



Top Stories

UK study highlights child abuse by humanitarian workers

A study by the non-profit organisation Save the Children UK claims that a number of aid workers and peacekeepers from organisations such as the United Nations and Save the Children itself have engaged in sexual abuse of children in the course of their humanitarian efforts. The study also says that many of these incidents remain unreported, and those involved often go unpunished.

Bob Barr wins the Libertarian Party presidential nomination

At the 2008 Libertarian Party National Convention in Denver, Colorado former Republican Congressman Bob Barr (GA) was nominated as the presidential candidate for the party. He served in Congress from 1995-2003.



Credit: Bob Barr - CC-BY

Florida teacher lets students vote to remove child from class

A kindergarten teacher in Port St. Lucie, Florida, United States is being reassigned following an incident last week in which her students voted to remove a possibly autistic child from the classroom.

New Jersey court rules Spanish citizens can sue over ship asbestos

A New Jersey state appeals court ruled Tuesday that fifteen Spanish citizens can sue over claims of health issues related to asbestos exposure while working aboard United States Navy and Coast Guard ships docked at United States-Spanish military installations. The defendant, Ohio-based company Owens Illinois, Inc., had sought a trial in a Spanish court, an opinion which was shared by the Superior Court which heard the case.

Wikipedia Current Events

The Governor of New York David Paterson directs New York state agencies to recognise gay marriages performed in other jurisdictions such as Canada, California and Massachusetts.

- In Dublin, over 100 countries, though not including the United States, Russia, or China, agree to a draft treaty banning cluster bombs.
- Ehud Barak, the Defense Minister of Israel and Leader of the Labor Party, calls for the resignation of the Prime Minister of Israel Ehud Olmert to step aside to face corruption allegations.
- The Majlis of Iran elects Ali Larijani as its new Speaker.
- The Nepalese Constituent Assembly meets for the first time since the Nepalese Constituent Assembly election, 2008 with the Assembly expected to establish a

Wikipedia Current Events

new Constitution of Nepal.

- The Nepalese Constituent Assembly declares Nepal to be a federal, democratic republic abolishing the 240 year old Nepalese monarchy.

FLDS couple reunited with child, Texas fear families will flee justice

One of the children, who on April 6 was removed from the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (FLDS) compound in Texas, has been reunited with his/her parents after a deal was struck between the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services and the parents.

Although the Texas authorities retain legal control over the child, the parents have been given the temporary right to look after their child. Dan Jessop, one of the parents, commented on the development. "It's one step closer to my family being together."

401 allegedly abused children were taken into state custody last month after officials received a call from a distressed 16-year-old girl. The children were found in a 1700-acre compound belonging to the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. It is now believed that the original phone call was actually a hoax.

The agreement follows an appeals court-ruling that Texas Child Protective Services (CPS) should

not have taken the children from the FLDS.

Meanwhile, CPS filed court papers today, saying that the families may choose to flee Texas if they are reunited per the appeals courts ruling. If they did that, they would suddenly be outside the court's jurisdiction, putting them at risk of abuse.

Lawyers for the mothers of the children, filed a counter-motion, stating that the children face "continuing, irreparable harm every day that they are separated from their parents."

Police were monitoring the compound ever since it was bought by the group one year ago. According to Texas law there must have been "a danger to the physical health or safety of the child which was caused by an act or failure to act of the person entitled to possession and for the child to remain in the home is contrary to the welfare of the child".

In addition to the above there must also be "the urgent need for protection required the immediate removal of the child and reasonable efforts, consistent with the circumstances and providing for the safety of the child, were made to eliminate or prevent the child's removal"

Finally, for state custody to be allowed there must also have been "reasonable efforts have been made to enable the child to return home". A lower court was given 10 days to make a decision on whether the above requirements are met. Although originally the mothers were allowed to stay with the children, they are not required to be separate unless the parents are aged under eighteen or the

children are very young. The FLDS said in an open letter the the Governor of Texas that a "critical crisis" was unfolding due to these recent incidents.

In addition to Texas, the group has compounds in Hildale and many other locations. The church has around 10,000 members in total, and was founded in the 1930s. The church split from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints due to the fact that it abandoned polygamy.

The Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints is led by Warren Jeffs – jailed last year for the rape and forced marriage of a 14 year old girl – is a breakaway branch of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which abandoned the practice of polygamy in 1890.

New Nazi victims' monument opens in Berlin

A new memorial opened in Berlin on Tuesday in honor of homosexual victims of the Nazis. The monument also aims to address the discrimination towards and social stigma surrounding homosexuality in today's society by confronting visitors with an image of a same-sex couple kissing.

The monument is a sloping gray concrete slab on the edge of Berlin's Tiergarten park, which echoes the vast field of smaller slabs that make up Germany's memorial to Jewish victims of the Holocaust, opened three years ago across the road.

Nazi Germany declared homosexuality a deviation that threatened the German race and convicted some 50,000 homosexuals as criminals. An estimated 10,000 to 15,000 gay

men were deported to concentration camps where few survived.

Berlin Mayor Klaus Wowereit stated that he regrets the lengthy time it took to honor the Nazis' gay victims.

The federal government financed the €600,000 building costs, while Berlin's city government provided the site.

Germany has allowed gay couples to become registered partners at registry offices since 2001, however the law falls short of permitting formal marriage. Berlin has a large gay community, as do other major German cities such as Cologne, Hamburg and Munich.

International ban on cluster bombs "very close" says British Prime Minister

British Prime Minister Gordon Brown has said that an international treaty aimed at banning the use of cluster bombs is "very close" to being achieved. It is hoped that many other countries, whether present at the talks or not, such as the United States and Canada, will sign up to the treaty.

Cluster bombs have been used in countries such as Cambodia, Kosovo, Afghanistan and Lebanon. More than 100 countries and multiple humanitarian organisations have supported a ban on their use, as they can remain dangerous for many years after being dropped and can cause "unacceptable harm to civilians".

Brown's comments come after ten days of talks in Dublin between 109 nations, but countries such as the United States, Russia and China oppose the treaty. A final draft is due to be shown to

delegates at a talk this afternoon and could result in a deal "by the end of the week, possibly sooner" according to the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

The move by Brown would mean that the entire stockpile of cluster bombs owned by the UK would be scrapped, costing taxpayers millions. While many countries such as Britain, Germany, Japan and Switzerland have asked for 7 to 15 years to fully implement the rules, many humanitarian organisations have criticised this suggestion.

Toilet on International Space Station breaks

According to a NASA status report, the lone toilet on the International Space Station (ISS) has broken, leaving the astronauts on board having to use a rigged-up system of bags to collect any liquid waste.

According to NASA, the collection fan motor broke sometime last week after one of the crew used the Russian-made toilet in the space station. The NASA status report quotes the crew as hearing "a loud noise and the fan stopped working". Russian officials have yet to solve the cause of the breakage and fix it. The seven-year old toilet has broken once before but not for a long period of time.

The crew had been temporarily using the toilet in the Soyuz capsule, but this had a very limited capacity.

NASA officials are now considering flying in replacement parts for the toilet and putting them on Space Shuttle Discovery, which is due to launch on Saturday and scheduled to arrive at the ISS on Monday.

Lewis Hamilton wins 2008

Monaco Grand Prix

Vodafone McLaren Mercedes driver Lewis Hamilton has won the FIA Formula-1 2008 Grand Prix de Monaco on the Circuit de Monaco in Monte Carlo, Monaco on May 25. It became the first time in the 23 year old Briton's career in F1. Last year, he finished in second place after his former teammate Fernando Alonso. In this race Alonso finished on a distant 10th place in his Renault car. The last British winner at Monaco was Graham Hill in 1969. Rain over the weekend causes a wet start to the Sunday race, causing driver mistakes, however no rain fell during the race or qualifying.

Robert Kubica from BMW Sauber finished behind Hamilton, after gaining 3 positions since the race start. Strategists at Ferrari underestimated the weather condition and the pace of their McLaren and BMW rivals, so Felipe Massa dropped to the third place starting from the brilliant pole.

Adrian Sutil was set to win 4th place until he was hit in the rear by Kimi Räikkönen, who lost control of his car while braking at the chicane after the tunnel. Räikkönen himself dropped from 5th to 9th place and Sutil was out of the race. Sutil qualified only 19th only ahead his Force India teammate Giancarlo Fisichella. Later Sutil was warned by the race stewards that he overtook other cars (Rubens Barrichello, Kazuki Nakajima and Nelson Piquet Jr.) on lap 13 under a waived yellow flags condition, but went unpunished.

Australian driver Mark Webber secured 4th for Red Bull-Renault after Sutil and Räikkönen collided. Sebastian Vettel scored his first points in 2008 season as the Toro Rosso's STR3 car debut. Rubens Barrichello made 6th for Honda.

This race became the 600th race for Frank Williams as his team's young driver Kaz Nakajima scored 2 points. Heikki Kovalainen, Hamilton's teammate closed top eight with one additional point.

Lewis Hamilton is now leading the Championship with 38 points, 3 ahead of Räikkönen, 4 ahead of Massa and 6 ahead of Kubica. Ferrari team still 16 points ahead of McLaren and 17 points ahead of BMW.

The race finished about 43 seconds after 2 hour limit expired.

UK submarine hits rocks in Red Sea

HMS Superb, a navy submarine from the United Kingdom, crashed into rocks in the northern half of the Red Sea on May 26. The UK Ministry of Defence (MoD) released a statement saying, "there were no casualties and the submarine remains watertight, is safe on the surface and able to operate under its own power."

The MoD also said that "the submarine's nuclear reactor is completely unaffected, and there is no environmental impact."

BBC News has reported that an investigation will be launched to discover the cause of the incident.

According to the MoD, "no other vessel, military or civil, was involved in the incident." The MoD has stated that the process of informing the relatives of the crew is underway.

New Jersey court rules Spanish citizens can sue over ship asbestos

A New Jersey state appeals court ruled Tuesday that fifteen Spanish citizens can sue over claims of

health issues related to asbestos exposure while working aboard United States Navy and Coast Guard ships docked at United States-Spanish military installations. The defendant, Ohio-based company Owens Illinois, Inc., had sought a trial in a Spanish court, an opinion which was shared by the Superior Court that had heard the case earlier. The three-judge panel appellate court overturned the decision of the Superior Court in a 3-0 ruling.

The Spanish citizens worked aboard U.S. ships between 1950 and 1998, and claim that they were exposed to asbestos dust and fibers from piping insulation produced by Owens-Illinois. The piping insulation was originally manufactured in Sayreville, Middlesex County, and Berlin, Camden County, New Jersey. The workers say they suffer from diseases related to asbestos such as asbestosis. Owens-Illinois has headquarters in Toledo, Ohio and is a Delaware corporation.

The New Jersey appellate panel ruled that the Superior Court judge did not consider where the plaintiffs wanted their case heard, and also held that the U.S. ships are considered U.S. territory and thus the workers' claimed health issues did not begin on Spanish land. Attorneys for Owens-Illinois argued that U.S. ships, when docked, are subject to the law of Spain, and so the case should be heard in Spanish courts.

"In sum, we conclude that defendant has failed to carry its burden to demonstrate that Spain is an available adequate forum to adjudicate the parties' dispute."
—Judge Anthony Parrillo

The court's opinion, written by Judge Anthony Parrillo, explained

the ruling: "In sum, we conclude that defendant has failed to carry its burden to demonstrate that Spain is an available adequate forum to adjudicate the parties' dispute and therefore the motion to dismiss on forum non conveniens grounds should have been denied without consideration of public- and private-interest factors." The decision reversed the ruling of the Superior Court and remanded the suit back to that court for trial.

"Spanish law will not allow, under the facts of these cases, to file a claim in Spain." —Mitchell S. Cohen, attorney for plaintiffs

"I find it difficult to understand how an appellate division court can countenance keeping the cases in New Jersey when there is absolutely no relation to New Jersey. There is barely any relationship to the United States of America. They've made their decision," said counsel for Owens-Illinois, John Garde, in a statement in *The Star-Ledger*. No decision has yet been made on whether the company will appeal the ruling.

Mitchell S. Cohen, attorney for the Spanish workers, said that the Superior Court judge should have considered that the New Jersey court was the only location where the lawsuit could have been tried before dismissing the case.

"Spanish law will not allow, under the facts of these cases, to file a claim in Spain," said Cohen to the *Associated Press*. Cohen said that Spanish law states that a case cannot be filed in Spain because the alleged injuries occurred on U.S. territory.

This is not the only asbestos-related lawsuit in which Owens-Illinois is cited as a defendant. The company is also a defendant

(among other defendants) in asbestos cases filed in Ohio and other states. In an April 30 press release the company reported that asbestos-related payments had decreased slightly, stating:

"Asbestos-related cash payments during the first quarter of 2008 were \$40.2 million, down slightly from \$41.0 million during the first quarter of 2007." According to the press release, the company had 14,000 pending asbestos-related lawsuits as of March 31, 2008. In its balance sheet for the first quarter of 2008, the company reported US\$835 million in asbestos-related liabilities.

"We exited the business 50 years ago and have been dealing with the legal issues for almost 30 years" —Edward C. White, Owens-Illinois Chief Financial Officer

In a May 2 earnings call with financial analysts, Owens-Illinois Chief Financial Officer Edward C. White addressed asbestos-related expenses. "Only a small portion of our first quarter asbestos payments related to the company's proactive legal strategy to reduce risk and accelerate asbestos resolution on favorable terms. Nevertheless, this strategy continues and additional expected spending is reflected both on the current liability portion of our balance sheet as well as in our full-year cash flow projection," said White. "We exited the business 50 years ago and have been dealing with the legal issues for almost 30 years. For OI, this remains a limited declining liability, which we will continue to manage in a conscientious and responsible manner."

Asbestosis is a disease resulting from asbestos exposure which causes lung scarring and can lead to lung cancer. Exposure to

asbestos can also lead to a more serious condition known as mesothelioma. Mesothelioma is a cancer which develops in the sac surrounding the lungs and chest cavity, abdominal cavity, or the sac surrounding the heart. Patients with malignant mesothelioma generally do not have positive outcomes, and once diagnosed typically have six months to a year to live.

IE8 Beta 2 will be released soon

Internet Explorer 8 beta 2 is expected to be released in the third quarter of 2008, which is between 1 July and 30 September, says Microsoft employee Nick MacKechnie in a blog written and posted yesterday. The beta will be aimed at end-users, whereas beta 1 was aimed at web developers.

The long awaited browser is said to comply with HTML and CSS standards. These are codes that are used to create the appearance and structure of a web page. Internet Explorer is notorious for not complying with these standards, so this release is expected to be an important release in its history. In beta 1, many websites have failed to display in the "IE8 standards mode," but many bug reports have been submitted to Microsoft regarding this issue, so rendering may improve.

The beta 2 release is expected to improve its standards compliant mode even more as well as adding a more customisable graphical user interface that is expected to be similar to Microsoft Office 2007. This is the first version of Internet Explorer that will have this customisable interface.

The final version of Internet Explorer 8 is expected at the end

of the year.

Bob Barr wins the Libertarian Party presidential nomination

At the 2008 Libertarian Party National Convention in Denver, Colorado former Republican Congressman Bob Barr (GA) was nominated as the presidential candidate for the party. He served in Congress from 1995-2003.

Barr officially entered the race on May 12, two weeks before the convention amidst months of speculation. He won the nomination on the sixth ballot of the convention edging Mary Ruwart 324-276. Wayne Allyn Root was nominated as his running mate after losing on the fifth ballot and throwing his support to Barr.

Barr's main opposition in the Libertarian race highlighted his vote in Congress in favor of the USA PATRIOT Act in 2001 following the September 11 attacks. He has since renounced the vote, and has worked to repeal the act. Barr's candidacy was also seen by Libertarian "radicals" as an attempt by conservatives to take over the party.

Following his nomination Barr remarked that he "will not let [the Libertarian Party] down" and that it "will be a historic and positive campaign that will succeed." To detractors who say he will take votes away from Republican candidate John McCain, Barr stated that "If Senator McCain ... does not succeed in winning the presidency ... it will be because Senator McCain did not present, and his party did not present, a vision, an agenda, a platform and a series of programs that actually resonated positively with the American people." Party spokesman Andrew Davis described the situation among the

electorate as "want[ing] and need[ing] another choice" and stating that "that choice is Bob Barr."

"I just ended my political career, from 15 years old to now, my political career is over, and it's no big deal" —Mike Gravel

Barr's nomination made former Alaskan senator Mike Gravel who recently switched from being a Democratic candidate to a Libertarian candidate for President back on March 25, 2008 to end his political career.

Gravel said, "I just ended my political career, from 15 years old to now, my political career is over, and it's no big deal. I'm a writer, I'm a lecturer, I'm going to push the issues of freedom and liberty. I'm going to push those issues until the day I die."

Florida teacher lets students vote to remove child from class

A kindergarten teacher in Port St. Lucie, Florida, United States is being reassigned following an incident last week in which her students voted to remove a possibly autistic child from the classroom.

According to school officials, Morningside Elementary School teacher Wendy Portillo held a vote in her kindergarten classroom concerning the removal of 5-year-old Alex Barton. The boy's mother, Melissa Barton, says her son is in the process of testing for Asperger's syndrome, a form of high-functioning autism which can impair social skills and behavior. She says Alex has had disciplinary problems stemming from his condition.

Alex's mother gave her account of the events. She said each of his

classmates was allowed to say what they didn't like about him; this included comments such as "disgusting" and "annoying", Barton said. After that, the teacher held a vote in which the class voted out Alex by a margin of 14 to 2. "He was incredibly upset," she said. "The only friend he has ever made in his life was forced to do this." Barton says that after the vote, the teacher asked Alex how he felt, to which he replied, "I feel sad."

"The only friend he has ever made in his life was forced to do this."
—Melissa Barton, Alex's mother

Alex then left the classroom and spent the rest of the day in the school nurse's office, his mother says. The nurse reportedly told Barton to talk with the child's teacher, who told the mother what had happened. Barton says her son will not be returning to Morningside Elementary anymore. "I'll never be able to send him to school again without worrying if something is going to happen," she said.

Barton says she is considering whether to file a lawsuit. The state attorney's office decided that no criminal charges would be filed, since the incident did not meet the criteria for emotional child abuse. But the school district is investigating Portillo's actions, says St. Lucie County School District spokeswoman Janice Karst, and it could be up to two weeks before a conclusion is reached.

After being contacted by Barton, the school's resource officer interviewed Portillo about the incident. According to police spokeswoman Michelle Steele, the teacher said Alex had been sent to the office earlier that day, and

when he came back to class, Portillo asked the students if they were ready for him to return. She allegedly had told her class that the vote was part of a lesson on tallying.

Portillo, who has taught in St. Lucie County for 12 years, has been reassigned out of the classroom at the district offices for the time being. Alex's mother believes that Portillo has "no business being near children at all" and should be fired, calling her reassignment "just a slap in the face".

The school board has advised Portillo not to speak with the press.

Today in History

363 – Roman Emperor Julian defeated Sassanid Emperor Shapur II outside the walls of the Sassanid capital of Ctesiphon, but was unable to take the city.

1167 – A 1,600-man force of the Holy Roman Empire led by Christian of Buch and Rainald of Dassel defeated a 10,000-man Papal States army.

1848 – Wisconsin became the 30th U.S. state admitted to the Union.

1913 – The Rite of Spring, a ballet with music by Russian composer Igor Stravinsky, was first performed at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris.

1953 – New Zealand explorer Edmund Hillary and Nepalese Sherpa mountaineer Tenzing Norgay became the first people to reach the summit of Mount Everest.

1999 – Olusegun Obasanjo took office as President of Nigeria, the first elected and civilian head of state in Nigeria after 16 years of military rule.

May 29 is Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna Day in Fiji

Quote of the Day

Those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable.
~ John F. Kennedy

Word of the Day

leer v

- To look, often sideways, with sexual desire or malicious intent.

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