for Work and Pensions - could advise the council what it should pay. It came up with a figure of £12,458 a month.

Mr Panesar said: "I can't help it if the law says I should get paid that amount of money."

The Saindis were first housed in a three bedroom property in Enfield. Four years later they moved to a five-bedroom house in Ealing and three months ago were placed at their current address which they are entitled to have by law given the size of their family.

Councillor Will Brooks, Cabinet Member for Housing at Ealing Council, said the case highlighted "some of the absurdities of the housing and benefit system".

"In cases such as this, where there are very few seven-

bedroom properties, landlords will obviously seek the absolute maximum as set down by the government. This clearly puts the council, the government and taxpayers at a significant disadvantage," he said.

"The Council believes that urgent changes are needed to the LHA and in particular for the publication of maximum rent levels to be ended" he said.

Mark Wallace, campaign director of the TaxPayers' Alliance, said: "The people running the welfare system seem to have forgotten money doesn't grow on trees. This family could be helped without the need for such a huge bill."

Courtesy of URL: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/3160307/Mother-gets-170000-a-year-in-benefits-to-live-in-1.2m-house.html>

and: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1072729/Council-workers-sacked-jobless-Afghan-mother-seven-got-1-2million-council-house.html>

Photographs of family members are © Richard Hoskins.



## ***Single mother of eight living in a £2.6m mansion!***

**so much for Labour's housing benefit crackdown**

By Emily Andrews

14th December 2009 - Daily Mail

A year after the Government vowed to crack down on housing benefits, a single mother of eight is still living in a £2.6million mansion funded by taxpayers.

Francesca Walker receives more than £90,000 a year in housing allowance to meet the rent on the five-bedroom villa, plus other payouts of £15,000.

A defiant Miss Walker, 34, insists that she and her children aged from six to 16 are completely justified in living there as the council could not find them a big enough home.



*Francesca Walker with Mohammed, daughter Rashida and son Moustapha in her £2.6million mansion*

And, bizarrely, she claims that 'living in this house is holding me back'.

Miss Walker, whose near neighbours include David Cameron, Elle Macpherson and Hugh Grant, said: 'I've started my own business making organic soaps and bath products but any money I make I have to pay straight back to the council so there's no incentive for me to work hard to grow my business.

'Lovely though the house is, I'd prefer to live in a cheaper one. But I had to move from my old flat as gangs kicked my door down and harassed my children.'

The four-storey villa in Notting Hill, West London, which costs taxpayers £7,600 a month, has five bedrooms, three bathrooms, a double living room, study and roof terrace.

'This house is lovely and spacious, and with three bathrooms we don't have to queue in the mornings,' added Miss Walker. 'If it seems like I've landed on my feet, I have. But I can't afford to buy a house myself and I can't work because I have eight children to look after.

'Where would people rather my family was - out on the street?'

Miss Walker was given the house last September on a three-year lease because a rule introduced in April 2008 forces local authorities to place tenants in private properties if suitable council homes are unavailable.

This was intended to promote fairness but has caused, in some cases, huge cost to the taxpayer.

Last month, it was revealed that a Somali family of nine are living in a £1.8million central London house costing £1,600 a week.

And a family of eight Afghan immigrants have been housed



*The imposing Kensington house where Miss Walker and her family live*

for the last 14 months in a £ 1.2million house in Ealing, West London, at a cost so far of £168,000.

While then Work and Pensions Secretary James Purnell said he would crack down on the failing system last year, little seems to have been done although a Government source said yesterday that a crackdown on high rates of housing allowance would be announced this week.

Miss Walker said: 'It's great living here, obviously, but it's ridiculous that the Government have housed me here as it's a complete waste of money.

'The benefits system in this country is a joke'

'There are a lot of people who defraud the system and abuse it - it's not difficult to take advantage of it.'

Miss Walker, a Muslim convert, was brought up by her Jamaican-born mother after they were abandoned by her

father, a musician.

She was taken into care at 14 when her mother had a nervous breakdown.

She said: 'I lived in three foster homes and moved school five times. By 17, I was living in a children's home with some disreputable characters.

'I was afraid of being abused and becoming a junkie. I began to explore Islam.'

She converted to the religion and had five children with her first husband before divorcing five years later.

She had three more children from a second marriage, which also lasted five years.

Miss Walker insisted: 'I'm the product of a failed society. My family failed me, the council failed me and I failed myself. I should not have married and got pregnant at 17.

'On the other hand, I've never been in trouble with the law, my kids are healthy and well-looked-after, we're moderate Muslims, not extremists, and I'm taking a psychology degree with the Open University so I can be a support worker for families who are socially excluded.'

The property owner Mr Armstrong, who lived there with his wife and three children before moving to a nearby borough, declined to comment.

Kensington and Chelsea Council originally said it had to house Miss Walker in the borough as her children were all at local schools, but now she has removed them all for home education.

Despite this the council claims there is still nothing it can do and it is just 'following Government rules'.

Courtesy of URL: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1235604/Single-mother-living-2-6m-mansion--Labours-housing-benefit-crackdown.html#ixzz0Zs3EcdN6>

## *Mugs!*



# *Police stop church photographer under terrorism powers*

**Seven officers sent to check on Grant Smith, who was taking pictures of Christ Church in City of London**

Robert Booth - Tuesday 8 December 2009 - The Guardian.

One of the country's leading architectural photographers was apprehended by City of London police under terrorism laws today while photographing the 300-year old spire of Sir Christopher Wren's Christ Church for a personal project. Grant Smith, who has 25 years experience documenting buildings by Richard Rogers and Norman Foster, was stopped by a squad of seven officers who pulled up in three cars and a riot van and searched his belongings under section 44 of the Terrorism Act, which allows police to stop and search anyone without need for suspicion in a designated area.

"Three of them descended on me and said they were here because of reports of an aggressive male," Smith said. "One of them even admired my badge which said 'I am a photographer not a terrorist'. But they searched my bag for terrorist-related paraphernalia and demanded to know who I was and what I was doing. I refused, saying that I didn't have to tell them, but they said if I didn't they would take me off and physically search me."

Smith's trouble began when he refused to provide his name and explain what he was doing to a security guard from a nearby Bank of America office. He said he was astonished by the police response, not least the expense of dispatching

four vehicles and seven officers.

His experience comes despite a warning last week to all police forces not to use section 44 measures unnecessarily against photographers. In a circular to fellow chief constables, Andy Trotter, of British Transport police, said: "Officers and community support officers are reminded that we should not be stopping and searching people for taking photos. Unnecessarily restricting photography, whether from the casual tourist or professional, is unacceptable."

In the past 18 months there have been 94 complaints to the Independent Police Complaints Commission about the misuse of section 44 powers. There is a growing outcry among working photographers who are finding their daily routines interrupted by police searches when working in high-profile areas that may be considered terrorist targets. City of London police said its response to Smith had been proportionate. "When questioned by officers, the man declined to give an explanation and he was therefore informed that in light of the concerns of security staff and in the absence of an explanation, he would be searched under the Terrorism Act," said a spokesman. "After the man's bag was searched, he explained he was a freelance photographer taking photos of buildings. Once this explanation was received there was no further action."

*Courtesy of URL: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2009/dec/08/police-search-photographer-terrorism-powers>  
Mother gets £170,000 a year in benefits to live in £1.2m house*

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## Was Munir Hussain supposed to let the intruders escape?

**Munir Hussain savagely beat a man who had tied up his family at knifepoint, writes Philip Johnston (Daily Telegraph). Was the judge right to send him to prison?**

**It is every father's worst nightmare. He returns home with his wife and children to be confronted by knife-wielding burglars who tie them up and threaten to kill them.**

What would any of us do in those circumstances? Our first instinct would be to protect our families by whatever means at our disposal. Our second would likely involve unadulterated fury at the violation of our most precious sanctuary. Above all, even in the red mist of our anger, we would imagine ourselves to be the victim and to expect the law to recognise that, too.

But it doesn't entirely, as Munir Hussain found out. The nightmare unfolded for the 53-year-old businessman when he came home from worshipping with his family at their local mosque in High Wycombe to discover three masked men in his house. They threatened Hussain and his family, tied their hands behind their backs and made them crawl around the house before forcing them to lie down in the living room.

A teenage son managed to escape and alert his uncle who lived close by. Help arrived and the intruders fled, pursued by Hussain and his brother, Tokeer. At this point, according

to the law, the family was no longer in danger and the hue and cry should have stopped.

But the brothers caught up with one of the burglars and beat him savagely with a cricket bat, which broke in three places. Suddenly, the intruder, a serial criminal with more than 50 convictions, became the victim – and at Reading Crown Court on Monday, the Hussain brothers were jailed,



*Munir Hussain (Left) and his brother Tokeer Hussain were both jailed Photo: PA*

Munir for 30 months and Tokeer (who had not been in the house during the burglary) for 39.

Finding them guilty may well have been a requirement of the law, which allows only for "reasonable force" to be used in self-defence. Chasing and beating the burglar to the point where he is said to have permanent brain damage can hardly be said to be "reasonable", especially after the immediate threat to life and limb had been lifted.

But by what measure can such a lengthy custodial sentence be described as serving the interests of justice? Did Hussain invite these lowlifes into his home? Would he have perpetrated such an attack had they not threatened his family? A successful businessman, he was described by his friends and colleagues as a good, law-abiding family man whose normal equanimity was shattered by an event that most of us would find beyond our abilities to respond to rationally.

What was Hussain supposed to do? Should he have simply let the intruders escape and telephone the police, who would then capture them and ensure their prosecution and conviction? Except that the system does not work like that either. Walid Salem, the burglar whom the Hussain brothers

caught and beat, was so badly injured that he was unfit to plead after being charged with false imprisonment. He was given a two-year supervision order at a court hearing in September. His two accomplices were never caught.

It is tempting to see this as a parable for our times. A hard-working family man who has never been in trouble with the police is transformed in the blink of an eye from the victim into the offender. The true criminals either get away with it or are dealt with leniently by the courts.

Yet at the same time, people are told not to take the law into their own hands and not to engage in vigilantism, which is anathema to any civilised country. As the judge, John Reddihough, said: "Whatever the circumstances, persons cannot SLps carry out

revenge attacks upon a person who has offended them."

He added: "Sadly, I have no doubt that my public duty requires me to impose immediate prison sentences of some length upon you in order to reflect the serious consequences of your violent acts and intent."

But did the judge really have no option? While the brothers were clearly guilty, would not the interests of justice have been better served by a suspended sentence? Prison and the deprivation of liberty is supposed to be a condign punishment, so it is a questionable use of custody when the person being locked up is himself a victim of circumstances that he never sought.

Getting the balance right between the protection of the innocent and the pursuit of the guilty is always difficult when it involves an assault on what we hold most dear – our homes and families. The most notorious case of recent years involved Tony Martin, the Norfolk farmer who killed a teenage burglar and shot another in 1999.

Martin pleaded self-defence, but was initially convicted of murder and sentenced to life imprisonment. In October 2001, three appeal court judges accepted fresh evidence

that he had been suffering from a paranoid personality disorder. The conviction was quashed and his sentence was reduced to five years for manslaughter.

The Martin case triggered a national debate over how far people could go to protect their own homes. David Blunkett, the home secretary at the time, promised new laws to protect the rights of householders and "to ensure that those intruding on the lives and property of decent citizens will not be able to turn the tables and sue them".

However, while this stopped the madness of burglars suing their victims for compensation should they injure themselves falling down the stairs in the home they have invaded, it did not address the central point. Instead, the Law Commission was asked to consider whether the defences for home owners were adequate and concluded that they were.

Two years ago, Jack Straw, the Justice Secretary, promised another review of the law but his proposals went no further than the long-standing legal protection that allows people to use reasonable force to defend themselves and others. On occasions, this appears to result in unfairness or injustice; yet the law, by and large, works.

Depending on the circumstances, it is legitimate to kill an intruder even when outside the home. In 1995, Niklos Baungartner, a Hungarian businessman, discovered Robert Ingham, 22, in the kitchen of his home and confronted him. The fight moved into the front garden, where Ingham suffered a neck injury from which he died. Derbyshire police concluded that Ingham's injuries were entirely consistent with Baungartner's version of events and that reasonable force had been used.

Things seem to be more straightforward in America, where it is often assumed that there is an absolute right for householders to protect their property, whatever the consequences. Yet even then, the violence used should be commensurate with the threat – though juries have been known simply to ignore this.

In 2007, Joe Horn was on the phone to the police while watching two men burgling his neighbour's home in Pasadena, Texas. Despite being told that a patrol car had been sent, Horn went outside, and subsequently shot and killed both burglars. He was cleared by a grand jury.

There is no jurisdiction where justification for self-defence can be applied to actions committed after a criminal act has taken place. For instance, a woman who is raped cannot with impunity then track down her attacker and assault or kill him. English and Scottish law make no such concessions to the use of excessive force, however great the provocation. Tony Martin, after all, was burgled 30 times and the police had told him there was nothing they could do for him. He was at his wits' end but it was still unlawful for him to chase and shoot the intruders, even

though they were on his own land.

The law, in order to discourage vigilantism and vendetta, must draw the line somewhere and a jury can then decide whether or not the force used was reasonable. According to advice published by the Association of Chief Police Officers and the Crown Prosecution Service, attacks motivated by malice or out of revenge and intended to cause injury are unlikely to constitute reasonable force.

However, justice requires something else – an understanding when it comes to passing sentence of the circumstances faced by the defendant. It also needs to reflect the fact that society can no longer rely on the forces of law and order to perform the function expected of them, in return for people agreeing not to dish out their own rough justice.

Judge Reddihough, in sentencing the Hussain brothers, acknowledged that many people would consider that Salem got what he deserved and that his assailants should be treated as victims, not prosecuted or punished. However, he added: "If persons were permitted to ... inflict their own instant and violent punishment on an apprehended offender rather than letting justice take its course, then the rule of law and our system of criminal justice, which are the hallmarks of a civilised society, would collapse."

The judge was undoubtedly right to say that the law had to take its course, but the exercise of justice was in his hands. He considered it his "public duty" to jail Munir Hussain. Many of us would beg to disagree.

Courtesy of URL: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/columnists/philipjohnston/6822702/Was-Munir-Hussain-supposed-to-let-the-intruders-escape.html>





