

LIFE MANIFESTO
A Guide to a Safer World

by
David Kazzaz

February 2009

Life Manifesto: A Guide to a Safer World

Abstract

Psychiatrist and author David Kazzaz, a native of Iraq, pursued his medical studies in Beirut in the 1940s and immigrated to the United States in 1954, settling in Denver, Colorado. He is currently Senior Associate at the Institute for the Study of Israel in the Middle East in the Josef Korbel School of International Studies at the University of Denver. His life experiences extend from the post–World War I period through the post–9/11 era. He offers a unique perspective on the causes behind the rampant brutality witnessed across the globe today—be it suicide bombings in the Middle East, genocidal wars in Africa, or terrorist strikes on American shores.

Identifying in particular the devastating “Culture of Death” that is primarily embedded in a number of African nations and in the wide Islamic world today, he argues that only a concerted effort to uproot that culture and supplant it with a “Culture of Life” offers humanity a realistic chance of achieving peace and finding ways to resolve disputes without resort to war and other forms of violence.

To that end, he advocates the WORLD WOMEN FOR LIFE (WWFL) movement and provides a set of life-affirming strategies that can be implemented among any segment of a population, in any nation on earth. Above all, in these deeply troubling times, this treatise offers a message of hope and inspiration and urges us all to cherish and celebrate life.

PREAMBLE

Human life, since its creation on earth, has been threatened both by acts of nature such as floods, earthquakes, and fires and by acts of humans such as all forms of intentional violence and, in the modern context, terrorism.

Over the ages, as humans became more sophisticated in acquiring knowledge and developing their capabilities, they became more adept at mitigating the dangers to life. At the same time, however, they often allowed themselves to ignore the dangers inherent in their actions, and they sometimes consciously inflicted cruel hurt on their fellow humans. Unfortunately, “man’s inhumanity to man” has become a commonplace throughout the world.

Yet the prevalence of this destructive tendency differs between the sexes. Men by nature have a ready willingness to exploit and destroy life, while women’s instinct is to nourish and protect life. Ironically, men’s tendency to destroy grew out of a sense of responsibility to protect life by any and all means necessary. Men will wage war and kill an enemy to safeguard and feed those they love. Women, by contrast, will explore creative ways to improve the well-being and quality of life of their loved ones.

The following pages will highlight dangers existing across the globe in this twenty-first century and suggest some novel and specific strategies to cope with them in the perilous years ahead.

THE DARKENING SKIES

We are now living in the year 2009, and it seems that with the spread of terrorism and war, the world has gone mad! Elements in many nations across the globe are acting like suicidal patients intent on taking their lives and the lives of their loved ones with them. And the extended family in the rest of the world's countries and organizations (including the United Nations) have been acting like unwitting enablers, expressing either indifference or sympathy or even, in some case, support.

Consider the genocide and mass, systematic rapes occurring in Africa, the plague of homicide/suicide bombings, and the all-too-prevalent sectarian violence. Also consider the Muslim-on-Muslim killing taking place in the Middle East and beyond and the rampant human rights violations in various corners of the earth.

We can no longer afford to stand on the sidelines, silenced by indifference or indecision. We must stop acting as if we are living on another planet, watching in dismay (but without response) as atrocities are allowed to be perpetrated on others in this interconnected world of ours. We need to get back to the basics. We need to reestablish our priorities and focus on life itself. The time has come to remember that life is given to us as a gift; it is something to cherish, protect, and improve. It

is time to remember that it is the duty of each of us to take care of one another and regenerate life.

Care and nourishment are requisite parts of life, and if properly cared for, we can expect to enjoy a natural life cycle. Granted, malnutrition, disease, accidents, and all acts of nature are also inherent in that life cycle. But we see so much *unnatural* behavior these days—animals attacking humans, humans wantonly killing humans, and organized homicidal violence known as wars.

Most people live in a society, not in isolation, and it is society that adopts cultural norms. Those norms shape the structure that governs society. The structure starts with the nuclear family or unit, which defines roles and duties of its members. Often, clear roles are prescribed for the father, the mother, and the children and more specific roles are adopted and assigned to both male and female members of the family. Traditionally, the governing structure has been widened to encompass the extended family and reach beyond to the tribe, the sect, the village, the region, and the country.

Government by definition involves power and control, ideally intended to provide order, care, and protection. But government can also invite corruption, greed, domination, exploitation, cruelty, and destruction. Human history is replete with savage rulers, corrupt kings, cruel tyrants, and malevolent despots whose actions have directly disrupted and destroyed lives.

Acknowledging that ruling and governing will always be needed and will always be with us, we are glad to see attempts being made to improve the systems of government around the world, albeit slowly. We can hope that the pace will pick up and result in increasingly efficient and humanitarian systems. It is unlikely, however, that we will, in any reasonably foreseeable future, see the whole world merge into one perfect system.

Nonetheless, we hold a worldview based on hope and trust, as well as faith in ourselves and our humanity. We know intuitively that our vision for humanity can be realized through cultural means and that cultural means can value, promote, and protect life. Sadly, we face a troubled world plagued by cultural negativity, a world that falls far short of our hopes and aspirations. Our challenge, then, is to neutralize and reverse the negative cultural trends that prevent the spread of a truly life-affirming ethic. An honorable and vital task would therefore be to develop ways of protecting and improving life even in the face of wars, disease, accidents, and acts of nature. In short, we must encourage all peoples to maintain a worldview based on hope in a life-sustaining future.

Each day's news seems to bring fresh and frightening evidence of an escalating climate of violence. Stories of rapes, acts of terror, the carnage of war, and egregious civil right violations rain down on us daily, without let up.

All these atrocities and more have been promoted and aided by a culture that advocates and valorizes death over life. Negative cultural mores result in behaviors that stunt the development of life and can ultimately cripple and destroy existence itself. Such tainted cultural mores are often the prime factors influencing the negative culture and leading to wars in which even the culture's own people are consumed.

WAR TRAMPLES LIFE

Wars have been with us for as long as humanity has existed. Sadly, it may be said that war is part of human nature. It has established itself as a way of settling conflict, expressing ambition, venting aggression, extracting revenge, or confirming faith. That is not to say that the search for peace has not been pursued vigorously across time. Peace *has* been pursued, but success has thus far proved elusive.

Religions, Judaism and Islam among them, have recognized the ever-present threat of war. That is why they have adopted for the daily exchange of greetings the word *peace*. Jews and Muslims repeatedly address each other with *Shalom* and *Salam* as a form of prayer that will, optimistically, bring peace. But peace has evaded their followers as they relentlessly confront each other.

Another example to keep in mind can be found in the history of the United States, a nation that has seen more wars in its short existence than it deserves or

desires. A devastating civil war shortly after its birth, two world wars, three or four regional wars in the last century, and a global war in the twenty-first century hardly make for a peaceful existence for this young and powerful country. In spite of that, or perhaps because of it, now is not a time for despair. It is a time to search for ways to minimize the effects of wars. It is time to find ways to short-circuit violence before it explodes into another major conflagration.

Whatever goes on in the making of wars, conflict always starts in the mind. War develops and is executed by the command of men's minds. Soon after the mind entertains the idea of waging a war, it sets up a campaign to influence other minds. Planning strategies and tactics and acquiring weaponry follow shortly thereafter. Consequently, the first step in any war entails influencing the mind. Furthermore, there are both offensive wars and defensive wars, each requiring different cultural and intellectual preparations.

Distinguishing Offensive Wars from Defensive Wars

While all parties involved in a war assert that their role is purely defensive in order to claim legitimacy, certain criteria nonetheless distinguish one type from the other. Sometimes, the distinctions cannot be made objectively—for example, when the conflict is declared to be “a war of last resort” or described as the only possible choice.

Offensive wars are waged for various purposes, including expansion (colonial wars), revenge (tribal wars), ego satisfaction for ambitious warriors (Napoleon), ideology (Nazism, communism), and propagation of religion (the Crusades, Islamic jihad). Almost all of these offensive wars are pursued with militant fervor and carried out with ruthless destruction. They are supported by a culture that glorifies death and even rewards it, with scant regard for human life and even less concern for human rights.

Defensive wars, by contrast, are imposed on nations and people who do not seek them, as in the involvement of the United States and the Allies in World War II. Defensive wars are fought for survival and the preservation of life, liberty, and property or to ward off an impending threat. Defensive wars usually are fought to protect a **Culture of Life**. Supporting the Culture of Life involves activities that foster, sustain, enhance, and preserve life. The possibility that enormous sacrifices in lives and property may be required is seen as inevitable and accepted with sorrow, not greeted with joy.

But sometimes, a defensive war may evolve into an offensive campaign as the warriors become emboldened by their success. Thus, for example, the Mujahadeen, after defeating the Russians in Afghanistan, evolved into the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. They ultimately proceeded to wage a worldwide war of terror.

Controlling terror is one of the missions of the United Nations. To that end, members of that international body try to differentiate between wars of aggression (offensive wars) and wars of self-defense. They even pass resolutions condemning the first and condoning the second. Recognizing the difficulty in differentiation, the five permanent members of the UN Security Council reserved to themselves a veto power. They cleverly anticipated that in some conflicts, the majority of the Security Council might identify one its members (or its allies) as the aggressor. That member would, of course, portray itself as the defender, and it could use its veto power to defeat a negative resolution that would work against its interests.

Despite the fact that the Security Council is designed to prevent war and promote peace, that august body can only do so much: wars appear to be an inevitable part of human existence. Therefore, the search for a way to preserve life as much as possible, even in the midst of wars, remains urgent and imperative. And that is the main thrust of this Manifesto.

BUILDING THE CULTURE OF DEATH

Acceptance of Death

Marauding tribes and piracy were early expressions of the **Culture of Death**. In its most elementary form, piracy is a war carried out on unsuspecting traders and voyagers by wayward vagabonds. It requires its leader to prepare fellow pirates to accept death as they roam the high seas. Likewise, invaders extol

their armies of regulars or mercenaries to confront death with daring and courage while whipping up their emotions to the point that they actually rejoice in death.

War movies present us with dramatic visual images of fighters marching into the line of fire, oblivious to the danger even as they see their comrades falling all around them. For troops to respond in this manner requires formidable mental preparation. Notorious wars in history have introduced new words to our vocabulary to describe them and their actions—such as *barbarians*, *Holocaust*, and, more recently, *ethnic cleansing*. None of these extreme actions would have been possible unless people had first accepted a Culture of Death and thus laid the groundwork for their execution.

The Propagation of Death Turns into Wars

Several systems and social organizations are often enlisted as vendors of the Culture of Death, for indoctrination and recruitment of purveyors of death takes place throughout the culture. The process starts with education and continues from kindergarten all the way through graduate studies. The print media and, even more effectively, movies and television play important roles in influencing the public. At the disposal of the media are the content of TV shows and radio programs, as well as the ever-present billboards, neighborhood committee meetings, and the airing of war songs on the radio and in the streets. Today, accomplishing that outreach is greatly enhanced by the use of Websites and Internet communications. All these

forces work together in a sinister way to glorify death and violence while minimizing or even ignoring the sanctity of life. An example is the way in which the terrorists use the funerals of suicide bombers/martyrs broadcast on TV—not to mourn the dead but rather to glorify their deaths and rejoice in the fate of their victims.

Death in the Twentieth-Century Wars

In World War II, the world witnessed two vicious manifestations of the Culture of Death, Japanese and German. Both nations inflicted death on their designated enemies with unfathomable brutality and without compunction. The Japanese resurrected an old tradition of strict discipline and blind obedience to authority figures, which made the recruitment of kamikaze pilots possible. Their militancy went so far as to deliberately attack civilians and abuse those under their control, as when they forced subjugated women to serve as prostitutes for their soldiers.

The Nazis, for their part, brought a brutality unprecedented in its inhumanity to a country that was considered a leader among the civilized nations. Professors, scientists, artists, and a whole range of educated citizens joined, endorsed, and cultivated the Nazi Culture of Death. What made that possible was, in part, an inherent tendency in German culture (like that of the Japanese) to submit to strict discipline and give blind obedience to authority. The effort was aided immensely

by the use of new and powerful psychological propaganda, which was effectively conveyed through the mass media of radio, movie newsreels, and newspapers. In addition, the psychological ploy commonly known as the “big lie” was widely used, which consisted of repeatedly projecting the most outrageous characterizations and accusations onto an enemy. The Nazis proved that even outlandish and patently false accusations, if repeated loudly enough and often enough, could become accepted as facts.

Through propaganda, the Nazis were able to introduce **four stages of elimination (the Four D’s)**: First, they *delegitimized* the enemy, then they rendered them *defenseless*, proceeded to *dehumanize* them, and ended in *destroying* them. In their “civilized minds,” they did not think they were killing human beings: they were merely eliminating dehumanized and loathsome creatures. Members of the Nazi SS Einsatzgruppen, after a day devoted to the wholesale shooting of thousands of Jews, often celebrated with drink and banquet—a truly barbaric and insane behavior. This behavior, significantly, exceeded what was considered at the time as a mere aberration. It was extreme even for the times, and, more important, it opened the door for further excesses to follow. To their dishonor, the Nazis left this lethal formula for other peoples of evil intent to emulate in the future. And indeed, we have seen such deeds enacted in recent years during the conflicts between segments of the former Yugoslavia and

throughout the Middle East. The behavior has been further elaborated by the introduction of individual homicide/suicide bombers of both sexes. The “Four D’s” strategy was used by Hitler’s Germany, Stalin’s Russia, and Pol Pot’s Cambodia. In Africa, we see it employed in Rwanda, and we find it current in various Middle East terrorist groups and among the breakup states of Yugoslavia. The strategy is propaganda at its worst.

Institutions Building the Culture

Media play a critical role in such efforts. When the media endorse the Culture of Death, they go beyond the dissemination of propaganda. They lend credence to the cultural value of the moment. The media are culpable of sometimes omitting or exaggerating and distorting. For instance, we may see a villain portrayed as a hero in the press or a hero as a traitor.

We must turn this around. Just as a Culture of Death can be enforced by the media, a Culture of Life can easily be fortified over the airwaves and through other media outlets.

But there is more to pay attention to these days. Now, besides considering the traditional role of the media in conveying propaganda, we must also attend to the widespread use of the Internet to bring the message of death into the dens and offices and bedrooms of millions of citizens. Websites and video games, streaming video and elaborate online hoaxes are all especially potent means to affect the

thinking of the younger generations. Over 1 billion people are connected to the World Wide Web, and there is no real filtering going on. So everything from biased news broadcasts to You Tube videos are being used to spread the language and images of a culture of hate.

Schools, starting with pre-kindergarten and going up through the institutions of higher education, are the fountains of knowledge. They feed the fertile mind and create the pathways through which an individual learns about history and life values. What makes them of prime importance is the fact that this knowledge is being reinforced through all stages of development. Individuals grow physically, intellectually, and emotionally all at the same time, thereby forging an organic link between the body and the intellect. If we look at the curricula of schools and colleges in countries where the Culture of Death is firmly imbedded, we can easily detect elements that justify death and minimize life. Such curricula reflect as well as affect the culture. Inversely, if we want to measure how deeply the Culture of Life is reflected and expressed in the halls of higher education; all we need to do is look at the curricula. The amount of research and creative work being devoted to areas of health, medicine, science, and technology is another strong indication of the value placed on life in a given society. A Culture of Life can play just as key a role in society as a Culture of Death.

The Culture of Life transcends all that humans bring to the world. But it must exist by itself—it must not be subject to any system of power because centers of power insinuate themselves, often with impunity, into our lives and sometimes challenge the sanctity of life itself. Let us examine the ways in which this is accomplished.

Ideology, by definition, is a power system that politicians use to govern and orders our lives. If a Culture of Life is allowed to be incorporated into an ideology, as surely as day follows night, an opposite ideology will come along extolling the value of death; it will seek its own followers and proceed to devalue and denigrate life. Therefore, we need to be wary of any ideology that rigidly takes over our lives because **life itself** is supreme and too important to be under the domain of any partisan ideology.

Religion is that which feeds the soul. It allows the individual to feel safe and protected while facing his or her own fragile humanity. It fulfills, or at least addresses, a vital need for our psyche. It acts like the vitamins that strengthen our bodies. Just as we would feel poorly in a vitamin-deficient state, we would often feel unhappy in a spiritually deficient state. Karl Marx called religion “the opiate of the masses” and advocated dispensing with it. Soon thereafter, communist ideology replaced religion, and Stalin became its cruel god. Even those who

profess agnosticism and a lack of any religious belief will find themselves adhering to some ideology or manmade value system as if it were their religion.

All religions contain teachings that extol and sanctify life:

From the Bible (Deut. 30:15): “Behold, I have set before you today, life and prosperity; death and adversity, choose life.”

From the Koran (Chap. 5): “Killing one person is like killing the whole world. Saving one life is like saving the world.”

The Christian insistence on the sanctity of life is legendary, notwithstanding the Crusades and Hitler’s Holocaust, which were carried out in its name. (Zealots, extremists, and tyrants, intent on domination, can easily interpret words of their religion to justify killing.) Buddhism and other religions also promote life. For those who believe in reincarnation, death does not mean the end of life but merely its transfer to other living beings.

Religion embodies a huge power over human beings and has helped many people to overcome grief and find a direction in life. But over the ages, leaders of various faiths and the fanatic adherents of many of those religions easily assumed that they were the agents of God. They then proceeded to pass life-and-death edicts dictating how their fellow religionists should conduct their lives. Even in our own time, certain religious leaders threaten to impose their faith on all “nonbelievers,”

in some cases even “by the sword.” Many of the poor, innocent faithful around the world find themselves with no power to resist the onslaught. Religion in the hands of humans has often been abused by fanatics and power-hungry zealots.

Politicians, by their chosen profession, seek power and aspire to be the governing force in their people’s lives. They seek power to legislate, to adjudicate, and to rule. Ideally, they have all the means and responsibility to do what is good for their people. But in any system of power, politicians are open to corruption and abuse. In their respected role, their effect on the culture and on the well-being and indeed the very life of the governed is almost unlimited. As necessary as politicians are in serving society, placing complete trust in their exercise of power is unwarranted and may even be dangerous.

In free and democratic societies, the people have the right to choose their political leaders. They can put their faith in benevolent politicians and discard the abusers. Unfortunately, in many countries, the common people do not have a quick and easy way to make such choices; in fact, they may not have any choice at all. With an issue as important as life versus death—whether that entails matters of sustenance versus poverty, health versus disease, or safety versus endangerment—a great deal rides on the freedom of the people to knowledgably choose their own leaders. Much must be done to educate the voters on how to protect themselves

politically, especially in nations struggling to move from dictatorship to democracy.

Home is the cradle of humanity. Home is where children, from birth through their formative years, receive the nourishment, protection, and love to which they are entitled. Psychologists tell us that imprints from childhood leave indelible traces on every individual. In most households, mothers play the most dominant role in affecting that imprint. This is especially evident in Muslim society, where it is almost an encoded cultural norm that the father has only a tangential part in raising the child during the first five years of life, leaving the mother as the primary bonding agent. In some respects, this is a fortuitous arrangement because mothers have a predominant natural instinct for nourishing and caring. As the designated agents for protecting and enhancing life, women therefore should be given all the freedom, knowledge, and wherewithal to impart this care. A quick glance around the world will show that male-dominated societies and cultures deprive mothers of the freedom and tools necessary to adequately support the growth of their children. In some places, this deprivation exposes the mothers and their infants to physical and psychological harm—witness the famine, poverty, diseases, and lack of medical care found throughout Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. Africa regularly supplies us with news of the devastation wrought by famine, AIDS, and the rape of women. Tragically, this terrible news has not been met with

serious life-promoting corrective measures on the part of the international community. Clearly, then, the home is not always a safe and nourishing environment.

The most significant product of the home is the growing child. If the child is deprived of love or subjected to abuse, he or she is likely to end up being abusive in turn. As studies have shown, most battered children grow into battering parents. Children who have been shown or taught that life is disposable and not valuable will end up accepting the promotion of death over life. Such is often the makeup of the hardened criminal and the homicidal/suicidal bomber.

CULTURES OF LIFE AND DEATH AROUND THE WORLD

The Culture of Death Kills Its Own People

The Culture of Death affects more than the obvious target, the external enemy. When the Culture of Death is introduced into a community, a sect, a religion, or a nation, it commonly teaches that certain goals, such as the spread of its religion or ideology, justify and often actually require the sacrifice of life. In fact, those who inflict death in pursuit of such goals, as well as their families, are often generously rewarded and glorified in their society. But the Culture of Death also brings death and killing into their own community—sometimes to a degree that surpasses the killing of the enemies.

It is also a fact that, by design and by neglect, the Culture of Death suppresses and distorts many aspects of life. Efforts to enhance the quality of life and advance the communal good are often retarded by the focus on death. And once that norm is established, it becomes the prerogative of the promoters of death to define their targets without exemptions.

Once the act of suicide becomes glorified as martyrdom and once causing death is promoted as honorable and just, death can be visited on anybody, including those who valorize death and their own families. We have seen instances in which a jihadist, for example, labels a coreligionist or even a member of his own family as a traitor or infidel worthy of elimination. And for that reason, we daily read news stories of Muslims killing other Muslims in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Algiers, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and other Arab Muslim countries. One of the most horrifying examples of perpetuating the Culture of Death was the 2007 incident in Iraq when Sunni terrorists attacked one the most holy Shiite mosques and killed hundreds of innocent, faithful members of the Muslim religion. The sole purpose of that horrific slaughter was to incite Shiites everywhere to kill their fellow religionists, the Sunnis, so that the Sunnis would retaliate in turn. The result was an endless cycle of killing for the sake of killing, in which even more of their own people were being killed than those of their original targeted enemy.

It is safe to predict that from now on in this age of terrorism, more Muslims will be killed around the world than Jews, Christians, Hindus, or Buddhists. It is conceivable that the people targeted outside the Muslim world, be it in Europe, Asia, America, or the Middle East, have become more prepared to absorb and defend against any future terrorist attacks, while the Muslim world remains a helpless victim of the jihadist.

The other area overlooked in most accounts is the far-reaching affect of the Culture of Death on the institutions that support life and life-enriching functions in society. Death-infected countries fail to assign adequate resources to health, science, and most other technical studies, thereby impeding many activities related to life-saving measures. Consequently, the people concerned have not been taught the importance of life, and they do not feel compelled to demand that life be treated as sacred.

Let us examine the events surrounding the major earthquakes in Turkey and Iran in recent years, as well as the tsunami in Indonesia—all three being Muslim countries. In the pictures relayed on our TV screens, we did not see well-trained or well-equipped teams rushing to aid the victims from any of the world's Muslim countries. The majority of the rescue teams came from the Western world and, interestingly, the tiny state of Israel. There is no doubt that enough wealth and brainpower exists in the various Muslim countries to train and provide expert

emergency rescue teams to respond to such natural disasters. But such teams were not present in Turkey, Iran, or Indonesia because training such individuals is not considered a priority in Muslim nations across the globe. Similarly, although there is clearly no lack of intelligence or monetary resources, we do not see significant research and development activities being pursued or Nobel Prize winners being produced by the Arab and Muslim countries. Indeed, since the Nobel was instituted, the 1.2 billion Muslims in the world have produced just 7 Nobel Prize winners, while the world's 14 million Jews alone have advanced 139. It appears quite evident that in those countries that have allowed the Culture of Death to creep into their daily life while neglecting life-promoting activities, growth in many essential areas has been seriously stunted.

A quick comparison of two countries will illustrate this point. These two countries share the same geography, the same difficult climate, the same overcrowding, the same lack of natural resources, and similar large populations. In fact, the people in both nations are essentially of the same race. The main difference is that these countries are dominated by different religions, and while one has widely embraced a Culture of Death, the other has done so only marginally. These countries are India and Pakistan. The former is a vital outsourcing area for the United States; the latter is a needy recipient of aid to meet its people's basic needs.

Bernard Lewis, a noted scholar of Islamic studies and a respected Islamophile, has recently lamented the hindered cultural and scientific development in the Islamic world by stating, in effect, how regrettable it is that people with such a rich and glorious past find themselves steps behind the rest of the world in so many significant areas. He attributes that shortcoming to the fact that women, who constitute half the population in the Islamic culture, have been cut out of the productive life of their people through inequality and restricted freedoms. He expresses hope and trust that this might change in the future as the emerging signs of awakening spread more widely and Muslim women move toward liberation.

Lewis's point is imminently relevant, but it will be incomplete until the Culture of Death is reversed. Therefore, women, even as they demand freedom and equal rights, must also consider simultaneously promoting the Culture of Life and doing so aggressively.

The Culture of Death exists in varying degrees of intensity in many countries around the world. The highest concentration seems to persist in African and Middle Eastern nations. One can almost calibrate the intensity of the Culture of Death in a given country by examining the status of its woman, its civil rights, its infrastructure, its scientific productivity, and the level of its higher and lower education.

Munther Dajani of Al-Quds University in East Jerusalem stated recently that over the many years of its existence, Jordan received as much financial aid from the United States and Europe as did the Palestinian Authority under the late Yasser Arafat, from 1993 to 2003. Having lived in both Jordan and the Palestinian West Bank, Dajani noted that Amman and many other cities in Jordan are well developed and modern in appearance and attitude. In the Palestinian areas of Gaza and the West Bank, by contrast, he was hard-pressed to find a newly paved street, a new hospital, or a newly erected school of any substantial size. The difference is that in Jordan, the Culture of Death is endorsed by only a small percentage of the population whereas it exists and is embraced by the vast majority of people in the Palestinian areas.

Granted, unlike the Jordanians, Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza have been engaged in ongoing armed struggles and subjected to blockades, road blocks, military actions, and other hardships related to “occupation.” But even taking all that into consideration, one has to acknowledge that the largest portion of the money that came from Europe and the United States was squandered by the Palestinians’ leaders and their cronies through misappropriation, mismanagement, and outright theft. Improving the life and livelihood of the people was never a high priority, largely because of the prevalence of the Culture of Death. Khalid Abu Toameh, a credible news correspondent with free access to the West Bank and

Gaza who reports for both the Palestinian media and Israel's *Jerusalem Post*, attested to that fact in a presentation at the University of Denver in May of 2008.

Unfortunately, death does not confer rights to humans. That is why the Culture of Death can also be measured inversely by the extent of basic freedoms and human rights afforded to the average person. It is thus important—and enlightening—to consider the amount of creativity that could be unleashed if that Culture of Death were reversed in those countries where it has a stronghold, not to mention the multiple ways in which the lives of millions could well be enriched and gladdened.

So, if one wishes to assess the existence of the Culture of Life in a society, one need only look as far as the quality of the infrastructure maintained in the cities and the quality of the higher education offered to its citizens. One can also get an indication of the value placed on the Culture of Life in any country or region by observing the extent and fruits of its research and development activities.

An overview of the world map highlights areas of Europe, Asia, New Zealand, Australia, and the Americas where the Culture of Life has predominance. Many of the Western European countries and the Scandinavian countries in particular stand out by the degree of care and concern for life exhibited in their societies. Looking farther to the east, we see India, with its overpopulation, Japan, overcoming a devastating defeat in World War II, and Israel, which has never seen

peace since the day of its birth, all holding unique positions in the world because they have allowed life to thrive even under inordinately difficult circumstances.

New Zealand and Australia also are respectable branches in the tree of life.

Unfortunately, Africa does not present an encouraging picture in this regard at the present time.

On the North American continent, Canada holds a secure place among the countries that love life, although it may soon regret being too lax in guarding its borders against the merchants of death. Of interest is a foiled terrorist attack that originated in Canada and was discovered and thwarted near Los Angeles at the turn of the millennium. In that regard, the United States, which carries an impressive portion of the Culture of Life on its shoulders, did not do any better when it allowed the 9/11 terrorists to roam freely around the country before they carried out their dastardly attacks in New York, in Washington, and in the skies over Pennsylvania.

In a category of their own, Central and South America present a mixed bag. Still, the Culture of Life in those countries is constantly progressing, as many of their governments move from dictatorship to democracy.

But make no mistake about it: a Culture of Life does not exist in a pure and all-pervasive form in any country. Even in nations where the Culture of Life

dominates society, there are Subcultures of Death that must be addressed and squarely confronted.

It would be instructive here to discuss two countries that carry an inordinate degree of the Culture of Life in their portfolios while remaining engaged in war or in a seemingly intractable and lethally violent conflict.

One, the United States, though currently engaged in active war in Iraq and Afghanistan, offers three instructive events that reflect the Love of Life held by its citizens.

In the year 2003, at the height of the Iraq War, a small army unit was isolated from its brigade. One women soldier, Jessica Lynch, was wounded and then held captive in a hospital. She was rescued in a daring operation and brought home to the United States. This was just one soldier among tens of thousands engaged in battle. Nonetheless, the free media, which depends upon having a maximum number of viewers, decided to give her rescue and return to the States round-the-clock coverage. The American people and their viewing habits did not disappoint. Predictably, they followed the coverage intensely because it was centered on a life-affirming event. To be sure, the military did interject its own agenda by presenting Jessica as a hero while exaggerating her role during the ambush and the capture, but ultimately, freedom of the press uncovered this

elaboration. But that is not the point. For the people, what really mattered was the saving of the life of one woman soldier lying wounded in the desert of Iraq.

The second event of note relates to the rescue of miners trapped in a mine shaft. The rescue proved to be a painfully slow and complicated operation that lasted a number of days, while the lives of several men hung in the balance. In this case, too, the 24-hour news networks chose to cover the story continuously, and the viewers again did not disappoint. They took the time to watch this life-saving effort. One might wonder why, in a country of over 350 million people where thousands of life-threatening events are happening every day, the rescue of a few unknown miners would be of so much interest. We can only conclude that life itself and the possibility of rescue must be of supreme value to this populace.

The third event has an interesting twist. In 2005, much coverage was given to the story of Terri Schiavo, a young woman lying unconscious for fifteen years, attached to a life-support system and requiring tube feeding. Credible and repeated medical tests had shown that Terri had extensive brain damage caused by an accident. She was pronounced medically brain dead with no chance of recovery even though her heart was still beating. Her tormented husband wanted to exert his right to curtail her misery by asking a court to order the merciful discontinuation of the tube feeding. He prevailed in court, but Terri's parents disagreed and sought to

keep the feeding tube in place indefinitely. They went back to court but lost their appeal.

One would think that this was a private matter involving just one sad situation, with no chance of a happy ending. But the politicians had other ideas. They conjectured that their intervention would please their constituents. The United States has a two-party system, and one party sided with the husband and wanted the court verdict to stand while the other wanted to introduce a twist in the law in order to allow the parents' wishes to prevail. The U.S. Congress was called from recess to convene for a vote on the matter, and the president of the United States himself was forced to disrupt his vacation to return to the capital and attend to this matter.

It is not important how this dispute was finally adjudicated (the intervention did not produce a reversal, and Terri was allowed to rest in peace). What is important is all the energy that the U.S. political system put into this case. What the politicians were saying was simply that they wanted to reflect to their constituents where they stood on this issue. And though they came from diametrically opposed perspectives, the salient point is that *both* sides were reflecting a deeply held love of life. One party was saying that life was valuable and should be preserved as long as there is a heart beating. The other was also saying that life was valuable but that it should be respected in dignity. Advocates of the latter view recognized that

whatever irrevocable events may disrupt life, a person should be allowed to die in peace.

In addition to the preceding anecdotes, an abundance of evidence exists that demonstrates America's dedication to life. Advances in medicine in the United States surpass those produced by the rest of the world. Nobel prizes are awarded to U.S. citizens every year and in every aspect of science, technology, and peace. Of special note, one can observe ways the war in Iraq is being conducted. Even in war, Americans are paying billions of dollars to devise and implement life-preserving and life-enhancing measures. Great effort and expense is invested in developing precision weapons that can limit or avoid collateral damage, and we continue to see astonishing advances in the care of the wounded, friend or foe. Soldiers whose main training is to fight are assigned to build infrastructure, constructing roads, hospitals, schools; they provide work opportunities to the populace under their control; and they even dole out candy and affection to local children.

During General David Petraeus's 2007 surge campaign, details about one military action were reported, complete with live-action images, on TV. The report showed how American soldiers found themselves in a difficult position while confronting the renegade Mahdi militiamen who were terrorizing the inhabitants of Sadr City in Baghdad. Three U.S. soldiers were pinned down by a sniper shooting

from one of the windows in a large house. In order to determine where the fire was coming from, the soldiers would have to move in the open and expose themselves to the sniper. Another option was to blow up the whole house in which he stood. But blowing up the house would mean killing innocent civilians inside. The third choice was to simply stay in their protected location and abandon the mission entirely. Luckily, the latest technological development in weaponry, costing billions of dollars, offered them another, humanitarian choice. Even as the soldiers and snipers confronted one another, sophisticated pilotless drones were circling in the skies of Baghdad, receiving electronic commands from a military base located in the eastern part of the United States. The soldiers on the ground in Baghdad connected with the military base in the United States and were able to give headquarters the exact location of the sniper, along with details of the dilemma they were facing. Amazingly—and in a humanitarian manner—the command officers directed the drones electronically to the house in question and instructed the drone to seek the source of fire and eliminate it. The drone successfully waited for the sniper to shoot, traced the heat of the weapon's fire, and targeted the specific window in which he stood. The mission was accomplished with neither soldier nor pilot being lost. Furthermore and more to the point, no noncombatant civilian was killed and no house was destroyed. Such is the modern model for military behavior in time of war that strives to preserve as many lives as possible.

LET THE RAINBOW SHINE

CULTURAL REVOLUTIONS IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

This Life Manifesto calls for a cultural revolution worldwide to establish the dominance of a Culture of Life over the Culture of Death. It must be made abundantly clear that the task, as noble as it may be, will be difficult, complicated, and time-consuming, taking perhaps decades to produce results. This “medicine” of cultural change being recommended to humanity should carry a warning label stating that if administered by the wrong hands and in the wrong way, it could have unintended disastrous results. We must remember that there have been a number of cultural revolutions in recent history. Almost all of them were proclaimed in the name of laudable causes. And all of them but one ended in total disaster.

Therefore, any attempt at **replacing a Culture of Death with a Culture of Life should be approached with extreme care** or else be left to take its own course.

That course might mean that different countries and communities with a Culture of Death will slowly recognize the problem and deal with it piecemeal, *without* an all-out, concerted, and comprehensive effort, as Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have been doing lately.

Given the potential for failure, why is this discourse still continuing? It is because there is also a potential for success and because of that one exceptional

revolution—the one that, even though it brought its share of destruction, did not destroy life or the creative ability of its people. Let us consider the way the various cultural revolutions of the last century worked themselves out.

In the middle of World War I, the **Communist Revolution** burst into Russia with the goal of expanding across the whole world. Its stated purpose was to bring “equality” and “fairness” to all the people, under the credo “From each according to his ability, to each according to his need.” The Communists chose the instrument of death to bring about the revolution, complemented with dislocation, humiliation, exile, and the forced labor of the gulag. They started by killing their king (Czar Nicholas), their nobility, and their “bourgeoisie.” They ended up by eliminating their fellow Communist intellectuals and leaders and starving their peasants. In the end, the only thing that was shared was the misery of the people and the devastation that ensued when millions of citizens were tortured and killed.

Fascism ushered in World War II, with Adolf Hitler’s Nazism at its pinnacle. Incredibly, Hitler had stated that his goal was to establish “peace” throughout the world, and he ironically labeled his regime the National *Socialist* Party. He decreed that members of the superior race, the Aryans, were to be the masters of the earth. They would dictate which people would live and which were unfit to exist, and they would enforce the order that they intended to prevail throughout the world. Here again, death was the preferred tool, and it was wielded

on an unprecedented mass scale. The Nazis killed millions with poison gas in concentration camps, in addition to shooting people indiscriminately in the streets. Theirs was the unbridled carnage of war. It was a war that Hitler hastened to start and expand, and it ultimately involved the wider world. In the end, more than the six million Jews were exterminated, and millions of Christians and other undesirables in Germany and throughout Europe were mercilessly killed, while tens of millions of soldiers fought and millions of other citizens collaborated in the war effort.

Yet in the midst of German society, even as the country was totally engulfed in the expression of the Culture of Death known as World War II, a brave Culture of Life arose. Deitrich Bonhoeffer, a Lutheran pastor, together with his brother-in-law and a number of German generals, conspired to overthrow and kill Hitler. Unfortunately, they were caught and executed. And their was but one of several such attempts.

In China, **Mao** rose to power with the intent of “reforming” his country with his own brand of communism, called **Maoism**. He took his peasants on a march, killing millions that were in his way, and proceeded to control and manage everybody’s life. As happens in all systems that aim to destroy life, Mao soon found that he needed to take another step to eliminate whatever was left of Chinese culture, including many of the Communist leaders he had cultivated. He called this

process **Mao's Cultural Revolution**, complete with exiles, imprisonments, demotions, and executions. Its hallmark was the public humiliation of leaders, who were shackled and marched in the streets and shown on television.

Pol Pot brought his cultural revolution to Cambodia toward the end of the Vietnam War. Though he himself had been educated in France, he decreed that the primary goal of the revolution was to eliminate any hint of the French culture in Cambodia, language and all, and kill everybody who endorsed it. To accomplish that goal, he used—what else—death; thus, the infamous “killing fields” of his scourge.

Osama Bin Laden, a rich Saudi Arabian Muslim, went to Afghanistan to rid it of the Russians and the Communist culture they intended to impose on that land. Together with native Afghan Muslims (later known as the Taliban), he decided to eliminate one culture, communism, and replace it with another, jihadism. He and his cohorts needed to utilize death for their purposes and easily took up the type of jihad that the prophet Muhammed had used: the spread of Islam “by the sword.” They reintroduced the motivating reward for the fighter, the “Muhajed,” by guaranteeing that his death would bring him entry to paradise, where he would be entertained forever by more than seventy virgins.

Bin Laden's jihad succeeded in defeating communism, so, he likely asked himself, why not go all the way? He had an impoverished, isolated country on his

hands, which made it possible for him and the Talibani to revert to the time of Muhammed and the Caliphs that followed him, introduce all the old religious laws (“sharia”) over Afghanistan, and embark on a global campaign to convert the world to Islam. This time, however, instead of the sword they could use bombs—human bombs (shaheeds). Training camps were established, and cell phones and the Internet were employed for communication. The wider world was providing them with enough trouble spots and enough poverty to exploit to their advantage, along with lax frontiers that made it possible to infiltrate and subvert other nations. Bin Laden and company had no need for a huge army and sophisticated weapons for this violent revolution. It was enough to recruit young and, yes, educated and wealthy prospective shaheeds, put bombs around their waists, and explode them among the most innocent of civilians. The purpose was to terrorize and bring about submission, the literal meaning of the word *Islam*. This strategy for revolution needed a big bang. And for that purpose, nothing less would do than to attack the most prominent symbols of U.S. power: the buildings at its financial, military, and political core, such as the World Trade Towers in New York and the Pentagon and perhaps the White House or the Capitol Building in Washington. This effort was meticulously planned and carried out in the horrific attacks of September 11, 2001.

This **Terrorism-Propelled Revolution** is still under way, but like the previous revolutions, it is now killing mostly its own people, Muslims in the Middle East and beyond.

Counterposed to the six cultural revolutions discussed thus far, with all their catastrophic effects, is the exceptional—and highly instructive—example presented by the **American Cultural Revolution** of the 1960s. What made this revolution unique was the fact that it did not resort to the use of death as its tool for implementation. In the sixties, the United States was in the middle of a war in a distant land, Vietnam, a war that seemed endless and a “quagmire.” The “light at the end of the tunnel” that the U.S. president was promising seemed elusive if not ephemeral. Each day, dead young soldiers in the thousands were brought back in black body bags. The victims of this carnage were by and large draftees, non-college men who were called up to serve beginning at age eighteen. And that fact in itself presented a major problem, for the Vietnam War was primarily fought by those who could not afford to avoid the draft by enrolling in college or graduate studies. (Of course, some who had completed their college education or dropped out of school were also recruited.) They were citizens of a democratic country whose elected legislative and executive leaders had freely decided on the war and how it was to be conducted. The reason for fighting the war was ostensibly to

vanquish the Communist ideology and culture in the Far East and prevent its spread to the region, like the fall of a row of dominoes—thus, the “domino theory.”

The growing teenagers of the era were watching the dead soldiers returning home in bags, and the males among them were thinking that in a year or so, they too would be drafted and shipped to Vietnam to die for a cause they could not understand, much less believe in. Facing that predicament, they became the undrafted soldiers of the American Cultural Revolution.

The revolution took shape gradually and spontaneously, without any one person or group or ideology to guide it. There were, however, closeted Communists, antiwar activists, pacifists, and conscientious objectors feeding it. Before long, anarchists stepped forward and began to lead the revolt. Since it was a democratic country that was responsible for the seemingly endless war in Southeast Asia, all the established institutions were themselves caught up in the fog of war. If the young people wanted to reverse that untenable situation, it seemed, they would have to uproot all the established centers of power in their country in an “antiestablishment” campaign. All holders of power—parents, teachers, religious leaders, police, soldiers who were drafted, elected officials, and the media that were supporting them—had to be questioned, defied, degraded, and despised. All the rules, the customs, and the mores of the establishment had to be challenged and cast aside with nonviolent means, such as sit-ins, demonstrations,

and other acts of civil disobedience. The cadre of revolutionaries developed a new dress code (torn jeans), a new language (“hippy” and “groovy”), and a new sexual behavior (make love, not war). They demanded the power to have a say in their education, choose their recreational drugs (marijuana, LSD), and engage in many other active but nonviolent means of resistance. There was some physical destruction of property and some burning, but such actions were contained.

Although the **American Cultural Revolution** had no central leaders, it had the most widespread participation, mostly among the nation’s youth. In essence, it was a revolution carried out by adolescents with adolescent behavior. These revolutionaries wanted to change one condition, the war, and amazingly enough, they succeeded. They compelled the respected TV commentators and the elected officials across the land to withdraw their support from the war and end it. The Tet Offensive, which the North Vietnamese forces launched against American and South Vietnamese troops, was judged by the military leaders who conducted that war as a military failure on the part of the Communists. However, the TV images that were sent home to the United States, graphically depicting the extensive damage wrought by the action, were used by the cultural revolutionaries to recast the offensive as an American defeat. And since the civilians controlled the military, they responded to the revolution of the young and forced an end to the war and withdrawal of the American troops. It would be instructive to contrast this

nonviolent revolution to end the Vietnam War with the deadly Russian Revolution that was aimed at ending Russia's participation in World War I.

This American revolution was unique not just by the absence of known organized leaders but also by the lack of ideology behind it. It destroyed a culture to achieve a goal (ending a war) but did not provide any substitute culture to replace it. This may have been a mixed blessing. Ideology would likely have caused destruction of life, but without proposing a thought-out system to replace the dislodged culture, this revolution left a cultural vacuum that is yet to be filled.

The **cultural vacuum** created by the revolution and the adolescent nature of the rebellion had a number of unintended consequences. One interesting example is seen in the makeup of today's elite society. A small number of the young rebels have risen to occupy, as middle-aged or older adults, important positions, yet they are still behaving like adolescents. One such high position, the presidency of the United States, was occupied by an ex-cultural revolutionary, and on his watch, Osama Bin Laden declared war on America. True to form, the president followed, faithfully and literally, the old dictum of "make love, not war" in response.

Some might take exception to the preceding observations. This American revolution, like all others before it, had its followers attributing lofty values and principles that any questioning of its motives and results would be considered as

wrong, if not insulting. Nevertheless, that revolution left us with many other lessons to be learned, lessons not within the scope of this writing.

Relevant to the subject of life, the American Cultural Revolution produced an important albeit unintended result—advancing the permissibility of taking one’s own life. There is a common thread in human behavior that civilized society and all religions recognize. Intrinsic to human nature is a tendency to do evil to oneself and others. For that reason, societies set up sanctions, admonitions, and prohibitions against undesirable behavior through a system of taboos. Religions and civil codes of conduct have realized that certain forbidden behaviors give pleasure to the persons engaged in them and would require a system of prohibition to restrain them. Committing suicide, stealing, murdering, and sexual assault are examples of bad deeds that society proscribes against, with special emphasis on protecting children, women, and elderly. It has been commonly observed that in any prohibited behavior, once the line of taboo is crossed by loosening the code of conduct or by justifying and encouraging it, access becomes limitless and its destructiveness rises to outrageous levels.

During the American Cultural Revolution, in the process of changing norms and defying authority, suicide, once prohibited by religions, societal norms, and even law (a person attempting suicide could be considered a felon under the laws in some states), was reframed as a matter of choice. Voices were raised by cultural

revolutionaries to reverse the societal taboo on suicide, stating that individuals were entitled to do whatever they wished with their own lives. A notable psychiatrist, Dr. Szaaz, even publicly advocated that suicide should be an option available to any patient. In reality, of course, all individuals face difficult situations in life that at times trigger despondency and a wish to kill oneself. But when the social mores and religious and legal prohibitions were removed, so too was an important psychological deterrent, thus increasing the incidence of suicide.

The effect of this permission to take one's own life has spread over time, to allow the unthinkable to happen. We hear of parents of killing their children, children killing their parents, husbands killing loved wives, and wives killing husbands not because of a psychotic illness but because of other emotions and factors as trivial as inconvenience. A good example occurred early in January 2009 when a husband in California killed his wife and five children and then himself because of financial woes. When we consider the foci of Culture of Death in America, this is one area that must be addressed.

Another focus of the Culture of Death in the United States is the "no-snitch" code imposed by gangs in some neighborhoods. Most of these neighborhoods happen to be composed of poor blacks, and gangs of the same race rule them. According to the code, if a mother sees her son or daughter killed by gang members, she is forbidden, under threat of death, to report it to the police. In this

law-abiding country, then, gangs are deciding to terrorize and overtake neighborhoods with a Culture of Death. The men in these neighborhoods are not likely to do something decisive to reverse this Culture of Death. (Recall that when Bill Cosby tried to draw attention to the lawless behavior by young blacks, he was criticized by other black leaders who were more interested in portraying even the victimizing blacks as victims themselves and blaming white society for it.) But a woman such as Oprah Winfrey actually *could* do something to reverse the Culture of Death if she put her mind to it.

The other country trying to preserve life during war is Israel. Since its birth, the country has been in a state of war, with a number of major flare-ups interspersed with periods of low-level hostilities. Of course, as usual in our world, both parties to the conflict see themselves as the victims and describe their own actions as defensive and justified. For their own reasons, the people of Israel, with their system of government, chose to adopt a Culture of Life in their day-to-day existence. In discussing the Israeli situation here, I do not mean to imply the rightness of Israel's cause in contrast to that of its opponents, nor do I intend to judge all Israeli actions as humane and totally life-promoting. Rather, I simply describe the ways in which a Culture of Life can be expressed even under a state of unremitting violence.

The scope of medical science, research, and creative products presented by Israel to the world is disproportionately large given the size of the country, the extent of its natural resources, and the its population numbers. In addition, many self-appointed Israeli civilians champion human right causes and monitor them throughout the world, and volunteer activists inject themselves into military checkpoints to observe and protest unnecessary humiliation and difficulties at these locations. They are allowed to protest on the spot if they see the young Israeli soldiers causing harm to innocent civilians passing through the checkpoints. Israeli lawyers volunteer to take to the Supreme Court cases involving actions taken by their government that they consider unjust. Israeli Arabs, members of the Knesset (parliament) are free to debate the government and to refuse to stand for the singing of the Israeli national anthem because they object to its wording. Young Israeli men and women are drafted into the army for two to three years of service at the age of 18. After their discharge, some choose to dedicate their lives to their education. A large number of them, however, choose to broaden their horizons beyond the claustrophobic existence in the state of Israel. The most popular destinations to date have been the Far East and South American. The simple life of the people in those regions of the world seems to be appealing, perhaps because in those areas, the migrating Israelis can observe life lived in a raw, uncomplicated way. Apart from the young people of Israel, the rest of the nation's citizens are the

most traveled people of the world on a per capita basis. It is as if they want to know how life is being lived everywhere on the planet.

This love of life is abundantly evident for all to see. By contrast, the Israelis' opponents in the ongoing conflict, the Palestinians, have chosen to immerse themselves in a Culture of Death to the fullest degree. Ironically, the Israelis' love of life has had the sad effect of encouraging violence against them. It has indicated a point of vulnerability that their opponents have countered with a "we love death more than you love life" conviction—and put that conviction into practice. This death versus life strategy has been the most immutable obstacle to reducing the violence and moving toward peace because the motivation of saving the life of one's own people is inverted. Mahmood Darwish, a Palestinian poet, is considered the soul and heart of the Palestinian people. On his passing in August 2008, he was mourned by all Palestinians, and flags were flown at half-mast in all the Palestinian territories. Darwish wrote about the pain and the pride of his people. In his famous poem "Identity Card," he wrote:

I do not hate people

And I am not an occupier

But if I am driven to hunger

The flesh of the occupier will be my food

What he did not say is that if the hunger is brought about not by the occupier but by the Culture of Death, the people will consume their own flesh.

In his last years, Darwish wrote with sadness and pain about the Palestinians who have been doing far worse harm and destruction to themselves than anybody else. In one of his moving poems about the love of the land, he wrote that “Palestine is worth living for.” A popular Israeli song of recent years chants about the Israeli land:

A land that we love—

A land we are born in—

A land we live in—

Come what may.

Significantly, neither Mahmood Darwish nor the Israeli songwriter had suggested death for their beloved land. Rather, **each wanted to celebrate his land with Life.**

BRINGING LIFE TO LIFE

Elements disrupting, degrading, and destroying life are all around us: wars that may be inevitable, true and lasting peace unattainable, ruinous acts of nature uncontrollable, diseases ineradicable, poverty interminable, and accidents not completely avoidable. Faced with these predicaments, should we give up and let “fate” take us where it may? The answer is a resounding no. Life is too precious for intelligent humans to take this defeatist attitude. Helpless animals may have to,

but they, too, depend on our intelligence, ingenuity, and creativity to protect them as we go about the task of preserving our lives.

The Culture of Life, where it exists, has already provided many measures of **affirmative attention** that need to be continued and enhanced. Developed nations lead the way, and the developing nations are beginning to catch up. Philanthropists have formed foundations with funds directed to tackle diseases, famine, and other problems around the world. Nongovernmental organizations of different shades and colors pursue social and environmental projects, locally and internationally. Large worldwide organizations such as the Red Cross have taken on life-preserving tasks in war and in peace, while Doctors without Borders focuses on medical missions. Other governmentally supported organizations such as the United Nations and international competitions in sports (soccer, tennis, running, etc.), in science, literature (the Nobel Prize), and other arenas are continuously making their contributions. The Olympics, started by the Greeks centuries ago, continues to channel the competitiveness of nations into sports instead of wars. Although this approach has been polluted, at times, by the injection of politics into the games, it still serves a life-related purpose. In recent years, the leaders of the wealthy nations, the G-8, have been meeting annually to promote economic and cultural advancement to the rest of the world. These and

other affirmative attentions to the needs of people everywhere are to be encouraged, multiplied, and blessed.

The ultimate challenge is to vanquish the Culture of Death, which remains a major destroyer of life today, as in the past. Although that culture is reversible, the task has not received the attention of the humanitarians, much less the governments, of the world. Institutions including the family, education, religion, and the media have easily fallen prey to the purveyors of death, almost at will in too many areas in the world. The most common condition that introduces a “love of death” to the people is when a conflict turns violent. In such a situation, at least one party to the conflict will resort to advocating death and stifling life.

Today, most of the violence in our conflicts is carried out through terrorist activities. The terrorists’ chosen targets are innocent civilians, for the goal is to instill terror. **Terrorism is a disproportionate weapon** wielded by one or more individuals against the populous, and even large and well-equipped armies are stymied by it.

This weapon of terror becomes operative by a culture that promotes the love of death. Some individuals, among them learned intellectuals, and sovereign countries, including members of the United Nations, justify terrorism as the “freedom fighter’s” legitimate weapon. Yet there is no evidence of any place where freedom was gained by the use of terror. On the contrary, wherever terror

has been introduced, it had ended by killing the very people who engage in it. By contrast, there are myriad examples of resistance having been carried out successfully without purposefully targeting civilians. Some individuals have succeeded with nonviolent resistance. Terrorism, therefore, becomes **an instrument of death for the sake of death**: there are no “root causes” for it. Although terrorists often cite a litany of causes to justify their use of terror, the causes are never achieved because terrorism destroys its people before it reaches their goals can be reached. **All those—individuals, organizations, or nations—who take part in it, support it, excuse it, and condone it are equally responsible.** If anything could be called morally evil, terrorism is. In the world of warfare, destructive weapons are necessarily developed and used. But there are weapons whose uses are condemned (or should be) by the world community and outlawed by international law as crimes against humanity. Such weapons include poison gas, biological weapons, and atomic weapons. These are inanimate weapons. Terrorism is an animate weapon of the human type. The United Nations tried to include terrorism in its list of outlawed weapons but failed to agree on a definition of terrorism itself. Some countries would not ban terrorism because they harbor its perpetrators or because they are intimidated by them.

Conflict Resolution

In order to unravel the violence from the violent conflicts, we need to look at the ways those conflicts have been resolved in the past. Historically, there have been three recognized outcomes to violent conflicts:

1. **One party to the conflict overwhelms, defeats, or eliminates the other, and thus the conflict is resolved.**
2. **Hostilities become protracted, sometimes punctuated by intense flare-ups, and thus the conflict continues.**
3. **Negotiations and mediation are pursued.** Such attempts, in the midst of protracted violence, have not generally produced resolution of the conflict. But they serve a purpose of bringing hope to the contending parties and a sense of caring to the goodwill mediators, and thus **conflict lingers in a state of frustration.**

To these three factors, I will add a fourth:

4. The **Exhaustion Factor** sets in. After years and perhaps even generations, when all of the approaches listed here have been attempted, a sense of weariness sets in on both sides. At that point, there will be a readiness to find a compromise and, more important, to remove the violence from the equation. But only women can bring about this latter result, for men's hormones bind them tightly to

concepts of “honor,” to aggressiveness, and to violence. To shrink back from aggression, turn away from a fight, or act without “honor” would be unmanly for men in positions of leadership, and they would therefore be deemed undeserving of their commanding role. (Golda Meir, the late prime minister of Israel, was described as the only person with “balls” in a cabinet of men. Margaret Thatcher, Britain’s ex-prime minister, was described in the same masculine terms.)

Ancient Greek history provides us with a clear example of women who were able to end the wars between Sparta and Athena after years of bloody conflict.

A more recent compelling example came from in Ireland in the current century. The violent conflict between the Protestants and Catholics of North Ireland has taken thousands of lives. It continued for many generations, during which countless mediations were attempted. The most notable modern effort was made in 1998 and involved President Bill Clinton of the United States and John Mitchell. With great pride, they produced a political compromise in what was called the “Good Friday Agreement.” Yet this agreement, which surpassed all previous ones, ultimately failed to produce the most important result of all, the laying down of arms.

It was clear at that time that both sides had reached the point when the Exhaustion Factor kicked in. But a decade later, two Irish women, Betty Williams

and Mairead Corrigan, sat down together for lunch and decided “enough is enough.” They founded the Northern Ireland Peace Movement (later renamed Community of Peace People), embarked on a campaign to halt the violence, engineered the disarmament of the Irish Republican Army (IRA), and went on to win the Nobel Prize for Peace. In the spring of 2008, a unified government took effect where, with no military militia in the picture.

Another example of women forcing an end to violence took place in the year 2000. But in this case, while the women succeeded in their goal, their action had a puzzling after-effect. Israel had occupied a zone in southern Lebanon to prevent incursions of terrorists (mostly displaced Palestinians) into north Israel. Hezbollah, a Lebanese Shiite militia that is backed and armed by Syria and Iran, took it upon itself to fight the occupying Israeli forces and expel them from Lebanon. In the process, Israeli convoys patrolling the area were subjected to ambushes, resulting in casualties. Yet the manly leaders on both sides were not about to quit. A group in Israel that became known as **Four Mothers** got together and mounted a campaign to stop the loss of life of their soldier sons. They argued that Israel had no territorial claim in southern Lebanon and that the country was strong enough to defend itself if attacked. Their call was adopted by an Israeli politician, Ehud Barak, who was running for election at that time. After being elected prime minister, he proceeded to implement his election promise to the Four Mothers and

its proponents. He first tried to negotiate unconditional withdrawal for peace with Hezbollah and the Lebanese government, but in this he found no takers. He then decided to withdraw quickly and precipitously, leaving many of the Israeli fortifications and some equipment behind. For all intents and purposes, the disengagement was carried through, and no more Lebanese or Israeli soldiers were being killed. The Four Mothers had accomplished their mission.

A tragic turn of events unexpectedly occurred at that point. As the Israelis were withdrawing, the Hezbollah forces, not the Lebanese Army, were occupying the region, proclaiming victory and taking credit for “expelling” the powerful Israeli Army. Yasser Arafat, head of the Palestinian Authority, had just rejected the comprehensive Barak/Clinton peace offer. As he watched TV coverage of Israel’s hurried troop withdrawal and Hezbollah’s triumphant march, he publicly declared, “Now I know how to deal with the Israelis.” The lesson he took from this was that the Israelis loved life *too much*. All that he needed to achieve his goals was to activate the love of death that was already in place and send waves of terrorist attacks into the Jewish state. That resulted in four years of gruesome deaths among Israeli civilians.

On the Lebanese side, Hezbollah, after fortifying southern Lebanon and arming itself with short-range missiles, provoked Israel in an attack in 2006, precipitating the “Second Lebanese War.” The war caused extensive damage to

Lebanese buildings, roads, bridges, and other infrastructure. On the Israeli side, the Hezbollah's inaccurate missiles succeeded in deeply frightening the Israelis, forcing thousands of civilians to leave their homes and go to safe areas in the south. A few civilians, some of them Arab-Israelis, were killed by the rain of missiles, and the Israeli forces lost over 100 soldiers. On the Lebanese side, besides the thousands of displaced people who chose to escape the war, over 1,000 fighters and "collateral damage" civilians were killed. Nasserallah, the head of the Hezbollah party, said at the start of the war that if he lost 10 men for every 1 Israeli man lost, he would call it a victory. He got his wish and celebrated victory when a cease-fire was called by the Security Council of the United Nations. The resolution also called for disarming Hezbollah, a provision that was not complied with. Instead, further arms were smuggled to Hezbollah, augmenting its sense of victory and preparing the ground for future terrorism.

Ironically, the war activities pursued by the Palestinians and the Lebanese were motivated by the unilateral peace demanded by the Four Mothers organization. This disastrous result stemmed from the fact that the so-called peace action was a one-sided effort on the part of Israeli women. Across the border, Lebanese women were not asking for peace from their men. Instead, they were sent out to celebrate Hezbollah's victory in the newly vacated areas of their towns. The lesson here is that **it takes only one to start a war but two to make peace.**

THE ROAD TO LIFE

The **Road to Life** is tortuous, bumpy, and endless. It requires paving, straightening, widening, and constant maintenance. All humanity has the duty to build it, make it safe, and march on it.

Leaders of the March

The women of the world should be entrusted to keep the **Road to Life** clear and spearhead the march of humanity on it. There are compelling reasons why women are necessarily needed to take on this critical leadership role. They are uniquely qualified for a host of reasons:

- Everybody on earth is born to a mother and owes his or her life to that woman.
- The vast majority of people have one or more other loving women in their lives: sister, aunt, grandmother, or wife.
- Women in general are endowed with strong nurturing instincts.
- Throughout the ages and at present, women have been oppressed, used, abused, victimized, and made to feel useless. Their contributions to the protection and enrichment of their own lives and the lives of their loved ones have been restricted and at times stilled, resulting in a huge net loss to humanity.

- As the **two Irish women** prove in a current context, women can succeed in stopping the killing when men have repeatedly failed.
- Men failed miserably in Rwanda in central Africa: they directly carried out or indirectly allowed a genocide to take place. World leaders proved ineffectual as the horrific events unfolded on their watch. Kofi Anan, an African himself, was secretary-general of the United Nations at the time, and President Clinton apologized to the Rwandans and the world for not doing anything to stop the genocide. The women of Rwanda have now taken charge and are doing an exemplary job of building a **structure of life** for their people.

At the same time, however, men do have a vital role to play in the movement for life. Their biological and masculine identity equips them with the instincts and abilities to be the **protectors and providers for life**. It is their duty to fulfill that role consistently and faithfully, for the sake of their mothers if not for themselves or their other loved ones. And this is a very feasible proposition. In the development of science and technology, for instance, each day brings evidence of the ways in which men's creative genius can thrive when they are not trapped in a Culture of Death.

Vehicle for the Road to Life

To carry out the **life mission**, a worldwide movement must be promulgated. It should be organized and run by women and be universal in scope and nonpolitical in nature. Known as the **World Women For Life (WWFL)**, it should function under the motto **Celebrate and Protect Life**.

Translating this idea into action has led us to a corner of the world where a perfect start can be made. In the midst of terror, death, and destruction lies a slice of a nation called Iraqi Kurdistan, the only Muslim nation on earth that has proved able to maintain a Culture of Life. Kurdistan, the land of the Kurds, was divided after World War I between Iraq, Turkey, Iran, and Syria. Over time, Iraqi Kurdistan was occupied and oppressed by different Iraqi rulers, and just decades ago, its people were gassed by Saddam Hussein. Throughout their existence, as part of Iraq, the Kurds had maintained resistance forces in order to fight for their freedom. At no time, however, did they attack civilians or teach and train terrorists. From 1991 to 2003, between the two Gulf Wars, the skies over the Kurds in the north of Iraq and the Shiite Arabs in the south, while still under Saddam's control, were controlled by American and British air forces. This protection allowed a limited amount of freedom in both areas. But the Kurdish north decided to maintain a Culture of Life for its people, while the Shiite south allowed Iran to

bring the Culture of Death to its inhabitants. As a result, life has flourished in the north whereas people in the south have been stifled and insecure.

It was fortuitous that the movement to affirm a Culture of Life planted its first roots in Iraqi Kurdistan. In cooperation with this writer and with the dedicated and impassioned efforts of Dr. Saman Shali, president of the National Kurdish Congress of North America, the first WWFL organization was founded. A group of capable and highly motivated women of different religions and nationalities formed the nucleus of the WWFL organizational structure in Iraqi Kurdistan. They decided on the goals they wanted to accomplish, and they are now asking for the assistance and cooperation of other women around the world in pursuing their noble vision.

That **vision** incorporates the following goals:

- Each country in the world should have its own chapter of WWFL. Its own women leaders would decide on their programs and run their activities.
- Each chapter should be responsible for its own funding. It may ask for assistance from the others.
- Cooperation is to be initiated between the chapters as they are formed.

- After a number of chapters are established, conferences will be held to decide on one central structure for maintaining coordination and cooperation.
- All women-run nongovernmental organizations (NGO) that promote any aspect of life will be invited to assist and, in turn, will be assisted by the WWFL.
- NGOs that are not exclusively run by women are also invited to join in this cooperative endeavor.
- Planning information and capacity-building activities such as:
 - Developing education and skill-building programs for women
 - Establishing a resource center on women's issues and solutions to violence
 - Conducting public relations campaigns and demonstrations against violence
 - Lobbying for policies and programs that help women

The idea is to erect a worldwide umbrella under which a network of wide-ranging life-enhancing activities can be interconnecting and enforcing each other. For example, the Iraqi women may one day want to sponsor a demonstration of women who were made widows, together with their fatherless children, to protest and call for an end to the violence that caused their condition. Through Websites

and Internet linkages, they may call on other widows elsewhere to stage solidarity demonstrations with them. From time to time, conferences and workshops may be organized to explore and promote WWFL, and the participation of women across the globe may be asked for. The possibilities for cooperation and progress are endless and will depend on the needs and desires of the different member groups.

The primary goal of the WWFL movement is to reverse the Culture of Death wherever it exists and within all the institutions that support it, while simultaneously encouraging the growth of the Culture of Life as needed.

The Culture of Death has infiltrated most of the Muslim communities around the world. The countries most seriously affected are in Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa. The pain inherent in this Culture of Death is felt most intensely in Iraq, Palestine, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Algeria, and Saudi Arabia. Yet there are signs of awakening in some of these countries.

The present and likely future trend suggests that terrorists' activity will target more Muslims than non-Muslims the world over. The Western and the other non-Muslim nations may endure occasional and perhaps even spectacular terrorist attacks in the future, but those nations will be able to absorb them. The Islamic people, by contrast, will continue to be helpless victims unless the terror is dealt with in a comprehensive and decisive manner.

This trend toward inwardly-directed terrorism is gradually and belatedly being recognized by the targeted Muslim countries. Algeria was the first to seriously and forcefully fight terrorism. Only lately, however, have Algerian leaders started to introduce life-enhancing programs to their population—measures that promote the Culture of Life.

Pakistan had undertaken a policy of fighting terrorism but carried it out halfheartedly and unsuccessfully. Pakistani leaders tried a negotiated agreement with the tribal leaders who resided along the border with Afghanistan and harbored terrorists. The government officials agreed to stop the raids on the terror cells and offered financial aid to the tribes. They expected, in return, that the terrorists would be frozen out of action and their movement curtailed. But instead, they found that their efforts had created a terror zone that provided a safe haven and free movement for terrorists on both sides of the border. The result has been an increase in attacks inside Pakistan and in Afghanistan. In making their agreement with the tribal groups along the border, the government was like a doctor treating a person with cancer by feeding the body, hoping that a strong body would overwhelm the cancer. What the good doctor should have done instead was to remove the diseased tissue first and then strengthen the body. The least the Pakistani government should have done was to ask the tribal leaders to stop teaching jihadism and death in their religious schools, the madrasas.

The Iraqis had their fill after experiencing the devastating effects of the Culture of Death. The Sunni “insurgents” who initially allied themselves with the terrorists have finally realized that they are, in fact, being victimized by them, and they have decided to uproot the terrorists and eradicate them. Unfortunately, the Shiites of Iraq have yet to come to the same conclusion and clear their communities of the militia-terrorism and the Culture of Death that was imported from Iran and imposed on Iraq.

Afghanistan was largely able to rid itself of the Taliban/Bin Laden terror with the help of the United States and the NATO countries. The dark cloud of the Culture of Death was lifted from most of the country. Tragically, however, it was allowed to linger in the near and far corners of the land. Terror has made a comeback lately, and once again it threatens to engulf the whole country.

In Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Afghanistan, one important aspect of the “war on terror” seems to have been grossly neglected, if not completely overlooked. Fighting the agents of terror and eliminating their supportive structure is a necessary but insufficient step. The essential final step, still to be accomplished, is to destroy the Culture of Death that terrorism imposes on a people and simultaneously replace it with a Culture of Life. This reversal of cultures must be undertaken seriously and aggressively. All the key institutions of society—home, school, media, religion, and government—must take active and consistent

steps. They must renounce death as a value for any cause and extol the value of life. They must explain and promote all of the advantages inherent in a Culture of Life. And they must protect it at every level. Educational measures should be accompanied by substantial life-building projects. None of the suffering countries listed earlier has pursued a policy to change the culture and make it an important goal in its war on terror; none has devoted the necessary attention, energy, and effort to achieve that reversal.

In May 2007, Queen Noor of Jordan exhorted women everywhere to raise their voices on behalf of the triumph of life over death: “Millions of mothers from Nablus to New York and from Baghdad to Beersheba must begin to find common cause in peace and work together to give their quiet power a louder voice on behalf of husbands, sons, daughters and wider family. Their moral fabric and resolve is the service and foundation of not only civic but human well-being.” Similar voices of women connected to the rulers of the Gulf States are being raised, and echoes in response have begun to be heard throughout the wider Arab world. In an unprecedented development, Bahrain recently sent the first non-Muslim woman as its ambassador to the United States. Ambassador Huda has been a leader in supporting women’s causes and her appointment is a harbinger of changes to come.

Incidentally, before Hamas took complete control of Gaza, the BBC reported a demonstration of women in Gaza denouncing the suicidal terror. Hamas has since silenced those voices and caused the Culture of Death to reign supreme. In spite of that, voices calling for a change in the culture are still being raised in the Palestinian territories, waiting to be heard.

But how, one might ask, can a Muslim woman, who has been subjected to a tradition of repression, ever be able to raise her voice, much less to connect with other women? The answer lies in the Internet and the incredible linkages it now permits. Computers are widely available in many homes, some even in the remotest places in the world. And for many Muslim women, the computer room is the only place where they are not subject to the control of husbands, fathers, or brothers. Once connections are made, the word of mouth will take over.

A related question may also be raised: How is it possible for a Muslim woman to affect a cultural change (from death to life) without being silenced by the adult males in her family? The answer lies in the fact that in the Islamic culture, mothers have almost exclusive power in the bonding and shaping that occurs in the first five years of their children's lives.

In forming the nucleus of the WWFL organization in Iraqi Kurdistan, the founders identified promising possibilities for reaching out to women in important non-Arab Islamic countries: Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan. One of the group's

organizers is a Turkish Kurd; a second has been educated in Iran and has knowledge of and contacts with numerous Iranians. And the fact that the mother of the late Benazir Bhutto, who was assassinated in a terrorist attack, was Kurdish opens up even wider possibilities. Benazir's surviving son and other members of her family can be contacted and asked to establish a chapter in Pakistan in Benazir's memory.

Central and Eastern Africa present a dire situation. Five million people have perished in the Congo in recent years. Death and maiming, mostly in the form of rape and disfigurement, continue unchecked daily. Somalia has been in a continuous civil war, fueled by Al-Qaeda terrorists. Hundreds of thousands of Darfurians were subjected to death, displacement, starvation, and rape by Muslims attacking fellow Muslims; the Darfur situation was designated as genocide by the United States. Yet neither the United Nations, the African Union, or the Muslim nations near or far seem to be willing or able to bring an end to the destruction.

There are women-based NGOs operating in the Congo and among Darfurians. Rwanda's women's organizations have in place a working structure for healing and building. These groups could all be brought together, reinforced, and enlarged under a **Movement for Life**. The needs are overwhelming, and the possibility of remedial actions is abundant. The time has come for the women of the world to wake up and take charge.

LIFE MANIFESTO: WHAT IT IS AND IS NOT

The Manifesto declares that life is supreme. Its protection, preservation, and enrichment stand above any other consideration under the sun. Life is a value that transcends every other. And it is not restricted to any one time, place, or being. The intelligent beings of this earth are charged with the protection and enhancement of life.

The Life Manifesto is not antiwar because war is sometimes unavoidable: though always undesirable, it is at times truly necessary. The Life Manifesto consequently does not demand an end to war but rather demands that wars, when they must be fought, be conducted in a manner that protects the lives of innocents and minimizes the deaths of combatants.

(As an interesting aside, note the way in which the language we use in daily life often betrays the sad truth of the inevitability of wars. We declare war on diseases, on illiteracy, and on a host of societal problems. Several decades ago, for instance, President Lyndon Johnson famously called for a “war on poverty.” Unfortunately, studies have shown that no significant gains were made in the ensuing years; apparently, poverty has won that war.)

To better frame the dimensions of the **Movement for Life**, as incorporated in the Life Manifesto, it may be helpful to summarize what it is *not*.

* **It is not political** because politics would turn it into a contested value and trivialize it.

* **It is not ideological** because there is already an ideology extolling a Culture of Death (jihadism), intent on destroying any ideology advocating life.

* **It is not religious.** While all religions extol life, their zealous followers have, time and again, used their beliefs to destroy even their own lives.

* **It is not an anti- or pro-abortion issue.** Abortion is a complex subject. It has been highly politicized in the United States, where each side asserts that its own position truly advances life. Entering into that argument would only detract from the main issue of preserving life as best we can.

* **It is not a peace issue.** Surprise, surprise. Indeed, the meaning and the process of peace have been corrupted and demagogued to death. The chances of achieving peace in a raging or stalemated war are slim to negligible. At any one time, whenever two parties negotiate peace, they bring two different definitions of the peace that they are working on. Issues of justice, honor, bravery, and victimhood are often brought into the picture, leaving no possibility for achieving the reconciliation needed for peace. Ironically, sometimes **peace leads to war.**

Example: Neville Chamberlain, the British prime minister, negotiated with Hitler, giving part of Czechoslovakia to Germany; on his return to England, Chamberlain declared triumphantly that he had brought “peace in our time.” We now recognize,

of course, that his “appeasement” agreement actually emboldened Hitler and directly led to the outbreak of World War II. More recently, in the year 2000, the peace offer extended by Ehud Barak, the Israeli prime minister (with the mediation of President Bill Clinton), to Yasser Arafat, the head of the Palestinian Authority, directly led to four years of terrorism and counterterrorism. Earlier, in the same Palestinian/Israeli theater, there was an example of how just starting the peace process could lead to further entanglements. In 1991, a famous handshake took place on the White House lawn in the presence of President Clinton. Yasser Arafat and Israel’s Isaac Rabin and Shimon Peres had just signed the Oslo Accord, an agreement to start the so-called Peace Process. But even though these three men went on to win the Nobel Prize for Peace, they ended up confronting complications and found no peace at all for their warring nations. At no point during the Peace Process activities was an attempt made to reverse or quash the Culture of Death that was raging and intensifying among the Palestinians, causing blood-curdling deaths for the Israelis and retaliation deaths for the Palestinians. Isaac Rabin was assassinated by a young Jewish fanatic because he was negotiating a peace agreement.

Counter intuitively, even today in the year 2009, it seems clear that the more “peace initiatives” are undertaken between the Palestinians and the Israelis, the more distant the peace becomes.

History shows us, though, that an enduring peace *can* be achieved after a war, as was seen with the cessation of hostilities in World War II. **Life-building measures** were introduced to Germany and Europe with the Marshall Plan and to Japan by Douglas MacArthur. They included the introduction of freedom and democracy, the building of the economy and the infrastructure of the destroyed countries, and the promotion of civil rights. The results have been a peaceful coexistence among the European nations and between Japan and its neighbors. Those nations have not engaged in preparation for the next war.

The unfortunate results of a failure to pursue life-building measures can be observed in events transpiring after another famous handshake, witnessed by President Jimmy Carter a decade earlier. Anwar Sadat and Menachem Begin signed a peace treaty between Israel and Egypt. (Egypt was in fact the first Arab state to do so.) Thereupon, the Egyptian president went back to his country and started the process of reversing the Culture of Death. Arches were erected showing pictures of the handshake, with inscriptions underneath reading “No more war” and “Anwar Sadat, Prince of Peace.” Alas, Sadat was assassinated before completing the reversal task by fanatic merchants of death—and only because he sued for peace. One of the planners of the attack was Ayman al-Zawahiri, the right-hand lieutenant of Osama Bin-Laden and the current architect of international terrorism. Removing Sadat from the scene stopped the actions needed to complete

the reversal of the Culture of Death. And as a consequence, Egypt continued both to breed terrorists and to be attacked by them. The relations with Israel were frozen in a “cold peace” that deprived Egypt of the benefits of free commerce and development, the true fruits of peace.

There is, however, a promising aspect of peace that should be highlighted. The message is clear: **preemptive peace is possible and doable**. Whenever conflict emerges and turns violent, the Culture of Death must be reversed. And if it a violent conflict has not yet started, it should be prevented from developing. Under these conditions, people of goodwill can devote their efforts to mediation and conflict resolution.

* **It is not antiwar**, as explained earlier.

* **It is not against killings**. Here again, reality indicates that killings will keep happening and thus that there should be laws to deter them and adjudicate punishment for wanton killings. One of the Ten Commandments states “Thou shalt not murder”; it does not say not “kill.” Clearly, God has left it to us to save ourselves.

Humans kill animals for food and sometimes for medical experimentation. For that, specific rules and regulations are established to control the manner of the killing and prescribe the animals subjected to it. Dietary laws in the Islamic

religion (Halal) and the Jewish religion (Kosher) are designed to address this aspect of killing for food.

In the Olympics, which are intended to bring peaceful competition to replace war, archery, fencing, and pistol shooting (all instruments of war) are components of the games. And references to combat are replete in the language of sports: in volleyball, for instance, the unreturned spiking of the ball is called a “kill.”

◆ **It is not pacifism** because total pacifism under all circumstances can lead to the undesired result of suicide.

◆ **It is not a call for masculinizing women or feminizing men**, even though women are being asked to champion life. Each gender has a specific role to fill and a specific ability to demonstrate, though there are overlaps. Both women and the men are asked to do what they can do best to promote life.

Is a Change of Culture Doable?

The wave of awakening that the election of Barack Hussein Obama as president of the United States brought to the people of America provides the answer to this essential question.

For generations, most black Americans absorbed and maintained a culture and self-image of a hated, unequal, discriminated-against minority—as subordinated, second-class citizens of the United States. This sense persisted in spite of significant advances in civil rights laws outlawing discrimination and

promoting affirmative action. And though blacks have held elected and appointed positions at all levels of society—in government, the judiciary, academia, police, military, and private enterprises—black people, with the support of most of their leaders, have nonetheless continued to see themselves as embittered victims, not full, proud, participating citizens of America. This persistent feeling produced a culture that, year after year, sent more young blacks to prison than to college or productive work.

But with the election of Barack Obama, the son of a black African from Kenya and a white American woman, the culture of America's blacks instantly, almost magically changed from exclusion to inclusion, from indifference to pride, and from estranged to belonging.

The swelling sense of pride and belonging was expressed loudly and in many different ways by American blacks from all levels of society and in every corner of the country. This spectacular phenomenon has transformed overnight nearly 15 percent of the population of the United States, the blacks, from apathy to productivity. If this remarkable transformation could happen here, it could, under the right circumstance, happen in any other part of the world as well.

A parallel situation exists in the large Muslim world. A feeling prevails among the masses and many of their leaders that they have been suppressed, oppressed, dominated, and stifled for centuries by occupiers and colonizers, since

the fifteenth-century collapse of the Caliphate and the Arab Empire they had created. They see themselves as dishonored, disrespected, and unappreciated by the non-Muslim world, especially the Western world. These pervasive feelings have been exploited by the jihadists who sprang up in Saudi Arabia and spread across the rest of the world, finding resonance among the rich and the poor, the educated and the illiterate alike. The jihadist solution was simple and easy to understand. They reasoned that the way to gain back the glory of the past was to return to the way the glory was achieved in the first place: they would spread Islam “by the sword.” (The national flag of Saudi Arabia depicts two crossed swords.) Their weapon of choice was terrorism, promoted on the basis of glorifying death to themselves and the nonbelievers with impunity and brutality. Jihadists comprise a minute fraction of the Muslim population, but that population is 1.2 billion worldwide, so their real numbers are nonetheless significant—and worrisome. Beyond that, they are able to recruit followers and influence sympathizers and collaborators. Those who oppose them are intimidated, shamed into submission, and often killed.

Looking at this state of affairs, one might conclude that containing and reversing the Culture of Death is an impossible task. However, the reality in today’s Muslim world suggests a totally different prospect. Most Muslim communities, whether in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East or in European

countries, are free from foreign occupation and colonization, and yet there is widespread suppression, oppression, and death imposed by their rulers and the Culture of Death championed by the jihadists. If someone comes forward with a voice that can be heard and exhorts the world's Muslims to "stand up, dust yourselves off, and start moving," just as President Obama said to the Americans at his inauguration, the Muslim people can occupy their honorable, productive place in the larger world at last.

A GUIDE TO THE PERPLEXED

This Life Manifesto has been derived from self-evident principles:

~It is better to love than to be loved.

~It is better to give than to receive.

~It is better to build than to destroy (except when there is a need to build anew).

~It is better to have order in life than to live in disorder.

~It is better to have faith in a power bigger than one's self than to see one's self as the ultimate power.

~It is better to have freedom than to be enslaved or restricted.

~It is better to gain knowledge than to remain ignorant.

~It is better to be productive, even in the smallest way, than to be idle.

~It is better to be joyful than to be sorrowful.

~It is better to seek relief than to sink in misery.

~It is better to resolve conflicts with dialogue than with guns.

~It is better to sing and pray for peace than to extol jihadism and its heavenly rewards.

~It is better that ambitions of all sorts be pursued peacefully rather than violently.

~It is better to assume that life will always present problems to be solved than to expect nirvana.

~Above all, it is better to acknowledge that all of the above desirables and undesirables coexist rather than to deny them.

In this Manifesto, seeds of ideas and a vision are offered. It is up to others to take those seeds, spread them, plant them, nurture them, cultivate them, reap their fruits, and bring the vision to life.

Disclaimer: This material is the sole property of Dr. David Kazzaz. It is offered free of charge for everyone to read and may be reprinted for personal use. Appropriation of this material, in part or in whole, by any other person or its use in this or any other language for commercial publication is strictly forbidden.

Dr. Kazzaz may be contacted at dlkazzaz@comcast.net.