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# Live encounters

March 2013

Free online magazine from village earth

A FILM BY MARC WIESE

**CAMP 14**  
TOTAL CONTROL ZONE

**Marc Wiese**

**Director - CAMP 14 - Total Control Zone (North Korea)**  
in an exclusive Skype interview with Mark Ulyseas



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Live Encounters is a not-for-profit free online magazine that was started in 2009 in Bali, Indonesia. It showcases some of the best writing from around the world. Civil and human rights activists, animal rights activists, poets, writers, journalists, social workers and more have contributed their time and knowledge for the benefit of the readers of the magazine.

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Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om

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Live  
encounters

March 2013

*"You can chain me, you can torture me, you can even destroy this body, but you will never imprison my mind." - Mahatma Gandhi*

### Dear Readers,

This edition features a cross section of writing that reflects the ground realities which we have to live with everyday.

Father Ivo Coelho, Priest and Philosopher, has written an in depth article exclusively for Live Encounters titled - *The Person, Human and Divine, in India - Richard De Smet's contribution*. This is essential reading for all those who are searching for the answer to the question - *Whom am I?*

The other contributions by Candess Campbell, Chris Hedges, Marc Wiese, Terry McDonagh, Natalie Wood, Human Rights Watch, Rainer Tormin, Randhir Khare and a young photographer from West Bengal, Sourav Jourdar are some of the many facets of humanity that enrich and enlighten those that seek true knowledge.

Since January 2012 Live Encounters has appeared every month bringing you food for thought and introspection. We shall endeavour to continue this free sharing of knowledge through 2013.

Please share this magazine with your family and friends.

*Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om*

**Mark Ulyseas**

Publisher/Editor

*Cover pic of Camp 14 - Total Control Zone © Marc Wiese*

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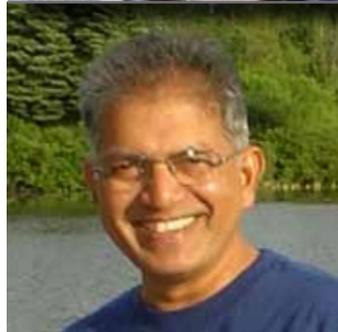
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## Guest Editorial Candess M Campbell

Candess M. Campbell, PhD is an internationally known Intuitive Life Coach, Licensed Mental Health Counselor, Seminar leader, Hypnotherapist and Author. She specializes in assisting others to gain their own personal power and to live a life of abundance, happiness and joy. Early 2012 she will be releasing her book *12 Weeks to Self-Healing: Transforming Pain through Energy Medicine*.

[12 Weeks to Self-Healing: Transforming Pain through Energy Medicine](#)



## The Person, Human and Divine, in India Richard De Smet's contribution Ivo Coelho

Coelho earned his PhD in philosophy from the Gregorian University, Rome. He is Reader in Gnostology and Metaphysics at Divyadaan: Salesian Institute of Philosophy, Nashik, India, and editor of Divyadaan: Journal of Philosophy and Education. Born in 1958 at Mumbai, he specialized in the hermeneutical thought of the Canadian philosopher, theologian and economist Bernard Lonergan. He is the author of *Hermeneutics and Method: The 'Universal Viewpoint' in Bernard Lonergan* (Toronto, 2001) and editor of *Brahman and Person: Essays by Richard De Smet* (Delhi: MLBD, 2010). <http://divyadaan.in>



## The Myth of Human Progress

Chris Hedges - This article was first published on [Truthdig](#)

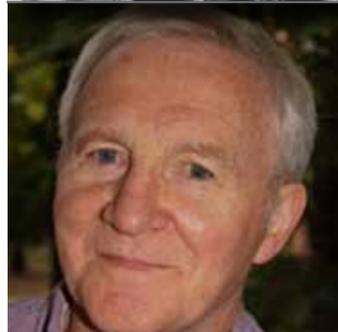
Chris Hedges was a foreign correspondent for the New York Times and was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Explanatory Reporting, and his *War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning* was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award in Nonfiction. Hedges is a senior fellow at the Nation Institute, a columnist for Truthdig, and the Anschutz Distinguished Fellow at Princeton University. He lives in Princeton, New Jersey. <http://www.truthdig.com>



## Marc Wiese, Director, Camp 14 Total Control Zone in an exclusive Skype interview with Mark Ulyseas

Marc Wiese was born in Dortmund, Germany. He has been directing documentaries for television and cinema for over fifteen years. His films include *Death by Delivery*, *Radovan Karadzic: Most Wanted*, *Warkids - Youth in Palestine*, *Kanun - Blood for Honour*, *The Picture of the Napalm Girl*, and *Camp 14 - Total Control Zone*.

[www.camp14-film.com](http://www.camp14-film.com)



## Limbo Terry McDonagh

Irish poet and dramatist, Terry McDonagh has published four collections of poetry; a play; a book of letters, novel and poetry for children. His work has been translated into Indonesian and German, funded by Ireland Literature Exchange. *In the Light of Bridges - Hamburg Fragments* is his latest book that was launched in Hamburg on 26th April, 2012. [www.terry-mcdonagh.com](http://www.terry-mcdonagh.com) [www.podcasts.ie](http://www.podcasts.ie)



## Jews Should Ignore Holocaust Memorial Day

Natalie Wood

Born in Birmingham, England, U.K., Natalie Wood began working in journalism a month before the outbreak of the 1973 Yom Kippur War. She remained in regional Jewish journalism for more than 20 years, leaving full-time writing to help run a family business and then completed a range of general office work. Natalie Wood and her husband, Brian Fink emigrated from Manchester to Israel in March 2010 and live in Karmiel, Galilee where she continues to work from home, concentrating on creative writing. She features in *Smith Magazine's new Six Word Memoirs On Jewish Life*. Natalie Wood also contributes to *Technorati*, *Blogcritics* and *Live Encounters* magazine. Read her stories at <http://www.perfectlywritefamilytales.blogspot.com> and her journalism at <http://www.alwayswriteagain.blogspot.com>.



## From Student Activist to Law Maker

Rainer Tormin

Rainer Tormin's mission is to help create an efficient and responsible working public sector which is crucial for the welfare of the people. Rainer (born in 1949) has served as a management consultant for all kinds of public sector organizations helping to improve their performance during the last 23 years. Before that he took one year off to achieve comprehensive knowledge at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. During the 80s he worked for the State Government of Hamburg, Germany, in different challenging positions. [www.tormin-unternehmensberatung.de](http://www.tormin-unternehmensberatung.de)



## Photo Gallery - West Bengal

Sourav Jourdar

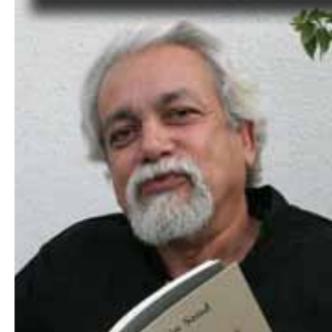
Since 2008, Jourdar, 27, has been working as a photographer for the North Bengal Bureau of The Statesman. A self taught photographer, he is convinced that photography is the only profession in the world that would never become boring. Sourav continues to capture for posterity moments of life... large and small, bitter and sweet. In addition to working as a photographer he looks after his ailing mother. Email: [jash.jourdar@gmail.com](mailto:jash.jourdar@gmail.com)



## Canada - Highway of Tears

Human Rights Watch Report

Human Rights Watch is dedicated to protecting the human rights of people around the world. We stand with victims and activists to prevent discrimination, to uphold political freedom, to protect people from inhumane conduct in wartime, and to bring offenders to justice. We investigate and expose human rights violations and hold abusers accountable. <http://www.hrw.org>



## Harvesting Silver

Randhir Khare

Khare is an award winning author of twenty one volumes of non-fiction, fiction, translation and poetry. Executive Editor of *Heritage India*, the *International Culture Journal*, a Director of The *Rewachand Bhojwani Academy* and Visiting Professor to the Dept Of English, Pune University. Recently he was given The Residency Award by The *Sahitya Akademi* (India's National Academy of Letters) for his contribution to Indian Literature and the Human Rights Award for his efforts to preserve and celebrate marginal and minority cultures. [www.randhirkare.in](http://www.randhirkare.in)



## Candess M Campbell

Author, Transformational Coach  
and International Intuitive Consultant



Guest Editorial  
March 2013

## Yes, Simply Increase your Health!

This month in the yearly focus on health and *12 Weeks to Self-Healing: Transforming Pain through Energy Medicine*, we will focus on increasing your physical health. The three main ways to maintain your physical health have to do with Breathing, Eating, and Moving.

No matter where you live you are probably stressed! Breathing is a great way to balance your life and release stress. A simple exercise, which you can do several times a day, is just to sit and focus in your heart. Take a deep breath from your lower belly and breathe in and out a few times. Feel the sensations in your body. You may sense that you are over-expanded; that your aura or etheric field fills up the whole room. Pull yourself back to around six to eight inches around your body. You will immediately notice you feel safe and your body begins to relax.

What you eat is also important to increasing your health. Your emotional body is directly related to your eating and your health and so by changing your diet, you can increase your emotional health as well! I am not at all a food nazi, but I do encourage gently moving into eating healthier. An example would be simply to begin to increase your water. This allows toxins to be released and your cells are happy and full of life. It is also said we are what we eat and I believe this to be true. Depending on your culture or your where you live, you will have different choices, but it is recommended that eating organic as much as possible is important.

It is important to understand that quality food has more life force. You can access a video where I teach about muscle testing and testing the life force of a tomato at [Foods](#) that are still on the tree, on the bush, or in or on the ground still have all the life force from the sun and the nutrients are high. Once a fruit or vegetable has been picked, the life force begins to decline.

You may have noticed that on some occasions you'll buy an apple that is juicy and tastes exceptionally delicious. On other occasions, you'll buy an apple, only to find that it is dry and tasteless with very little juice. When you choose your food, especially if you are limiting your calories, be sure to choose foods with the highest life force.

The third part of simply increasing your health is movement or exercise. The best exercise routine for you is the one that you will do consistently. If you have not developed the habit of movement yet, look at possible behaviors.

Do you start a new exercise plan, buy new clothes or the latest CD or piece of equipment, and then quit right away? Do you plan out your activities and keep an exercise journal? Are you able to stick to the plan you develop? Do you set your expectations too high or too low? Do you need a workout partner to inspire you? Is your plan too complicated? Are you clear on what you want to accomplish? Maybe you want to feel stronger, lose weight, firm up your body, get better motion in your movement, fit into your clothes, and meet new friends. Are your expectations unrealistic?

Some of you get a lot of exercise every day but it may not be stress releasing movement. Maybe rather than an intense exercise plan, gentle movement to help you relax after a stressful day is more appropriate. I know after working all day, I like to lie on my yoga mat, listen to my body and just stretch. It helps the transition from a busy day to a relaxed evening with Domingo, my dog.

Other ideas that may be helpful are to find your favorite music and begin to dance around your house. You can explore your neighborhood and walk around the block. Those of us with dogs are often familiar with the areas around our homes because they tend to walk us! This is a fun way to meet your neighbors and to feel a gentle stretch in your body.

Getting into nature is one of the most important ways to become healthy. The vibrational energy of nature is an automatic healer! I love walking along the beautiful Spokane River. I have great memories also of walking along the Ganges! Whatever you decide, know that your own body will guide you when you listen!

There is so much more you can find in *12 Weeks to Self-Healing: Transforming Pain through Energy Medicine* that will help you evaluate where you are increase your Passion! In April the focus will be *Self Hypnosis!*

[12 Weeks to Self-Healing: Transforming Pain through Energy Medicine - UK](#)

Spokane, Washington State, USA



## The Person, Human and Divine, in India

*Richard De Smet's contribution*

by

**Ivo Coelho**

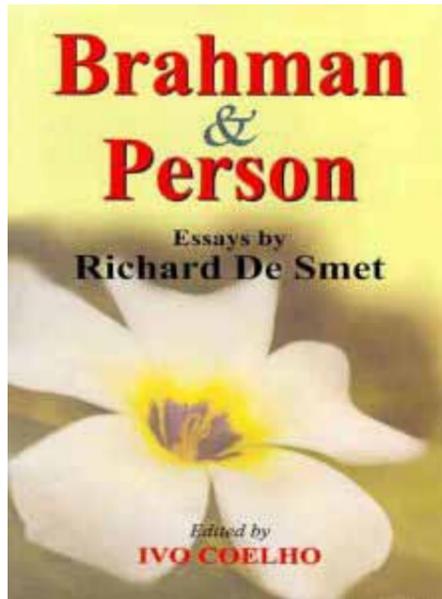
*Exclusively for Live Encounters*

The great Vedantic tradition in India distinguishes two forms of *Brahman*, *saguna* and *nirguna*. *Saguna Brahman* is the Brahman with qualities, while *nirguna Brahman* is the Absolute *Brahman* without qualities. The former is usually identified as personal, while the latter is considered impersonal. The problem is that the impersonal *nirguna Brahman* is regarded as superior to the personal *saguna Brahman* or *Isvara*. One implication is that the Christian God, who is clearly personal, tends then to be looked upon as a lower, anthropomorphic form of deity.

Is this a fair reading? This is one of the great questions with which *Richard De Smet* concerned himself, producing 15 essays spread out over a period of 39 years. The problem is that these essays tend to be difficult of access, having been published for the most part in a number of relatively obscure reviews and journals in India. *Brahman and Person: Essays by Richard De Smet* (ed. Ivo Coelho, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2010) aims to remedy this situation by bringing together 14 of the essays (one has not yet been traced) within the compass of a single volume.

The relative inaccessibility of De Smet's work, and the consequent fact that De Smet has remained one of the 'largely unsung pioneers' of dialogue in India, has spiritual roots: a twofold 'election,' first, to meet requests arising from his dialogical activity rather than produce works satisfying his personal inclinations, the organs of publication for which existed mainly outside India; and second, to give preference to the requests of Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, Muslims, etc. over those of Christians. Towards the end of his life, however, he had the desire to bring together and publish his work, and with this in mind he had approached me for help. At the time I was not in a position to respond to his request. So *Brahman and Person* is a much delayed *guru-daksina*.

**Richard De Smet, S.J.**



### De Smet: the man and the scholar

**Richard de Smet (1916-1997)** was a Belgian Jesuit Indologist who lived and worked some 50 years in India. He joined the Jesuits in 1934, served as medical assistant in three of the battles of World War II, and spent time as a prisoner of war in a German camp. Influenced both by the openness of mind and heart called for by Ignatius of Loyola and by an early and fortuitous interest in Indology, he volunteered for the foreign missions. In the meantime, before and after the War, he engaged in philosophical studies, coming under the influence of outstanding Jesuit thinkers such as Pierre Scheuer and Joseph Marechal, and great Jesuit Indologists such as Pierre Johanns and Michael Ledrus.

In 1946, De Smet landed in India as a young student of Catholic theology. Asked to specialize in Indology after his ordination to the priesthood, he launched on a study of Sanskrit and obtained a doctorate from the Gregorian University, Rome, in 1953 for a thesis on the theological method of Sankara. The inspiration for the thesis had come from hearing Dr Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan describing Sankara's doctrine as almost purely rational, and his method as philosophical.

Against this prevailing current opinion, De Smet showed how the great Vedantin was a theologian, a *srutivadin* who applied reason and other cultural resources to the sacred texts accepted as authoritative. This thesis, which was never published in its entirety, went on to become something of a legend, circulating in 'roneotyped' form among students and scholars both inside and outside India, and earning a reputation as a pioneering landmark in Indological studies.

Returning to India in 1954, De Smet was assigned to teach at the new Jesuit department of philosophy at Pune – later incorporated into the Jnana Deepa Vidyapeeth. He quickly established himself as an Indologist of note, thus joining the ranks of the 'Calcutta School,' which is the name sometimes given to an impressive group of Jesuit Indologists taking inspiration from Brahmobandhav Upadhyaya, a group that includes William Wallace, Georges Dandoy, Pierre Johanns, Robert Antoine, Pierre Fallon, Joseph Putz, Joseph Bayart, Camille Bulcke and Michael Ledrus.

From almost the very beginning of his sojourn in India, De Smet had become a member of the Indian Philosophical Congress and other such associations, participating regularly at their meetings at not little personal cost and sacrifice, contributing papers and establishing relationships of enduring friendship with many scholars after initial moments of incomprehension and even hostility. De Smet thus has the merit of having actually engaged in dialogue with Indian thinkers in secular universities and with religious leaders and people in ashrams and other such places.

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The fact that, for many years, he taught not only Indian philosophy but also 'Western' courses such as metaphysics and philosophy of God accounts for his extraordinary ability to be a bridge between East and West. He was achieving in himself the fusion of horizons which Gadamer speaks about. A small indication of the esteem in which he was held is the undocumented remark of Prof. S. Panneerselvam, Head of the Department of Philosophy at the University of Madras, that he is to be counted among the great Vedantins of India.

De Smet may be said to have made two major contributions to Indological scholarship: his interpretation of Sankara as a non-illusionistic non-dualist realist, and his clarification of the personhood of the Absolute *Brahman*. *Brahman and Person*, as we have said already, is dedicated to the documentation of the latter contribution.

### The nirguna Brahman is personal

De Smet's campaign on the topic of the personhood of Brahman unfolds in two movements, the first dealing with the origin of the concept of person in the ancient and medieval West, and the second with the loss of that concept in the modern West.

In the first movement, De Smet explains how the concept person was formed precisely in the effort to think about God. The term itself originated on the stage, where it meant mask or character (the Greek *prosopon* and the Latin *persona*). From here it was transferred by the Stoics to the role played by human beings on the stage of the world. The Roman jurists took an important step when they applied it not merely to an aspect of human beings but to human beings in their entirety.

However, they restricted this application to Roman citizens, so that only Roman citizens were really persons. Still, this move prepared the term for use by Christian theologians who were searching for ways of expressing adequately the revealed mysteries of Christ and the triune God.

After much controversy between Greek and Latin Christians, mainly because of the need to identify proper equivalences, it was agreed to say that Christ was one person in two natures, divine and human, and that God was a Trinity of persons subsisting equally in the unity of the divine nature. But the point is that 'person' took shape in the effort to think about God.

De Smet notes that this precise application of *persona* to Christ and to God had the effect of opening up the field to Christian humanism. Biblical revelation spoke of the human being as created in

The second movement in De Smet's campaign consists in indicating the connections between the loss of the person in the West and the reception of the term in India. Aquinas' organic, holistic and intrinsically social concept degenerates in the modern period of the West into atomic individualism. This degeneration has roots in Duns Scotus and Descartes, but Leibniz is the first to posit an infinity of spiritual monads in an effort to overcome Cartesian dualism and Spinozian monism.

God's image. If then God was personal, it was a short step to the recognition that not only Roman citizens but all human beings created in God's likeness had the dignity of personhood. Historically, the recognition of this dignity had great consequences for the emancipation of the human being from all kinds of oppression.

There followed efforts to define the term, one of the earliest and most influential being that of Boethius: "Person, properly speaking, is an individual substance endowed with a rational nature." De Smet shows how this definition underwent a brilliant transformation at the hands of Thomas Aquinas, who strove to safeguard its application to both God and the human being.

The resultant concept is not only holistic, but also applicable equally to a partless, absolute spiritual substance, or to a complex substance that is spiritual as well as material, where the spiritual in the sense of the intellectual dominates. The person in this sense is an ultimate subject of attribution, freely responsible, and an end in itself.

A problem is presented by relationships: can a personal God enter into interpersonal relationships with finite persons without compromise? De Smet appeals here to Aquinas' theory of relation to answer yes: God can and does relate to finite persons without violation of his transcendence and simplicity, though this kind of relationship is regarded as real from the side of creatures but 'merely logical' from the side of God. On this point, perhaps, contemporary thinking might urge us to go further and deeper.

The second movement in De Smet's campaign consists in indicating the connections between the loss of the person in the West and the reception of the term in India. Aquinas' organic, holistic and intrinsically social concept degenerates in the modern period of the West into atomic individualism. This degeneration has roots in Duns Scotus and Descartes, but Leibniz is the first to posit an infinity of spiritual monads in an effort to overcome Cartesian dualism and Spinozian monism.

Hobbes introduces a new dualism between human beings and society: since the human being is essentially individual, society is a construct and the state a despot. Locke modifies this despotism by positing a political contract based on trust. Rousseau adopts Hobbesian individualism but ends up alienating all the rights of the individual to the state.

In such a context, the German philosopher F.H. Jacobi proposed a restriction of the term person to human beings: since to be a person is to have qualities, relations, etc., only a limited being can be personal. He was followed in this by a certain number of philosophers, and this trend influenced

De Smet admits that the Indian conception of nirguna Brahman does not clearly connote the possibility of interpersonal relations with finite creatures, but insists that what it denotes is identical with the personal God defined by the great Christian councils, the Trinitarian aspect being excepted. The advantage of admitting the personhood of the Absolute Brahman is significant: we do not any more have to explain away the mysterious pointings in the later Upanisads and in the Gita to grace and love.

the great translators of Sanskrit works towards the end of the 19th century, who made the fateful decision to render *saguna* as personal and nirguna as impersonal. De Smet points out, however, that the original concept of person is fully and properly applicable to the *nirguna Brahman*.

In fact, it transcends the opposition between *nirguna* and *saguna*, incomplex and complex, since, like being, spirit and bliss it is transcendental rather than predicamental. Of course, even transcendental terms cannot be said to apply univocally to God and creatures. But here comes the utility of another of De Smet's discoveries: that Sankara was familiar with and made use of *jahad-ajahal-laksana*, which is largely equivalent to the intrinsic analogy of Aquinas.

Such a doctrine enables us to understand that God is properly personal, but only in an eminent sense. De Smet admits that the Indian conception of *nirguna Brahman* does not clearly connote the possibility of interpersonal relations with finite creatures, but insists that what it denotes is identical with the personal God defined by the great Christian councils, the Trinitarian aspect being excepted.

The advantage of admitting the personhood of the Absolute *Brahman* is significant: we do not any more have to explain away the mysterious pointings in the later Upanisads and in the Gita to grace and love.

The *Svetasvatara Upanisad* declares not only that the *Atman* must be loved above all, but that this love is reciprocated. The highest word entrusted by Krsna to Arjuna is, "I love thee well, thou art dear to Me." And the Buddhist tradition has not only insisted on *karuna* (compassion) but has also thrown up the ideal of the Bodhisattva, a hero of charity, morality and wisdom, a merciful saviour, an ideal personality to be emulated.

It must have been, then, a matter of considerable personal satisfaction for De Smet to hear the scholar and revered Vedantin Prof. T.M.P. Mahadevan declaring, at a seminar convened in 1973 at the University of Madras on the topic of the person, that the *Brahman* of Sankara was, if anything, surely not impersonal.

Unfortunately, it would seem that this declaration has not had the kind of resonance in subsequent Indological thinking as might have been hoped for. De Smet's remark that this was "an important linguistic change," far from being merely an expression of his personal modesty, now appears to have a far deeper significance. Change of meaning, especially at a systematic level, is not so much an event as a process: it involves a change of a whole set of interconnected terms and relations.

The tension between the Vedic ideal of the human being, embodied in the caste-system in the age of the *dharmasastras*, and the challenge of the renunciators, both orthodox and heterodox, was met in a brilliant way by the *Gita* which inserted renunciation within the structure of duty itself through the concept of disinterested action (*niskama karma*).

### Towards an Indian recognition of the human person

We come now to the related topic of the absence of a proper equivalent to the term person in India. The Indian tradition has *atman* (self), *purusa* (male human being), *vyakti* (individual), *jana* (a being that is born), none of which is the exact equivalent of person. De Smet's method here is to construct an adequate notion by gleaning elements from all over the tradition. In the Vedas he finds an organic, holistic and social conception of the human being, quite the opposite of the atomic individualism of the modern West. Thanks to an equation between being and stability, however, and the consequent tendency to analyse (*viveka*) in order to find the most stable and enduring element in the human being, the holistic Vedic conception was torn apart in the Brahmanas, the Upanisads, Jainism, Buddhism, Samkhya and Nyaya Vaisesika. But there were also gains. The Upanisads rooted the human being in the Absolute, thus establishing clearly the creaturely dimension and implying dignity, while the later Upanisads speak explicitly of grace and love. Jainism implies a real connection of the eternal *jivas* with material bodies, and the doctrine of *ahimsa* implies consubstantiality between *jivas* and their bodies: violence against the latter also disturbs the former. Early Buddhism goes to an extreme of analysis, but also throws up a new ideal of personality centred about the virtues of the Buddha: non-violent morality, selflessness and devotion to wisdom.

The tension between the Vedic ideal of the human being, embodied in the caste-system in the age of the *dharmasastras*, and the challenge of the renunciators, both orthodox and heterodox, was met in a brilliant way by the *Gita* which inserted renunciation within the structure of duty itself through the concept of disinterested action (*niskama karma*). Further, it overcame the dualism of Samkhya through a highly personalistic conception of the human being and of God: when the Absolute is not only the object of love but also Lover, and the human beloved is free, then both Lover and beloved are personal.

The Mahayana Buddhists responded with an apophatic monism which, despite its *sunyavada*, was able to give birth to the attractive ideal of personality embodied in the *Bodhisattva*. But the most adequate conception of the human person available in India, according to De Smet, is to be found in the redoubtable Sankara: the *jivatman* of Sankara is a contingent and dependent reality; it is the only door by which we can pass from the ordinary to the other meaning of I and Thou, but also the key to any correct anthropology. Here the human person is internally unified by the Atman through the reflection-like *jivatman*. Sankara's conception is somewhat deficient only in the social aspect. Unfortunately, says De Smet, this integrated conception of the human being failed to receive the attention it deserved in India.

This conception is made up of various elements: the organic conception of society from the Vedas; an acknowledgement of the dignity and rights of individuals from the modern West; a combination of the lofty transcendentalism of the Upanisads with the humanism of the Sermon on the Mount in Neo-Hinduism, as also a balancing of the self-sufficiency of Hinduism with a universal openness and religious and cultural pluralism.

De Smet goes on to point out that the *Gita*, Mahayana, and Sankara represent attempts to transcend the transcendence of the renunciators in favour of an Absolute, whether conceived of as *Brahman* or as the Buddhist *Dharmakaya*, giving rise in the process to anthropologies that are less cut off from the world. In this sense, there is a surprising affinity between the three: their focusing on the Absolute allowed them to turn compassionate eyes to the world and to adopt a humanistic perspective, though this is somewhat less obvious in the case of Sankara. He concludes with the observation that an Indian personalism is bound to be meager unless lit up by a religion of the Absolute.

Interestingly, De Smet is also able to say that contemporary India itself has a conception of the human being that is congenial to the development of persons. This conception is made up of various elements: the organic conception of society from the Vedas; an acknowledgement of the dignity and rights of individuals from the modern West; a combination of the lofty transcendentalism of the Upanisads with the humanism of the Sermon on the Mount in Neo-Hinduism, as also a balancing of the self-sufficiency of Hinduism with a universal openness and religious and cultural pluralism. "The conjunction of these three," he says, "has opened India to all the chief dimensions of the human person."

In De Smet's opinion, then, there are enough materials for an Indian recognition of person. The outstanding problems, to his mind, are two: that of rebirth, and that of the selection of a term. The latter he seems to have resolved in favour of *vyakti*, despite possible confusions with 'individual.' Given that meanings evolve and that they become determinate through efforts at systematization, this holds out hope for an increasing rapprochement as far as the concept of person/*vyakti* is concerned.

At any rate, *Brahman and Person* is a small effort to bring the contributions of an outstanding Indologist to the attention of scholars and the general public.

**A second collection of De Smet's articles, this time on Sankara, will hopefully soon be out of the press.**

**Father Ivo Coelho**  
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THE MYTH OF HUMAN PROGRESS

# THE WORLD

# AS IT IS

## DISPATCHES

ON THE MYTH OF

## HUMAN PROGRESS

# CHRIS HEDGES

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## The Myth of Human Progress

by Chris Hedges

*(This article was first published on [Truthdig](#))*

“We have to readjust our entire civilization to live in a finite world. But we are not doing it, because we are carrying far too much baggage, too many mythical versions of deliberately distorted history and a deeply ingrained feeling that what being modern is all about is having more. This is what anthropologists call an ideological pathology, a self-destructive belief that causes societies to crash and burn. These societies go on doing things that are really stupid because they can’t change their way of thinking. And that is where we are.”

My special thanks to Janet Buehl, Assistant to the Publisher of [truthdig](#)  
- Zuade Kaufman, for facilitating the special permission required to  
reprint this article. - Mark Ulyseas

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**The human species, led by white Europeans and Euro-Americans, has been on a 500-year-long planetwide rampage of conquering, plundering, looting, exploiting and polluting the Earth - as well as killing the indigenous communities that stood in the way. But the game is up. The technical and scientific forces that created a life of unparalleled luxury - as well as unrivaled military and economic power - for the industrial elites are the forces that now doom us.**

Clive Hamilton in his **"Requiem for a Species: Why We Resist the Truth About Climate Change"** describes a dark relief that comes from accepting that "catastrophic climate change is virtually certain." This obliteration of "false hopes," he says, requires an intellectual knowledge and an emotional knowledge. The first is attainable. The second, because it means that those we love, including our children, are almost certainly doomed to insecurity, misery and suffering within a few decades, if not a few years, is much harder to acquire. To emotionally accept impending disaster, to attain the gut-level understanding that the power elite will not respond rationally to the devastation of the ecosystem, is as difficult to accept as our own mortality. The most daunting existential struggle of our time is to ingest this awful truth—intellectually and emotionally—and continue to resist the forces that are destroying us.

The human species, led by white Europeans and Euro-Americans, has been on a 500-year-long planetwide rampage of conquering, plundering, looting, exploiting and polluting the Earth—as well as killing the indigenous communities that stood in the way. But the game is up. The technical and scientific forces that created a life of unparalleled luxury—as well as unrivaled military and economic power—for the industrial elites are the forces that now doom us. The mania for ceaseless economic expansion and exploitation has become a curse, a death sentence. But even as our economic and environmental systems unravel, after the hottest year in the contiguous 48 states since record keeping began 107 years ago, we lack the emotional and intellectual creativity to shut down the engine of global capitalism. We have bound ourselves to a doomsday machine that grinds forward, as the draft report of the **National Climate Assessment and Development Advisory Committee** illustrates.

Complex civilizations have a bad habit of destroying themselves. Anthropologists including Joseph Tainter in **"The Collapse of Complex Societies,"** Charles L. Redman in **"Human Impact on Ancient Environments"** and Ronald Wright in **"A Short History of Progress"** have laid out the familiar patterns that lead to systems breakdown. The difference this time is that when we go down the whole planet will go with us. There will, with this final collapse, be no new lands left to exploit, no new civilizations to conquer, no new peoples to subjugate. The long struggle between the human species and the Earth will conclude with the remnants of the human species learning a painful lesson about unrestrained greed and self-worship.

"There is a pattern in the past of civilization after civilization wearing out its welcome from nature, overexploiting its environment, overexpanding, overpopulating," **Wright** said when I reached him by phone at his home in British Columbia, Canada. "They tend to collapse quite soon after they reach their period of greatest magnificence and prosperity.

**We have set in motion an industrial machine of such complexity and such dependence on expansion that we do not know how to make do with less or move to a steady state in terms of our demands on nature. We have failed to control human numbers. They have tripled in my lifetime. And the problem is made much worse by the widening gap between rich and poor, the upward concentration of wealth, which ensures there can never be enough to go around.**

That pattern holds good for a lot of societies, among them the Romans, the ancient Maya and the Sumerians of what is now southern Iraq. There are many other examples, including smaller-scale societies such as Easter Island. The very things that cause societies to prosper in the short run, especially new ways to exploit the environment such as the invention of irrigation, lead to disaster in the long run because of unforeseen complications. This is what I called in *'A Short History of Progress'* the 'progress trap.' We have set in motion an industrial machine of such complexity and such dependence on expansion that we do not know how to make do with less or move to a steady state in terms of our demands on nature. We have failed to control human numbers. They have tripled in my lifetime. And the problem is made much worse by the widening gap between rich and poor, the upward concentration of wealth, which ensures there can never be enough to go around. The number of people in dire poverty today—about 2 billion—is greater than the world's entire population in the early 1900s. That's not progress."

"If we continue to refuse to deal with things in an orderly and rational way, we will head into some sort of major catastrophe, sooner or later," he said. "If we are lucky it will be big enough to wake us up worldwide but not big enough to wipe us out. That is the best we can hope for. We must transcend our evolutionary history. We're Ice Age hunters with a shave and a suit. We are not good long-term thinkers. We would much rather gorge ourselves on dead mammoths by driving a herd over a cliff than figure out how to conserve the herd so it can feed us and our children forever. That is the transition our civilization has to make. And we're not doing that."

Wright, who in his dystopian novel **"A Scientific Romance"** paints a picture of a future world devastated by human stupidity, cites "entrenched political and economic interests" and a failure of the human imagination as the two biggest impediments to radical change. And all of us who use fossil fuels, who sustain ourselves through the formal economy, he says, are at fault.

Modern capitalist societies, Wright argues in his book **"What Is America?: A Short History of the New World Order,"** derive from European invaders' plundering of the indigenous cultures in the Americas from the 16th to the 19th centuries, coupled with the use of African slaves as a workforce to replace the natives. The numbers of those natives fell by more than 90 percent because of smallpox and other plagues they hadn't had before. The Spaniards did not conquer any of the major societies until smallpox had crippled them; in fact the Aztecs beat them the first time around. If Europe had not been able to seize the gold of the Aztec and Inca civilizations, if it had not been able to occupy the land and adopt highly productive New World crops for use on European farms, the growth of industrial society in Europe would have been much slower. Karl Marx and Adam Smith both pointed to the influx of wealth from the Americas as having made

**Crisis cults spread rapidly among Native American societies in the 19th century, when the buffalo and the Indians were being slaughtered by repeating rifles and finally machine guns. People came to believe, as happened in the [Ghost Dance](#), that if they did the right things the modern world that was intolerable—the barbed wire, the railways, the white man, the machine gun—would disappear.**

possible the Industrial Revolution and the start of modern capitalism. It was the rape of the Americas, Wright points out, that triggered the orgy of European expansion. The Industrial Revolution also equipped the Europeans with technologically advanced weapons systems, making further subjugation, plundering and expansion possible.

“The experience of a relatively easy 500 years of expansion and colonization, the constant taking over of new lands, led to the modern capitalist myth that you can expand forever,” Wright said. “It is an absurd myth. We live on this planet. We can’t leave it and go somewhere else. We have to bring our economies and demands on nature within natural limits, but we have had a 500-year run where Europeans, Euro-Americans and other colonists have overrun the world and taken it over. This 500-year run made it not only seem easy but normal. We believe things will always get bigger and better. We have to understand that this long period of expansion and prosperity was an anomaly. It has rarely happened in history and will never happen again. We have to readjust our entire civilization to live in a finite world. But we are not doing it, because we are carrying far too much baggage, too many mythical versions of deliberately distorted history and a deeply ingrained feeling that what being modern is all about is having more. This is what anthropologists call an ideological pathology, a self-destructive belief that causes societies to crash and burn. These societies go on doing things that are really stupid because they can’t change their way of thinking. And that is where we are.”

And as the collapse becomes palpable, if human history is any guide, we like past societies in distress will retreat into what anthropologists call “crisis cults.” The powerlessness we will feel in the face of ecological and economic chaos will unleash further collective delusions, such as fundamentalist belief in a god or gods who will come back to earth and save us.

“Societies in collapse often fall prey to the belief that if certain rituals are performed all the bad stuff will go away,” Wright said. “There are many examples of that throughout history. In the past these crisis cults took hold among people who had been colonized, attacked and slaughtered by outsiders, who had lost control of their lives. They see in these rituals the ability to bring back the past world, which they look at as a kind of paradise. They seek to return to the way things were. Crisis cults spread rapidly among Native American societies in the 19th century, when the buffalo and the Indians were being slaughtered by repeating rifles and finally machine guns. People came to believe, as happened in the [Ghost Dance](#), that if they did the right things the modern world that was intolerable—the barbed wire, the railways, the white man, the machine gun—would disappear.”

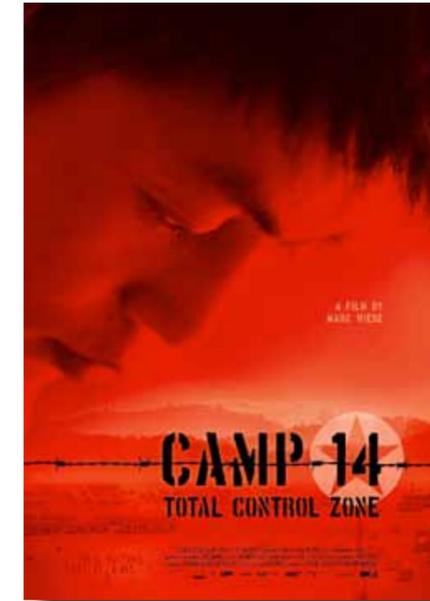
**Look at the way we are letting oil and gas exploration rip when we know that expanding the carbon economy is suicidal for our children and grandchildren. The results can already be felt. When it gets to the point where large parts of the Earth experience crop failure at the same time then we will have mass starvation and a breakdown in order. That is what lies ahead if we do not deal with climate change.**

“We all have the same, basic psychological hard wiring,” Wright said. “It makes us quite bad at long-range planning and leads us to cling to irrational delusions when faced with a serious threat. Look at the extreme right’s belief that if government got out of the way, the lost paradise of the 1950s would return. Look at the way we are letting oil and gas exploration rip when we know that expanding the carbon economy is suicidal for our children and grandchildren. The results can already be felt. When it gets to the point where large parts of the Earth experience crop failure at the same time then we will have mass starvation and a breakdown in order. That is what lies ahead if we do not deal with climate change.”

**“If we fail in this great experiment, this experiment of apes becoming intelligent enough to take charge of their own destiny, nature will shrug and say it was fun for a while to let the apes run the laboratory, but in the end it was a bad idea,” Wright said.**



**CAMP 14 will be shown to a large group of diplomats at the UN on 6th March, 2013, to highlight the plight of the North Koreans in the camps.**



**Marc Wiese**

Director

## **Camp 14 Total Control Zone**

in an exclusive Skype interview with Mark Ulyseas

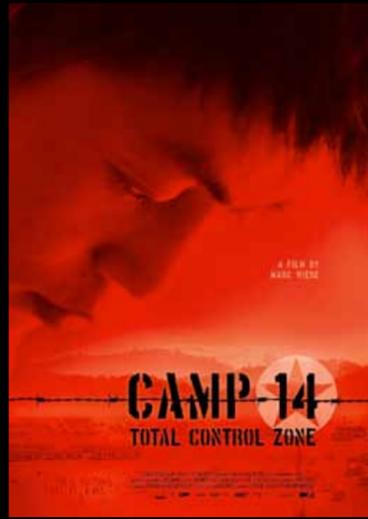
“My grandfather was in the resistance in World War 11. The Nazis punished him for that by sending him to Russia in a “Punishment Brigade”. He managed to escape. He told me all about his life when I was about 17 years of age.

When I heard what he had to tell me I asked him, “ Grandpa what shall I do? I see it (injustices). I see that all the banks and all the companies getting richer and richer...and borrowing money and it’s never leaving the house because countries are not able to pay the money back....so they are just getting more and more dependent upon the banks. How shall I manage this knowledge? Do I become a terrorist? What is the way?”

What I mean is I never wanted to be a terrorist.

So I became an investigative journalist. “

- **Marc Wiese**



Cinema for peace promo in Berlin © Marc Wiese

**It took me days and days to accept what he knew...like a parallel universe...there was one moment when Shin looked at me and said, "You know what? I can tell you for weeks and weeks about my life and you will never understand".**

**I nodded and replied, "Yes Shin, that's true".**

**- Marc Wiese**



This documentary is about a young man, Shin Dong-Huyk, who escaped from a "Camp" in North Korea. His parents were married in the camp where he was born. Shin's childhood years were made up of beatings, starvation, human degradation and entertainment of a macabre kind – witnessing executions. The only world he knew was within the fortified camp...where the smell of fear and human waste filled the air. It was his life ...surrealism in the depths of hell.

Wiese in his many interviews with Shin has brought forth onto the screen, with a mix of animation, the sheer inhumanity of humanity... the power of the human soul to survive in abject futility.

Shin's escape and subsequent international celebrity status has made him *consider* returning to hell i.e. Camp 14! His mind, his spirit still battles on in the realms of a H.P.Lovecraftish world of living horror.

Camp 14 – Total Control Zone is a reminder to many among us who whine about the necessities of life and the travails of everyday existence that there are people out there surviving on the mere whim of a man with a gun.

*- Mark Ulyseas*



Cinema for peace promo in Berlin © Marc Wiese

### Could you give the readers a glimpse of how you became a film maker?

To be honest from the age of 14 I wanted to be a journalist but I didn't have an idea at that moment that I wanted to be a film maker. In Germany we had Der Spiegel magazine. It was really good in those days...investigative journalism...it was always my aim to work for Spiegel or a broadcasting report called *Monitor*.

I started work for the first time for a newspaper in Dortmund – my birthplace- a city of 600,000 inhabitants. It was very depressing because it was far, far away from what I wanted to do and also very frustrating and so I thought I had to go to a newspaper I like working with and so I joined *TAZ*, a left wing newspaper and worked for them for six months in Berlin. After this period it was clear to me so I managed to study journalism...and I never wanted to work with TV but then it started that I began working on feature films and in a way this “infected” me...this working with pictures and so after a while I got an offer to work in a broadcasting program...an education for one year, I took it and after this period I got one job after another. In the beginning I produced 30 minute reports ‘cheaply’. Then it got bigger and bigger...till Camp 14 – Total Control Zone, my latest documentary.

### Which was your first documentary film?

It involved people in Bremen, a city in Northern Germany, who were dealing in drugs and weapons.

I can't remember the title...you know it is always like that...you have a title in your head and but the broadcasting station chooses another!

I produced two 45-minute reports about these guys who were just making music...gangster rap...and we were hanging around with them living in the scene and making the film.



Warkids – Youth in Palestine © Marc Wiese

### You have made a number of documentaries. All of them are investigative journalism. Have you received threats of any kind while filming on location?

When I was filming my first documentary in Bremen on the drug dealing I was warned by the Kurdish mafia who told me to leave the town and would not allow me to make a second film.

Then there was the incident in Palestine where I was making a documentary on the Intifada movement and about the kids there...I was living in the refugee camp for around six months when members of the *al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade* told me, “Hey we don't like it that you're living here so long and the way you are working...” It was a warning.

There were other situations where people made it clear that we had to move or stuff like that...ofcourse things happen...

### Any particular incident where you felt the film crew was in danger or the broadcasting station had directed you to stop a project due to threats?

For example, when I was working on a project about war criminals in Bosnia, the Serbian part of Bosnia, the Serbian Secret Police were checking what we were doing...they tapped my hotel phone.

I had informed the broadcasting station in the beginning that it can be that we are arrested, it can happen that the Serb Police seize our material, our footage and there will never be a film because they just take it and that's it! So they were informed about the risk.

I always tell them “if you want to do a project be aware that there are risks...I was really lucky. I have never been thrown out of a country”.



Kanun – Blood for Honour © Marc Wiese

### **Your documentary, *Death by Delivery*, what is it about?**

It is about illegal immigrants from India and Sri Lanka who were attempting to reach mainland Europe. They were on one of those typical ships that carry such immigrants. Because of the Coast Guard the Captain of the ship refused to sail near the coastline for fear of being arrested. A smaller overcrowded boat of 300 people attempted a landing but the boat sank...all of them drown. The people on the ship witnessed this and when the captain of the ship left them in Greece they told their story. But no one wanted to believe them because they felt that the immigrants have made up the story in order to stay on in Greece...to seek asylum. So in a way...it was a ghost ship. It was forgotten until bodies were caught in the nets of the fishermen in Sicilia. The fishermen informed the police, "What are we to do, there are lots of dead bodies in the sea...what's going on here?". The reply they got was, "You are not allowed to talk about it, keep silent..." They were worried that the millions of Euros they were earning from the sale of fish could get jeopardized if word got out that the fish being sold had eaten human flesh.

### **Kanun is a documentary on honour killing...please explain?**

It's based in Albania. Kanun is the name of the law for honour killings. And the situation is like this...inside the law is one rule – you are not allowed to kill your victim in their own house. Therefore, mothers do not permit their sons to leave their homes. The film is about a 17 year old boy who had been confined to his home for over 14 years by his family. He had never seen the street. He had never left the apartment! The reason for honour killings are many. For example, slapping a person...it is always a question of honour! The boy I interviewed was confined to his apartment for many years because his father and uncle had killed the brother in law in front of their kids. So he was not allowed to leave the apartment for fear that the relatives of the murdered person would kill him in revenge.

However, in the end he managed to escape and is now living in Sweden.



The Picture of the Napalm Girl © Marc Wiese

### **And *The Picture of the Napalm Girl*, what is this about?**

About the story behind the iconic photograph of the Vietnamese girl fleeing naked and burned by a napalm bomb that had exploded nearby.

### **Your documentaries are about social topics, about making a change. Is this where you are heading with your work?**

Let me make it clear. I am no 'missionary' man. I was really angry at a media meeting on Camp 14 when a journalist asked me, "Are you a missionary man?". I was close to leaving the interview. But you know what? My typical reply is, "that there are lots of coloured pictures in TV and cinema... so if I contribute to this medium I would need to have a real reason to do so...so I ensure that the coloured pictures I make are different. Of course there is a social background, of course there is a message I want to convey. Incidentally, CAMP 14 will be shown to a large group of diplomats at the UN on 6th March, 2013, to highlight the plight of the North Koreans in the camps.

### **All your films focus on social issues...you depict the inhumanity of humanity and by doing so you show your humanity. Please comment.**

Yes, that's true. I will tell you a small story. Everybody is faced with the reality of the disparity between the rich and poor, and various other injustices.

My grandfather was in the resistance in World War 11. The Nazis punished him for that by sending him to Russia in a "Punishment Brigade". He managed to escape. He told me all about his life when I was about 17 years of age. When I heard what he had to tell me I asked him, "Grandpa what shall I do? I see it (injustices). I see that all the banks and all the companies getting richer



Camp 14 - Total Control Zone © Marc Wiese

and richer...and borrowing money and it's never leaving the house because countries are not able to pay the money back....so they are just getting more and more dependent upon the banks. How shall I manage this knowledge? Do I become a terrorist? What is the way?" What I mean is I never wanted to be a terrorist. So I became an investigative journalist. I shall tell you something about my research around Camp 14...I had heard that there was footage...not real footage but Google Earth footage on North Korean camps. So I Googled the North Korean camps and used Google earth to locate them.

**I discovered another camp not far from Camp 14! I could see people moving around in the camp. How sickening is that? Just think about the possibility of viewing Auschwitz live on the internet (if internet was available in the WW11)? In a way this is "modern times"... you can see the place where people are now dying, watch live as they die.** In Camp 14 I have tried to bring more depth into the picture because the people can relate/connect to a horrible reality.

Another example ....perhaps you will recall, a few years ago, two American journalists crossed into North Korea from China and were arrested. One is the sister of a famous CNN journalist. Viewers worldwide were subjected to eight hourly media reports on the fate of the journalists and the state of the camps. I don't know how many millions were paid for the release of the journalists.

In the end, when they were freed the news updates abruptly stopped. What does this mean? It means that the lives of the two American journalists were more important than the lives of 200,000 North Koreans incarcerated in the camps. That's the message!

**How do you choose a topic? Do you spend time in research or is it on the spur of the moment?**

A lot of time it is by chance. I will give you two examples. One is Camp 14 - While I was working on



Shin Dong-Huyk © Marc Wiese

a documentary, *The Picture of the Napalm Girl* – the story behind the iconic photograph of the Vietnamese girl running naked down a road, burned by a napalm bomb, I came across a news report in *The Washington Post* about *Shin Dong-Huyk* who had been born in a North Korean Camp and for 24 years had known only life within the camp. He had no idea of life beyond the barbed wire. I knew at that very moment I had to tell his story.

And the other documentary, *Death by Delivery*, was produced by me after I had heard a short radio report on the 300 immigrants who had drowned.

It is really like this...you feel it...you really feel the need to tell the story.

If you take Camp 14 there are four broadcasting stations, four film foundations, many crew members and then the producer. What I mean is as Director you have to convince a lot of people that this is a story that needs to be told...but one has to be sure about how one feels!

Presently, I am working on a story, collecting money and trying to find people...all this has come about after I saw a photograph on the internet...and no I am not sharing the idea with you... please wait for the documentary to be released!

**After meeting Shin how did it affect you personally?**

It took me days and days to accept what he knew...like a parallel universe...there was one moment when Shin looked at me and said, "You know what? I can tell you for weeks and weeks about my life and you will never understand". I nodded and replied, "Yes Shin, that's true".

I am lucky. I have never had to live in a camp... Never had to stay in jail. Of course, Shin's story did affect me. I get fed up with my own kids when they refuse meals...or just take two potatoes too many on their plate and just throw them away.



Camp 14 - Total Control Zone © Marc Wiese

### How does your wife support you in your work?

She is not involved in an official capacity. But I talk to her. When you are working on such topics like Camp 14 you need 'real ground' under your feet. My kids and my family are my roots, my base...this keeps me strong.

### The animated scenes in Camp 14 are deeply moving. How did you accomplish this?

In the beginning we asked four companies to give us samples of their work. From these we selected one company. It was a long tedious process because in the beginning they made, in my opinion, much one to one...real torture scenes which I felt was not acceptable. It was ridiculous so I directed them to create an atmosphere...the fright that Shin felt...it had to come out in the animation. I gave them 600 pages of the unedited interview with Shin and made them read it all. Many times I recall they came to me and said, "This is the final" and I would reply without looking, "No, it's not the final". Finally they got it.

### Did you follow a script?

I never use a script. In documentaries the story comes out in the editing. In a way, the documentary creates itself.

### How did you know Shin was telling you the truth and that he was not a plant?

I had checked him out. His story is that he escaped from the camp to China where he hid in the mountains for one year. Then he managed to reach the South Korean Embassy in Shanghai. In the beginning nobody trusted him, nobody believed him.



Camp 14 - Total Control Zone © Marc Wiese

The South Korean Secret Service conducted polygraph (lie detector) tests. They contacted other defectors, people who managed to escape from North Korea. They made hours and hours of interviews with them. They activated their secret service force in North Korea. In the end the result was his story was true. This whole process took 3 months.

There is other proof...he has scars on his back and legs and his arms are twisted. You may ask if he is a plant...but for whom? The North Korean government is not interested in getting the story of the camps to the world!

### When will Camp 14 be in the cinema halls?

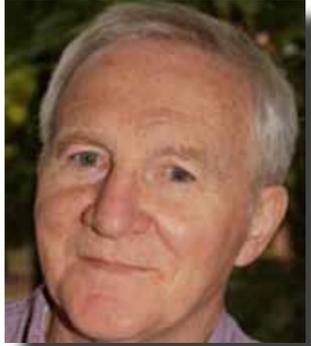
It is already in the cinemas halls in Germany and Japan and will be in the UK in March.

### What is your message to the readers of Live Encounters?

First let me say that it is a privilege making documentaries and I love it. Sometimes people ask me, "Hey when are you going to make a funny film?" I always answer, "Hey I am not inventing this!"

There is much cruelty in the world. What we guys as documentary film makers do is bring it to the world...into the knowledge of the world.

**Watch Camp 14 and my other documentaries...this is my message.**



Growing up in a very Catholic environment in the west of Ireland, I was very conscious of Limbo as a state or place where non-baptised children were to exist, without ever seeing the face of God, for all eternity. It was bad enough for a mother to lose a child, but the thought of Limbo was tragic. These children could not be buried in consecrated ground, but it is said that mothers baptised their stillborn babies themselves in the hope that they could *see the face of God*. Burial often took place after dark, in secret, by fathers or close relatives. I found this so unjust as a child. Thankfully Limbo is no longer an article of faith.

## Limbo

The dead were never far from us as children.  
Some looked up at us from Hell, while  
the shining examples were in Heaven  
or nearly there after a short stop-over in Purgatory.

In our parish there were no dropouts, but there were  
nameless babies in Limbo. You could see them  
on nights black as tom-cats or among fox-cubs  
in pools of dew – marked children in unmarked graves.

When I drift about in insomnia, I try to count them  
but give up and return to sheep, hens or fish  
because they usually have labels, tags – even names,  
dates and places of burial. We are victims of gods.



'Sunday Times' anti-Semitic cartoon Photo: Courtesy. Gerald Scarfe with Jane Asher



## Jews Should Ignore Holocaust Memorial Day

If Holocaust Memorial Day is good for anything, it's to demonstrate how hard it is simply being Jewish. The twenty-four hours of global commemoration and solemn reflection established by the United Nations only eight years ago, was soon snatched up by Jew haters everywhere.

This is unsurprising to anyone knowing how terms adopted to explain the Jewish experience have become woefully debased through overuse and abuse. Let's look at some:

'Holocaust' (the mass murder of Jews under the German Nazi regime during the period 1941-45) and 'Diaspora' (the dispersion of the Jews beyond Israel). The word 'Genocide' (the deliberate and systematic destruction, in whole or in part, of an ethnic, racial, religious, or national group) is a little trickier to discuss. It was coined barely 65 years ago by Polish-born Jewish lawyer, Raphael Lemkin, who once remarked during an interview: "I became interested in genocide because it happened so many times. First to the Armenians, then after the Armenians, Hitler took action."

There's been a whiff of unpleasantness associated with Holocaust Day ever since its inception and this year's row was sparked by the gratuitously nasty cartoon produced by **The Sunday Times's** veteran cartoonist, Gerald Scarfe. He managed, no matter a thousand hot denials, to conflate the stalled Palestinian-Israeli peace process with the ancient anti-Jewish blood libel. Moreover, the picture was published on Holocaust Day and the furore forced the artist to issue the following apology on his own website:

**"First of all I am not, and never have been, antisemitic. The Sunday Times has given me the freedom of speech over the last 46 years to criticise world leaders for what I see as their wrongdoings. This drawing was a criticism of Netanyahu, and not of the Jewish people: there was no slight whatsoever intended against them. I was, however, stupidly completely unaware that it would be printed on Holocaust Day, and I apologise for the very unfortunate timing."**

I am sure Scarfe is not anti-Jewish. The milieu he and his wife, the actress, Jane Asher inhabit is concerned wholly with artistic integrity. The race and faith of those in it becomes important only when it affects any work they produce.

But I'm not sure he would have apologised so swiftly if he had not received an irate response from a fellow passenger on a holiday cruise soon after publication. The Jewish Chronicle reported:

**"Gerald Stecker, a bridge director on cruise ships, happened to be on board Mr Scarfe's round-the-world liner."**

**"When Mr Stecker discovered the 'malicious cartoon' he decided to ring Mr Scarfe's cabin."**

**"I told him how disgusted I was and [asked] can he give reasons for producing it,' Mr Stecker said ... 'He was dumbstruck and apologised to me'."**

**"Mr Stecker also confronted the veteran cartoonist in person. 'I asked if he would give a public apology upon his return to the UK' ... He agreed."**

However, while I am not convinced that everyone at the S.T. was ignorant of their bad timing, libel law forces me to take their insistence at face value. I am also mindful that the newspaper's proprietor, Rupert Murdoch was among the first to apologise openly for the mess. Again, while I point out that he and his publications are largely pro-Israel, I must consider that he does not want to lose more friends while News Corporation is beset by other scandal.

The nasty affair produced a familiar slew of well-known Jewish and gentile figures leaping to defend the cartoon and its creator while spouting the usual anti-Israel rhetoric. I hate the current Israel Government West Bank settlements' policy but all level-headed people know the security barrier was erected to stop terrorists murdering both Arab and Jewish citizens of Israel. It is not there to keep law-abiding citizens of the Palestinian Authority out of Israel. As Daniel Taub, Israel's present Ambassador to Britain said:

**"Israelis have a longstanding commitment to free speech and a high threshold for tolerating strong and even provocative criticism. This cartoon, however, bears no relation whatsoever to legitimate political comment .... The use of vicious motifs echoing those used to demonize Jews in the past is particularly shocking and hurtful on International Holocaust Remembrance Day, but the crude and shallow hatred of this cartoon should render it totally unacceptable on any day of the year."**

Sadly a good number of 'ordinary' Jewish people, including Israeli citizens, did not view the cartoon as harmful. I reminded someone that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu did not relish a view of himself building a wall, squeezing Palestinian bodies between the bricks and using their blood as cement. Why else ask Knesset Speaker, Reuven Rivlin to write to his U.K. counterpart, John Bercow (coincidentally a fellow Jew) to express "extreme outrage"?

The familiar Palestinian advocates included *The Guardian's* political cartoonist, Steve Bell, who a while earlier had produced a picture showing Netanyahu as a puppet master controlling British Foreign Secretary, William Hague and former Premier Tony Blair. I would have been quite disappointed if he had not started a BBC Radio 4 *Today* debate with *The J.C.'s Editor*, Stephen Pollard by accusing Israel of 'ethnic cleansing', a charge so demonstrably false it was no wonder that Pollard did not respond.

**Germany marked the 80th anniversary of Hitler's rise to power with a talk from German-Israeli author, Berlin resident and Holocaust survivor Inge Deutschkron at the Reichstag. A couple of days later, Egypt's Islamist President Mohammed Morsi visited Berlin and dismissed criticism of his comments referring to Jews as "the descendants of apes and pigs". He said his remarks were directed at Israeli attacks on Palestinians. But German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who had just attended an annual parliamentary memorial event for Holocaust victims, said she had brought up the issue during her meeting with Morsi.**

But these dreadful moments also produce the best in some people, so non-Jewish friends of the Jewish community and Israel emerged making their feelings felt on Facebook, their own websites and in protest letters to *The Sunday Times*. What's more, they got results:

Here's respected Manchester-based writer Cathy Bryant in a letter to The S.T.:

**"One doesn't have to be Jewish to find the cartoon published on Holocaust Memorial Day abhorrent. Was it really too much to ask that for one day you respect the State of Israel's inhabitants, even if you disagree with some of its alleged policies?"**

She was joined, *inter alia*, by Derek Hopper who blogged of the deeply entrenched antisemitism still current in parts of Ireland. He concluded:

**"... the day I meet a supporter of Palestine who can discuss in detail various global conflicts and has taken a side in each one giving moral and historical reasons for doing so, I will take their opinions on Israel/Palestine at face value. Until that day I will assume that the shrill scrutiny they subject Israel to represents a primitive obsession with Jews, one that exists subconsciously in the fabric of our civilisation, the vestigial but ever-present remains of over a thousand years' worth of European Jew-hatred."**

The *S.T.*'s Acting Editor, Martin Ivens, was forced to apologise and by the Thursday following the caricature's appearance, people like Ms Bryant received the following message (my excerpts):

**"[ ... The] publication was a terrible mistake. The timing - on Holocaust Memorial Day - was inexcusable. The associations on this occasion were grotesque. As someone who understands the history and iconography in this context, I appreciate fully why publication has caused such offence and I apologise unreservedly for my part in that."**

**"I sought an urgent meeting with leading members of the Jewish community, ... Mick Davis, Chair of the Jewish Leadership Council, accepted my apology on behalf of the group and told the press afterwards that the community "now looks forward to constructively moving on from this affair".**

Then a full, public apology was published on Sunday 03 February. All very fine, but the damage was done and even when the bruise fades, the memory will linger.

So before closing the curtain on the H.M.D. show for 2013, let's survey the mixed bag it produced:

\* Liberal Democrat MP David Ward was censured by his party for comparing the Israeli Government to the Nazis, and accusing Jews of inflicting "daily atrocities" on the Palestinians.

\* Gareth Smith, a Huddersfield Town F.C. supporter has been banned from attending all football matches in England for the next three years after making a Nazi salute during a Championship game in December 2012. Meanwhile in Egypt, Soccer referee Nasser Sadeq Abdel Naby urged a boycott of Israel saying he hoped to "shake UEFA and FIFA, so that Israel can never again organise a World Cup or any other championship".

\* Germany marked the 80th anniversary of Hitler's rise to power with a talk from German-Israeli author, Berlin resident and Holocaust survivor Inge Deutschkron at the Reichstag. A couple of days later, Egypt's Islamist President Mohammed Morsi visited Berlin and dismissed criticism of his comments referring to Jews as "the descendants of apes and pigs". He said his remarks were directed at Israeli attacks on Palestinians. But German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who had just attended an annual parliamentary memorial event for Holocaust victims, said she had brought up the issue during her meeting with Morsi.

There were several brighter stories but most material I've read supports the report produced by Israeli Information and Diaspora Minister Yuli Edelstein, pointing to a sharp rise in verbal and physical attacks against Jews, particularly in Western Europe.

So I conclude by repeating the advice offered elsewhere: The emerging pattern is blatantly obvious and the worldwide Jewish community would be better avoiding official Holocaust Day activities, which could become the preserve of those memorialising non-Jewish victims.

Instead, international Jewry could all mark Israel's springtime *Yom Ha Shoa*, which falls eight days before Israeli Independence Day.

## Rainer Tormin

### From Student activist to Law maker

chats with Mark Ulyseas

“The late 60s through to the early 70s was a heady period of change in West Germany. There was an expectancy of revolution, the spirit for change was growing and the streets were invariably filled with protesting students.

On the extreme side of the spectrum there were a number of left-wing radical student groups that wanted a communist revolution in Europe and criticised German society and State and questioned the fundamentals on which these two were based on. And on the other side, it was the right wing conservatives who didn't want any change. Sandwiched between these two was a small group which I headed – **Demokratische Alternative**. Our group agreed with the left wing radicals that change needed to be made but did not agree with their methods and definitely not with the idea of turning either Germany or the rest of Europe into a communist State!

**Demokratische Alternative** began by changing the '*college conditions*'. At that time Professors had exclusive authority on all matters relating to '*college conditions*'. For instance, students could not question nor take part in any decision making including formulation of the syllabus and method of teaching. This situation soon changed with our group protesting the shortcomings of the system and ensuring a change for a more democratic method of functioning. Soon committees were made up of professors as well as students. This was the beginning of an overhaul of the entire '*old-fashioned college*' system.





From left to right: Daniel Cohn-Bendit aka Dany le Rouge, Willy Brandt and Gustav Heinemann

“Our society at that time was very conservative. Here are some instances....

- If you were over 21 years but not married you were not allowed to rent an apartment with a woman. It was illegal. The Law stated that those who rented out apartments to unmarried couples could be prosecuted because they were promoting sexual relations between unmarried adults. In a way terming this immoral!
- Abortion was illegal.
- Gay rights did not exist and one could go to jail for having sexual relations with a person of the same sex. I recall an incident when I was training to become an expert rower, my trainer was always short of money. The reason was that someone had been blackmailing him because he was gay. If reported he would have been jailed.
- Life was restricted and one couldn't do what one wanted. It had to be acceptable to the social mainstream.

The mass student protests which included promoting sexual freedom were sparked by the rule that women friends could not visit male friends in dormitories after 10 p.m. Of course, other major issues followed like the Vietnam War. These protests were fuelled by the French demonstrations for change in May 1968 which was headed by the legendary **French-German Daniel Cohn-Bendit** aka *Dany le Rouge* (French for “Danny the Red”, because of both his politics and the color of his hair). He brought the protests to the streets of Germany. Cohn-Bendit is presently a Member of the European Parliament among other things.

And then **Willy Brandt** was elected as Chancellor and sweeping social changes came about in the following years. Brandt was a Social Demokrat whose famous words still resonate today - **“Wir wollen mehr Demokratie wagen”** (We want to take a chance on more Democracy). He spoke about the need to reintegrate the students back into German Society, that they had good ideas about social change and that the people had to listen to them.

What followed was a deluge...democracy unfettered, sexual revolution and the general opening up of German society.

**Gustav Heinemann** was the President of West Germany at that time who often remarked that he wanted to be ‘the citizens’ President and not ‘President of the State’. He encouraged Germans to use their democratic rights and not be subservient to the authorities. This endeared him to the young generation fighting to break out of the restrictive conservatism.”

**“Wir wollen mehr Demokratie wagen”**  
We want to take a chance on more Democracy.

*Willy Brandt, Chancellor of West Germany*

### Where did you grow up and study?

Hamburg City State is where I grew up, studied and worked and still work! I attended Law School at the **University of Hamburg** and was admitted to the Bar.

My father began his career as a High School teacher and later became a senior officer in the State Government as Head of Department for Adult Education and was elected as Member of State Parliament. He belonged to the **Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschland** (SPD).

### And what did you do after college?

I joined government and one of my first jobs was Head of Personal Office to the First Mayor and State Governor of Hamburg, **Klaus von Donanyi**, from July 1981 thru July 1982. This post was exciting and varied from carrying the briefcase of the Governor to telephoning, on behalf of the Governor, Secretaries of Construction or Economy and instructing them what to do or not to do. This was followed by a stint in the Department of Interior (DOI).

When I joined DOI (1982 end-1990) I was given the job of drafting a law that would help police (German: Polizei) in their drive to collect the personal data of suspected criminals etc. without impinging on the civil rights of citizens. The **Bundesverfassungsgericht** (Federal Constitutional Court of Germany) had directed the DOI to work on such a law as consequence of a new created constitutional law of informational self-determination, after there were protests by human rights groups on the perceived ‘involvement’ of the State in the ‘personal’ lives of citizens.

At that time the Polizei were forbidden to collect any data on citizens. But they needed this data to tackle growing crime. For example, here were two areas –

- Identifying trouble makers in a protest rally. Usually in a rally there were always some trouble makers who provoked the crowd to react violently, attack Polizei and destroy property. These few trouble makers had been known to create chaos at a rally attended by genuine human and civil rights activists.

- Prostitution – it was not illegal – so collecting data should have normally been forbidden. But there was an urgent need to collect/collate data on this business. I spoke to some prostitutes who narrated instances where pimps kidnapped and traded women in the business. The prostitutes did not object to giving the Polizei any data needed because they knew they would be protected by the law.



Ralf Stegner

The Law is now in place and does not infringe on the democratic rights of the citizens.

In the summer of '88 I was sent by the government to study Economics and Computer Systems at Harvard. The Americans had been computerising their government work and I was sent to learn the system so that it could be applied back in Germany.

When I returned from Harvard I found my job responsibilities greatly diminished and so after a short while I quit government and joined one of the world's largest auditing/consultancy firms, KPMG.

Two years later I started my own consulting business in the area of public sector.

### **Do you still work for government in a private capacity?**

I have done over 300 projects that include work done for the Hamburg State, Federal Government agencies, Municipalities, Utilities and Hospitals.

Most recently I was involved in fighting joblessness.

The system prevailing before my input was that five different government agencies (Federal/State/Municipal) were involved in assisting in solving the problem of youth joblessness. My contribution to this has been to create an umbrella organisation so that under one roof a job seeker can approach the relevant agency. This has streamlined the process, cut down red tape and overhead expenditure and has resulted in fast processing of applications of youths seeking jobs.

### **One has heard about the economic crunch in Europe and how people are finding it very hard to find work etc. Please comment.**

Europeans are complaining on a high level. I would say that the poorest person in Germany is probably wealthier than the average Indian Middle Class person.

Nothing is wrong with the economy of Europe. We have accomplished a lot in 150 years. We have improved our society so much. It is ridiculous how people complain.

But we have to change. We need to change every day; to improve our standard/way of living.

Do you know that only 45% of German students go to college? The other 55% do not. It is something that needs to be changed. Added to this is the 'shrinking' population resulting in 'importation

**Ralf and I had studied together at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. Only a few months earlier we had organized a panel at the Kennedy School on the German issue. All panellists, including two speakers from East Germany, Ralf and myself were convinced at that time that the two German states would never ever reunite!**

of expertise/people' from other countries. And this adds to other social issues arising from foreigners working in Germany.

### **Is there any difference between students in your days and that of today in Germany?**

We needed to pass...it was as simple as that. It was not necessary to get high marks in an examination. After college a good job was always available.... So we spent our time doing many other things like protesting, being involved in social issues and broadening our horizons by taking part in the Arts etc. College was not just studies!

Nowadays students spend all their time studying their narrow/limited subject because if they don't get a high percentage, the chances of a good job will diminish. So they simply study a subject focused on a good examination and that's it! Further, with the advent of social media even though they are connected by the cell phone or computer they are actually disconnected because they don't spend quality time discussing issues one on one, face to face. The emphasis is more on "I, Me and Myself" than on wider pressing social issues affecting humanity.

### **When the Wall fell where were you and what were you doing?**

On November 9, 1989, I was invited to a dinner party by my friend [Ralf Stegner](#) and his wife. During the party somebody called Ralf and we turned on TV for the sensational news.

Ralf and I had studied together at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. Only a few months earlier we had organized a panel at the Kennedy School on the German issue. All panellists, including two speakers from East Germany, Ralf and myself were convinced at that time that the two German states would never ever reunite!

Nowadays Ralf is the leader of the [Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschland](#) (SPD) in Schleswig-Holstein, the most northern state of the Federal Republic of Germany, and he is also one of the party's most important federal leaders.

### **What is your message to the students of today?**

Studies should be only one part of the syllabus. One must go beyond the recommended books. One must go beyond the college gates...to involve oneself in social issues, in the questions of today. Then and only then can great leaders emerge from the people and solutions to problems affecting humankind can be solved.

### What inspires me as a photographer?

What is truly inspiring is the ever fresh newness of life, its surprises, its twists and turns, its imponderables. It seems to be a passing show with sameness wheeling life around on the self-same rails. Yet, it is not so when viewed from within. Life changes as mind evolves. Things which looked uninteresting at a certain stage of the subjective evolution turns just their opposite later when mind ripens.

As Tennyson said, every moment dies a man, every moment one is born. Seemingly a little gleam in Time suspended between two Eternities, it is by no means a brief candle but a splendid torch. Sometimes I feel this way- if life has a second edition I would love to correct the proofs.



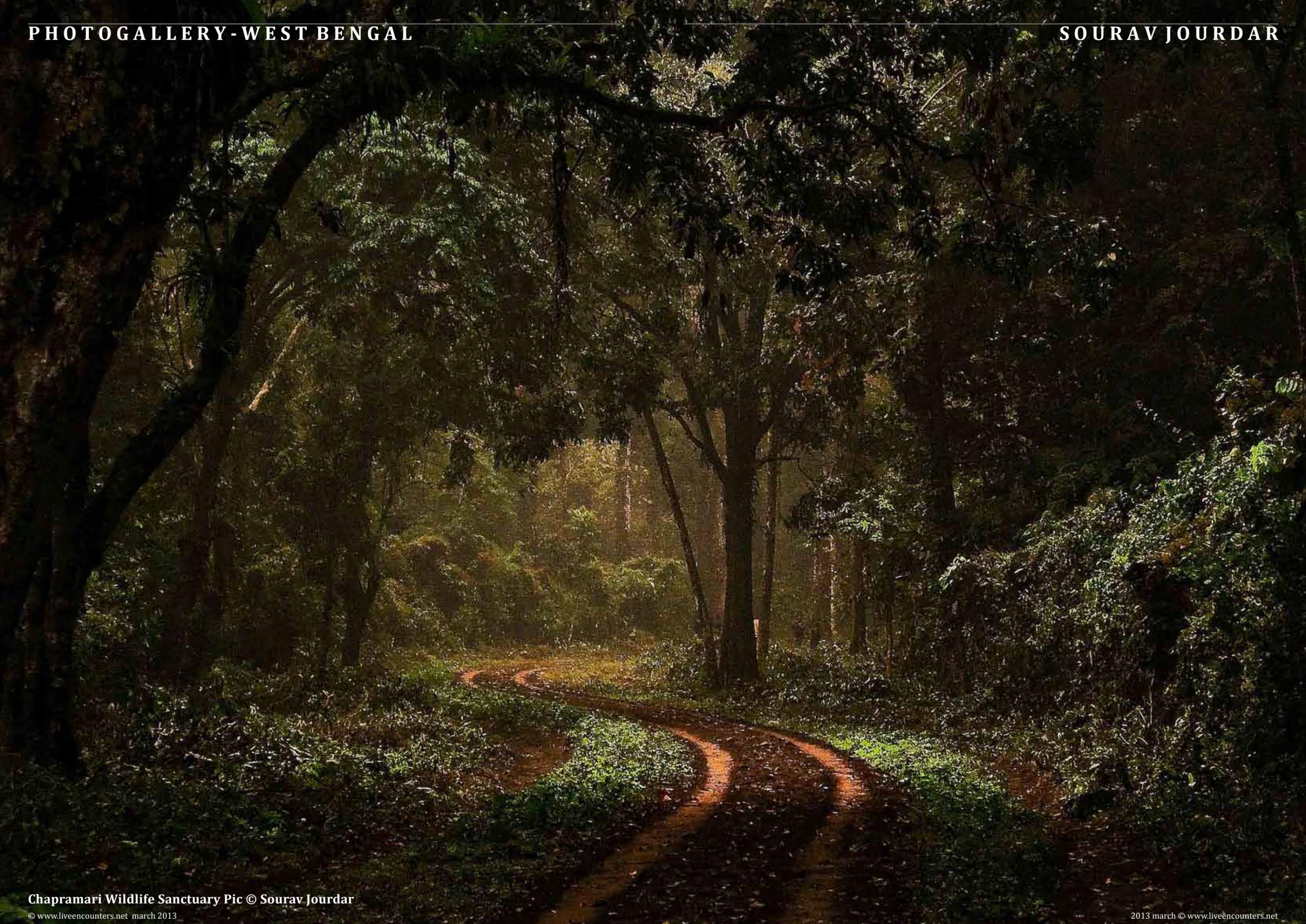
**Sourav Jourdar**  
Photographer, West Bengal, India



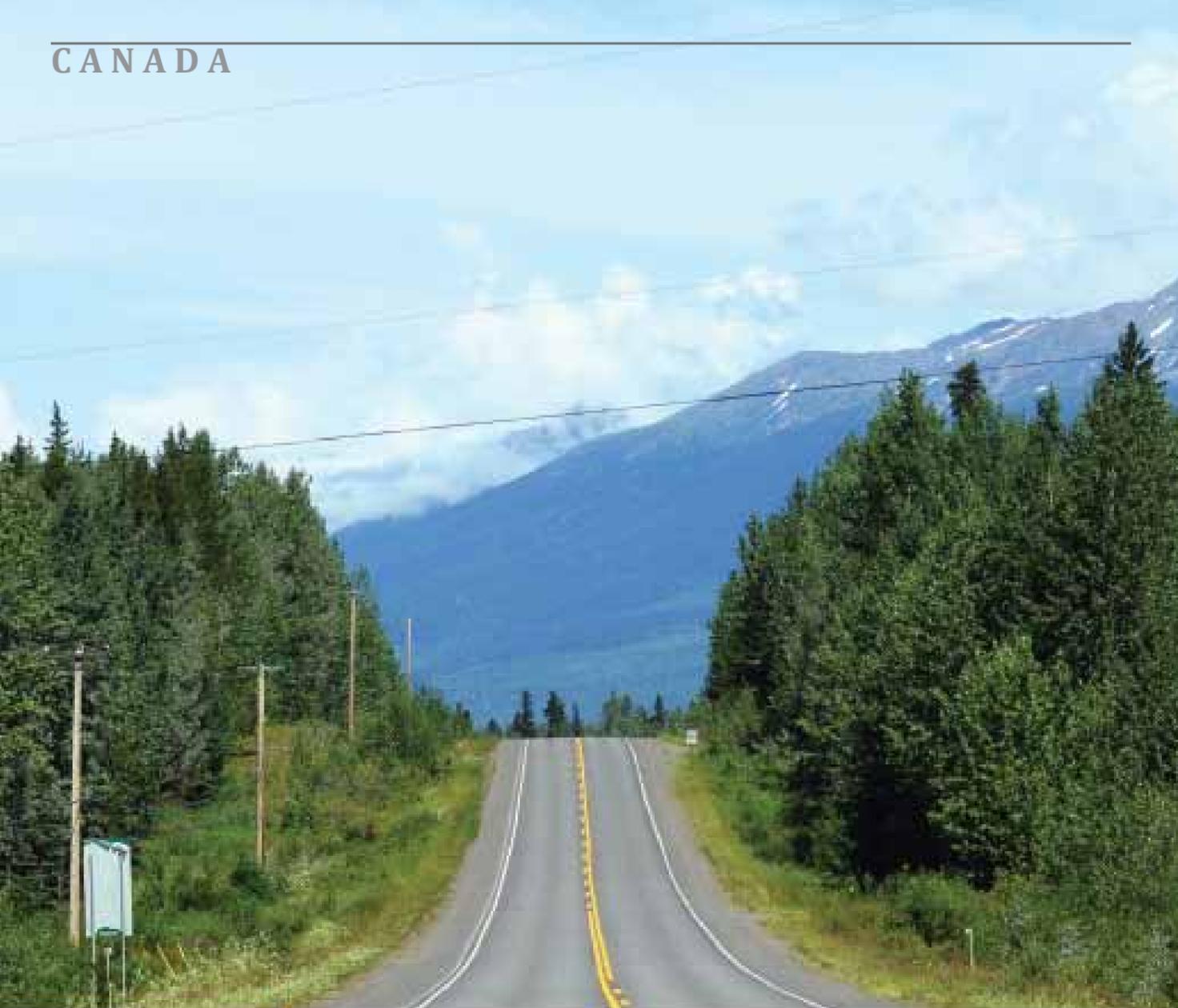
Fried potato and onion snacks popularly known as pakoras Pic © Sourav Jourdar



Vegetable seller in Siliguri Pic © Sourav Jourdar







## THOSE WHO TAKE US AWAY

Abusive Policing and Failures in Protection of Indigenous Women and Girls in Northern British Columbia, Canada



Community members participate in a spirit healing walk in Burns Lake, British Columbia, in remembrance of missing and murdered women. © Human Rights Watch

## Canada:

### Abusive Policing, Neglect Along 'Highway of Tears' Human Rights Watch Report

The 89-page report, *“Those Who Take Us Away: Abusive Policing and Failures in Protection of Indigenous Women and Girls in Northern British Columbia, Canada,”* documents both ongoing police failures to protect indigenous women and girls in the north from violence and violent behavior by police officers against women and girls. Police failures and abuses add to longstanding tensions between the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and indigenous communities in the region, Human Rights Watch said. The Canadian government should establish a national commission of inquiry into the murders and disappearances of indigenous women and girls, including the impact of police mistreatment on their vulnerability to violence in communities along Highway 16, which has come to be called northern British Columbia’s “Highway of Tears.”

*Human Rights Watch is dedicated to protecting the human rights of people around the world. We stand with victims and activists to prevent discrimination, to uphold political freedom, to protect people from inhumane conduct in wartime, and to bring offenders to justice. We investigate and expose human rights violations and hold abusers accountable.*

*We challenge governments and those who hold power to end abusive practices and respect international human rights law. We enlist the public and the international community to support the cause of human rights for all.*

*Human Rights Watch is an international organization with staff in more than 40 countries, and offices in Amsterdam, Beirut, Berlin, Brussels, Chicago, Geneva, Goma, Johannesburg, London, Los Angeles, Moscow, Nairobi, New York, Paris, San Francisco, Tokyo, Toronto, Tunis, Washington DC, and Zurich.*

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**Indigenous women and girls told Human Rights Watch that the RCMP has failed to protect them. They also described instances of abusive policing, including excessive use of force against girls, strip searches of women by male officers, and physical and sexual abuse. One woman said that in July, four police officers took her to a remote location, raped her, and threatened to kill her if she told anyone.**

(Ottawa) – The Royal Canadian Mounted Police in northern British Columbia has failed to protect indigenous women and girls from violence, Human Rights Watch said in a report released today. **Women and girls Human Rights Watch** interviewed also described abusive treatment by police officers, including excessive use of force, and physical and sexual assault.

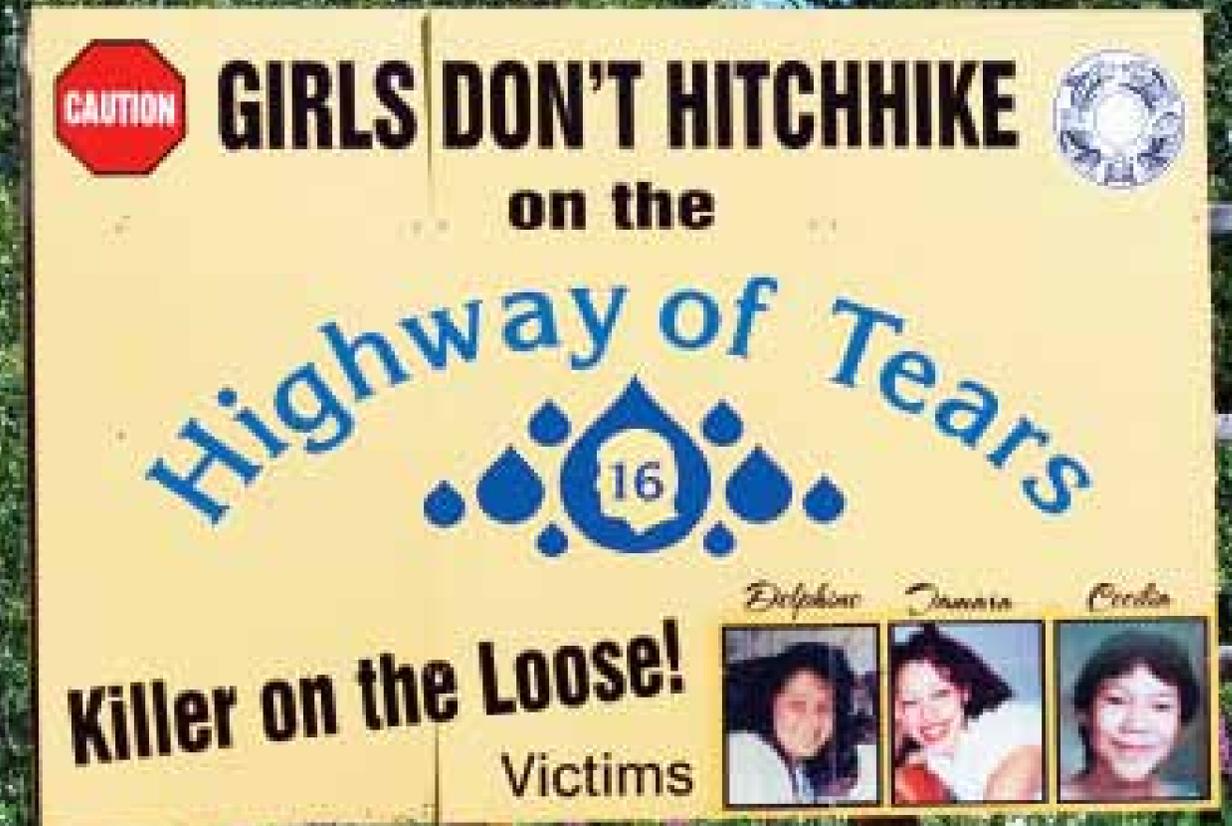
The 89-page report, **“Those Who Take Us Away: Abusive Policing and Failures in Protection of Indigenous Women and Girls in Northern British Columbia, Canada,”** documents both ongoing police failures to protect indigenous women and girls in the north from violence and violent behavior by police officers against women and girls. Police failures and abuses add to longstanding tensions between the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and indigenous communities in the region, Human Rights Watch said. The Canadian government should establish a national commission of inquiry into the murders and disappearances of indigenous women and girls, including the impact of police mistreatment on their vulnerability to violence in communities along Highway 16, which has come to be called northern British Columbia’s “Highway of Tears.”

**“The threat of domestic and random violence on one side, and mistreatment by RCMP officers on the other, leaves indigenous women in a constant state of insecurity,”** said **Meghan Rhoad** women’s rights researcher at Human Rights Watch. **“Where can they turn for help when the police are known to be unresponsive and, in some cases, abusive.”**

Human Rights Watch conducted research along Highway 97 and along the 724-kilometer stretch of Highway 16 that has become infamous for the dozens of women and girls who have been reported missing or were found dead in its vicinity since the late 1960s. In July and August 2012, Human Rights Watch researchers interviewed 50 indigenous women and girls, and conducted an additional 37 interviews with families of murdered and missing women, indigenous leaders, community service providers, and others across 10 communities.

Indigenous women and girls told Human Rights Watch that the RCMP has failed to protect them. They also described instances of abusive policing, including excessive use of force against girls, strip searches of women by male officers, and physical and sexual abuse. One woman said that in July, four police officers took her to a remote location, raped her, and threatened to kill her if she told anyone.

Women who call the police for help have been blamed for the abuse, shamed over alcohol or substance use, and have found themselves at risk of arrest for actions taken in self-defense, women and community service providers told Human Rights Watch.



**British Columbia's legislature recently established the Independent Investigations Office (IIO) to provide independent civilian "criminal investigations regarding police-related incidents involving death or serious harm." The law's definition of "serious harm" would exclude most cases of police rape and other forms of sexual assault, however, sending a strong message that assaults on women and girls are not important, Human Rights Watch said.**

"I will never forget that day," said "Lena G.," whose 15-year-old daughter's arm was broken by a police officer after the mother called the police for help during an argument between her daughter and her daughter's abusive boyfriend. "It's the worst thing I ever did. I wish I didn't call."

Despite policies requiring active investigation of all reports of missing persons, some family members and service providers who made calls to police to report missing women or girls said the police failed to investigate the disappearances promptly.

Women and girls have limited recourse when they experience police abuse or when police fail to provide adequate protection, Human Rights Watch said. They can lodge a complaint against the police with the Commission for Public Complaints. But the process is time consuming and the investigation of the complaint is likely to fall to the RCMP itself or to another police force.

Human Rights Watch researchers were struck by the fear expressed by women they interviewed. The women's reactions were comparable to those Human Rights Watch has found in post-conflict or post-transition countries, where security forces have played an integral role in government abuses and enforcement of authoritarian policies.

In September 2012, Human Rights Watch wrote to the RCMP to advise the national headquarters and the "E" Division in British Columbia of the results of the research and seek information about questions raised by the research. The RCMP responded in November. Human Rights Watch did not include details of specific incidents of abuse in the September 2012 letter because of victims' fears of retaliation if the officers they accused were able to identify them.

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"The lack of a reliable, independent mechanism to investigate allegations of police misconduct is unfair to everyone involved," Rhoad said. "It is unfair to the officers who serve honorably. It is unfair to the northern communities that deserve to have confidence in their police forces. And it is especially unfair to the indigenous women and girls, whose safety is at stake."

United Nations human rights bodies have criticized Canada for the inadequate government

**The government of Canada has taken some steps to address the murders and disappearances, Human Rights Watch said, but the persistence of the violence indicates a need for a national public commission of inquiry. "The high rate of violence against indigenous women and girls has caused widespread alarm for many years," Rhoad said. "The eyes of the world are on Canada to see how many more victims it takes before the government addresses this issue in a comprehensive and coordinated way."**

response to violence against indigenous women and girls. The United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women announced in December 2011 that it was opening an inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women in Canada. In 2008, the committee called on the government "to examine the reasons for the failure to investigate the cases of missing and murdered aboriginal women and to take the necessary steps to remedy the deficiencies in the system."

The [government of Canada](#) has taken some steps to address the murders and disappearances, Human Rights Watch said, but the persistence of the violence indicates a need for a national public commission of inquiry.

"The high rate of violence against indigenous women and girls has caused widespread alarm for many years," Rhoad said. "The eyes of the world are on Canada to see how many more victims it takes before the government addresses this issue in a comprehensive and coordinated way."

#### Additional recommendations

The Canadian government should develop and put into operation a national action plan in cooperation with indigenous communities to address the violence against indigenous women and girls, with attention to the current and historical discrimination and the economic and social inequalities that increase their vulnerability to violence, as well as the need for accountability for government bodies charged with preventing and responding to violence;

The British Columbia provincial government should expand the mandate of the Independent Investigations Office (IIO) to include authority to investigate allegations of sexual assault by police;

The RCMP, in cooperation with indigenous communities, should expand training and monitoring of training for police officers to counter racism and sexism in the treatment of indigenous women and girls in custody and to improve police response to violence against women and girls in indigenous communities; and

The RCMP should eliminate searches and monitoring of women and girls by male police officers in all but extraordinary circumstances and require documentation and review of any such searches by supervisors and commanders. It should prohibit cross-gender strip-searches under all circumstances.

A swing set stands on the former grounds of the Lejac Residential School, one of the compulsory boarding schools for indigenous children that operated until 1976 and a site of reported sexual and physical abuse.

© Human Rights Watch



### Statements about police abuse

"I feel so dirty....They threatened that if I told anybody they would take me out to the mountains and kill me, and make it look like an accident." – Gabriella P. (pseudonym), who told Human Rights Watch that in July 2012 four police officers took her to a remote location and raped her. She said that police officers had raped her in similar circumstances on previous occasions.

"Here's your choice, you either get charged with assaulting an officer or you take the beating,' [said one of the officers.] Stupid me I said, 'I'll take the beating.' She grabbed me, slammed me up on the wall and I hit my head. Then she slammed me on the ground. A male cop drove his knee into my back while she stripped earrings out of my ears and elastics out of my hair. 'Have you had enough?' 'Yes, I've had enough. I'm sorry.' " – Anna T. (pseudonym) who spat on a police officer when she was arrested.

"I had a woman about two years ago who decided to report [a sexual assault] to the RCMP – very rare. I have worked with many women sexually assaulted and only a handful go forward with charges. She was made to feel that she was to blame....You have a system of authority that puts the blame on the victim." – Community service provider in northern British Columbia.

For more information, visit HRW website: [www.hrw.org](http://www.hrw.org)



The memorial stone for the Downtown Eastside's missing and murdered women located in Crab Park, Vancouver. The stone reads: "The heart has its own memory, dedicated July 29 2007. In honor of the spirit of the people murdered in the Downtown Eastside. Many were women and many were Native aboriginal women. Many of these cases remain unsolved. All my relations."

© Human Rights Watch

At a community center in Prince George, BC, Georgia I. (a pseudonym) said that she was raped by a member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police almost 40 years ago as a 16-year old returning home from a pizza parlor. "I'm looking at filing an application to the Attorney General about the rape. He [the perpetrator] is still on the force...how many other young girls has he hurt, as he hurt me?" © Human Rights Watch



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HARVESTING SILVER

RANDHIR KHARE

Traditional Fishing Communities Of India

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# HARVESTING SILVER

by Randhir Khare

**In ponds, pools, rivers, streams and along the incredible coastline of the Indian peninsular, fishing communities continue their age-old struggle with water - to make it bear fruit. Though each community may have its own social and cultural ethos, a common thread weaves them together into a magnificent tapestry of tradition.**

Fishing is perhaps one of the most ancient of human activities on the Indian subcontinent. In streams, pools, rivers, lakes, on shorelines and in the deep sea, people from early hunting and gathering communities caught fish and other water creatures in a variety of different ways. For some, it was only to supplement their diet whilst for others it was an all-encompassing occupation which moulded the very patterns of their lives, beliefs, cultures and community ways.

In the hinterland, it was relatively easy to tell the difference between the two.

For the former, fish had to be caught in whatever way possible – by blockading streams and killing them with stones, stunning them with crushed dhatura fruits, shocking them with crude explosives, netting them with makeshift weapons, trapping them with baskets and baited hook. No regard was paid to the breeding season or any other environmental and ecological considerations. Interestingly, early subsistence fishing around the hinterland operated in water bodies other than the main arterial rivers. In time, the commercial possibilities of fishing attracted a more organised approach and fresh water fish rearing began being practiced.

For the latter, there were well defined fishing practices which were both eco-friendly as well as tuned to the seasonal habits, needs and breeding patterns of fish. Related to this was the fact that community cultures and beliefs began evolving around the practice of fishing, along with family roles and responsibilities. Activity was predominantly along arterial rivers. And so for example the region around West Bengal saw the flowering of a number of small traditional fishing communities along rivers like the Hooghly or in the dominantly delta region of the Sundarbans, or along the Ganga that runs through Uttar Pradesh, or at one time along parts of the Chambal, the Narmada, the Kaveri, the Bhavani and other major water courses. Because they each belonged to specific geo-cultural regions, they had little in common other than maybe the fact that they shared slightly similar fishing equipment and methods and were affected by partially similar seasonal patterns.

As time passed and the banks of rivers became increasingly populated, these small traditional fishing communities began vanishing, overtaken by commercial fishing endeavours and activities that either disrupted fish life in rivers or destroyed the possibility of rivers enriching their own fish stock. With the deterioration of fishing sources, the very core activity of the communities was broken – leading to social, cultural and economic dislocation and dissolution.



Pic © Mark Ulyseas

The very same pattern is being repeated on another scale along the lengthy coastline of the country. But in this case the process will take considerable longer.

India has the seventh longest coastline in the world, stretching to 7,500 km, crossing a number of states. Of these Gujarat has the most extensive shoreline which is often referred to as the Saurashtra Coast. Most of the traditional fishing communities here have been dispersed as more organised commercial fishing enterprises have stepped in. In places like Jakhau at the extreme western end of the Saurashtra coast, scattered communities now eke out a living as catches have been drastically reduced by commercial fishing operations. More and more of the people are taking to salt panning and other occupations. As a result, core community life and socio-cultural practices have dissolved.

From among the many traditional communities that once lived along the shoreline, the Kharva, a seafaring and fishing community is still dominant. Concentrated around Porbandar, but also spread westwards along the coast, this community has managed to maintain its roots despite changing conditions. Their association with the port where the city stands is old. Known in Sanskrit as Paurvelakul, the port city is centuries old. In fact, the Kharvas begin fishing in their new year only after offering prayers to their deity Paurva Mataji (The Port Goddess). So close is their relationship with the sea that they have a natural respect for its creatures. Recently, the world wide effort to save the whale shark from extinction got their unstinting public support. People from the community living around Veraval made an inflatable life size whale shark on the birth celebrations of one of their deities Ramdev Maharaj. This is a good example of how this traditional community has adapted and evolved.

As the Saurashtra coastline gives way to the Konkan belt, running southwards, the presence of the Kolis becomes apparent. Of course, what should be noted here is that not all Kolis are engaged in fishing. In fact, this is a community with numerous subgroups that are spread across the region. Most notable are those that fish. The entire region of Mumbai and its environs was once the home of these harvesters of the sea. It is said that even the names of places here have been derived from Koli originals. With strong roots in the region, this community has managed to dominate other lesser ones and continues its presence politically, socially, culturally and economically.

Like the Kharvas, they have managed to evolve and maintain a firm grip on their own destinies.



Pic © Mark Ulyseas

Their relationship with the sea is deep and emotive, finding expression in their performing arts which celebrate the very source of their survival and wealth.

Moving further south along the west coast one encounters the traditional fishing communities of Goa in the south Konkan. Much of their indigenous ways of community life, social structures and cultural expression have either been erased or mutated by Portuguese occupation and in most cases even local deities have vanished. Today, St Anthony is considered by many as the Patron Saint of Fishermen in the region.

What then gives them their identity? Quite obviously their traditional fishing vessels, equipment and techniques. From solitary hook and line fishing along the coast to hand nets, small cast nets and drag nets, deep sea nets, dramatic 200 metre long sea to shore channis nets, trawl nets and others, the range is baffling. Techniques have survived because they have been consistently practiced by members of the family and relatives close to one another. Active fishermen naturally pass on skills to novices.

Whilst the men build and repair vessels, maintain equipment and regularly go out to sea, women collect and sort fish when the catch is brought in and carry the smaller and less in demand fish and shellfish to the local market. The laying out of fish to dry is done by both men and women.

The impact of commercial fishing enterprises is enormous and growing rapidly with each day. Today, you will hear traditional fishermen complain that their large scale motorised competitors have hogged the waters and systematically cleared the shoreline areas of fish and shellfish. Changing climatic conditions have affected the tides and subsequently the life of the Arabian Sea and the movement of shoals. Nevertheless, they continue an unbroken tradition.

The coastline that continues from the lower Konkan areas along down to Kerala's Malabar shores is considered to be the country's richest marine region in biodiversity and fish life. This is because the shores are hardly 20 degrees above the equator, ensuring that the climate remains stable all the year round. Apart from this, forty-one rivers that start in the Western Ghats pour into the Arabian Sea mingling fresh water, salt and nutrients to ensure an abundance of marine life. In addition to this, two monsoon visits every year enrich the sea.



Pic © Mark Ulyseas

This is perhaps why fishing communities with diverse cultures have been concentrated here. Further, this section of the west coast has rich historical traditions both of fishing and trade. Actual records go back nearly 2,000 years. This exposure had nourished traditional fishing communities with a wider and deeper and more self-sustaining attitude to life and culture. In fact, it made them far more settled and prosperous. In turn their social and community systems were enhanced.

Perhaps one of the most interesting features of these traditional fishing communities is that even though they were culturally different from one another they were held together by common social institutions that managed any differences that may have arisen. Their knowledge, skill and practices developed a variety of fishing crafts, nets and catching techniques. So sensitive was their understanding of marine species that they could clearly identify the movement of shoals and use various types of mesh nets in order to catch grown fish and not damage the younger ones. The 'shore seine' is considered to be the most highly developed traditional fishing technique.

In this region, people belonging to the tribes of old were called meenavars and paravars and in time they were joined by the vambamuriyars, koshers and moka-aryas or mokayars. The others who are Hindu have numerous sub-castes like the mokayas, mukkuvas, valers, nulayars, arayas and mokaveeras.

Unfortunately, change has swept through the region, heralded by mechanised fishing and hence a disregard for traditional ways and community norms. With this has also come communal politics, causing drastic splits in the culture of wholeness and cooperation.

Whilst the geophysical character of the west coast has created innumerable havens and creeks, ensuring protected areas for traditional fishing community settlements to thrive, the east coast on the other hand (though wider) is more exposed to the sea, offering little protection to settlements. This has resulted in constant damage being caused to life and property by cyclones.

The eastern shoreline extends all the way from Kanyakumari at the southernmost tip northwards to the Ganga's delta in the Bay of Bengal. The lower half of the coastline is known as the Coromandel Coast and the upper half as the Northern Circars.

## HARVESTING SILVER



Pic © Mark Ulyseas

It is commonly agreed that the Hindu Pattinavars and the Catholic Paravas and Mukkuvas control fishing along the Tamil Nadu coastline. Of course. There are others like the Ambalakarars, Karaiyars, some smaller in numbers and others scattered. Included among them are the Vanniyars and Nadars who aren't traditional fishermen.

The Pattinavars are perhaps the most noticeable because of their clearly defined social management systems which ensure that equality is maintained and the rights of the individual are protected. Earlier, the nattamai system was followed but that later shifted to the 'democratic' panchayat. Interestingly, the villages along this coast are linked and work in unison. Information moves swiftly and when the need arises, entire villages are known to band together and stand as one.

Traditional fishing communities along the Tamil Nadu and southern Andhra coastline hold out against the juggernauts of change – mechanization, politics, drastic climatic changes and dwindling resources. Along the Andhra coast, mechanization and rapid uprooting of settlements has scattered communities while up along the Orissa coast cultural diversity still richly exists.

The shoreline of the southern district of Ganjam in Orissa has a long tradition of sea-fishing. Communities in the north took to marine fishing much later because they discovered that there was a demand for fish from Bengal. It would be useful to note here that most of the sea fishermen in Ganjam, Puri and other nearby places actually came from Andhra Pradesh. In fact they still have settlements stretching deep into that state. They are known as Noliyas and have a tradition that spans a thousand years. The community is divided into two castes, the Jalaris and Vodabalijas. The former are known to live in small settlements hugging the shoreline and are fairly well settled with a caste council that controls the economic and social life of a village. The latter also have a similar caste council.

Apart from these communities there are other fishing communities like the Gokhas and Kaibartas. Pressures of change have even brought traditional farmers to marine fishing. They however do not harvest the sea on boats but restrict their activities to beach seine activity. In northern Orissa one finds settlements of non-traditional fishing communities like the Harayans, Khandayat, Radhi, Teli, Ganda, Barik and Kumar. These and other lesser and more scattered communities all have a rich social and cultural ethos which persists.

## RANDHIR KHARE



Pic © Mark Ulyseas

The overflow is seen and felt when one moves into Bengal before the world of the delta reveals itself and one encounters a magnificent blend of the old and the new, the traditional and the non-traditional, living and struggling side by side, harvesting the Bay of Bengal - alive with cyclonic storms and unpredictable tides.

Despite the difference, people from fishing communities in India share the same struggles, triumphs and dreams, the same bafflement in the face of change, the same moments of oneness with water, waiting for the line to come alive with a tug, the net to be heavy with fish, and the great spirit of the waves to protect them in peace.

### Mender Of Nets

(A fisherman mends his nets)

Moments of silver over  
I sit among my nets  
Spread on the sand,  
Looping each wound -  
Tightening to a close  
It's vacant mouth.

Master of craft and crew  
Crouched on the shore  
I'm healing nets now  
That they may  
Embrace the rising tide  
Silver and wild.

In my hands I hold  
The snare of dreams.

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