More than just a day of peace

Text: Cathrin Jaeger

What would happen to the world if there was only one day without war, without violence, without victims?

For English actor and film-maker, Jeremy Gilley, this question was not simply an idealistic day-dream; it was a motivation that led to the establishment of an organisation dedicated to the promotion of an International Peace Day.

Frustrated by the news of war and destruction, Gilley set about establishing a day where there would be no violence and fighting.
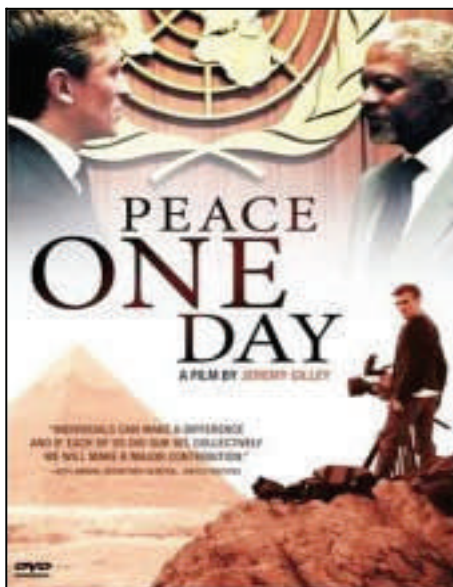
Although the United Nations had approved a peace day in 1981, the idea was languishing in the dark. Gilley wanted the day of non-violence to be one with a global ceasefire and be respected with a fixed calendar date.

"I realised there was no Day of Peace. There was nothing to unite the world, above politics, above religion. We have Earth Day, we have Valentine's Day. We should surely have a peace day," said Gilley.

For a few years, Gilley travelled all around the world and met victims of war, heads of states, Noble Peace Laureates, aid workers, freedom fighters, media moguls and United Nations representatives in his quest for peace.

In 2001, Gilley's efforts paid off. The United Nations General Assembly passed resolution 55/282, declaring that "the International Day of Peace shall be observed on 21 September each year" and that it "shall henceforth be observed as a day of global ceasefire and non-violence" with "a cessation of hostilities for the duration of the Day".

Gilley filmed the process of lobbying the international community

Gilley made a film of his efforts to lobby the international community to establish an international day of peace.

to establish an international day of peace. You can watch excerpts of Gilley's film and on POD's website at www.peaceoneday.org.

The work has not ended. To raise awareness of Peace Day, Gilley's non-profit organisation, Peace One Day (affectionately known as POD) continues to engage all sectors of society to build peace through the practical manifestation of non-violence and celebrate Peace Day in every possible way.

"By working together there will be Peace One Day," said Gilley.

As part of their commitment to the International Day of Peace on 21 September, the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies and Sydney Peace Foundation organised a lunch time screening of Jeremy Gilley's film.

Cathrin Jaeger is a German student of philosophy, British and American studies with special interest in human rights, and peace and conflict theories.

Short Takes

Tickets for this year's City of Sydney Peace Prize Lecture are now on sale. Thanks to all our friends and supporters who have already purchased the tickets to the eagerly awaited lecture by Dr Hans Blix on **7 November 2007** at the **Sydney Town Hall.**

You can purchase your tickets online from Ticketek (click here) or call 132 849. (The tickets are selling fast!)

Former Australian Prime Minister **The Hon Paul Keating** will present the Sydney Peace Prize to Dr Blix on **8 November 2007** at an Award Ceremony and Gala Dinner at the **Great Hall, University of Sydney**.

Mary Kostakidis will be the MC for the black tie occasion.

For enquiries and bookings for the Gala Dinner, please contact us at spf@arts.usyd.edu.au

Click here for details to both events. We look forward to seeing you in November!

Amnesty International UNSW will be hosting a panel discussion on "Human rights and Australian identity in the age of terror".

Speakers include: The Rt Hon Malcolm Fraser, AC CH, The Hon John Dowd AO QC, Professor George Williams and Dr Ben Saul.

Date: 3 October 2007
Venue: UNSW Kensington Law Theatre from 6:30 - 8:00pm.

For more information, please visit www.amnesty.unsw.edu.au

Editorial: Jaime Koh