



Dear Friend,

Greetings from the Project on Middle East Democracy!

Last week debate on Capitol Hill continued surrounding Iraq and particularly the financing of the reconstruction efforts there. The new Pakistani coalition government drew praise for reaching an agreement to reinstate justices deposed last year, and debate continued surrounding the Turkish Constitutional Court's confrontation with the ruling AKP. POMED has been busy as well, with recent conferences in Morocco and Egypt, and a Capitol Hill discussion of the budget and appropriations process as it relates to Middle East democracy. This week, the House and Senate Armed Services Committees will mark up the defense authorization bill, while Secretary Rice wraps up her latest visit to the Middle East.

For more detailed coverage of the debates surrounding U.S. foreign policy and the prospects for democracy in the Middle East, be sure to check out POMED's blog, [the POMED Wire](#).

The Weekly Wire

May 5, 2008

Legislation

On Monday (4/28), the Senate passed [S.RES.536](#) sponsored by **Sen Susan Collins** (R-ME), recognizing the 15th anniversary of the founding of Seeds of Peace, an organization promoting understanding, reconciliation, acceptance, coexistence, and peace in the Middle East, South Asia, and other regions of conflict.

On Tuesday (4/29), **Rep Lynn Woolsey** (D-CA) introduced resolution **H.R.5925** [text not yet available] to establish a fund to support international efforts for political reconciliation in Iraq, and for other purposes.

On Tuesday (4/29), the Senate voted on bill [S.2829](#) sponsored by **Sen Edward Kennedy** (D-MA) and originally introduced on (4/8), to make technical corrections to section 1244 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008, which provides special immigrant status for certain Iraqis, and for other purposes.

On Tuesday (4/29), **Rep Thomas Allen** (D-ME) introduced [H.CON.RES.337](#), honoring Seeds of Peace for its 15th anniversary as an organization promoting understanding, reconciliation, acceptance, coexistence, and peace in the Middle East, South Asia, and other regions of conflict. On Wednesday (4/30) The House Committee on Foreign Affairs agreed to seek consideration of the bill under suspension of the rules by unanimous consent.

On Wednesday (4/30), the House Committee on Foreign Affairs agreed to seek consideration of [H.CON.RES.332](#) under suspension of the rules by unanimous consent. The resolution recognizes the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

On Wednesday (4/30), House Foreign Affairs Committee also agreed to seek consideration of the bill under suspension of the rules by unanimous consent for resolution [H.RES.1127](#), sponsored by **Rep Gary Ackerman** (D-NY), condemning the endemic restrictions on freedom of the press and media and public expression in the Middle East and the concurrent and widespread presence of anti-Semitic material, Holocaust denial, and incitement to violence in the Arab media and press. The bill had originally been introduced to the House on 4/22.

On Thursday (5/1), **Rep John Lewis** (D-GA) introduced resolution [H.RES.1169](#) expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that the United States should become an international human rights leader by ratifying and implementing certain core international conventions. It was referred to House Committee on Foreign Affairs.

On Thursday (5/1), the Senate passed/agreed to resolution sponsored by **Sen Robert Casey** (D-PA) [S.RES.494](#), expressing the sense of the Senate on the need for Iraq's neighbors and other international partners to fulfill their pledges to provide reconstruction assistance to Iraq. Sen Casey originally introduced the legislation on 4/1.

Committee Hearings

On Thursday (5/1), The House Foreign Affairs Committee held a joint hearing with the Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia and Subcommittee on International Organizations, Human Rights, and Oversight with Chairmen [Gary L. Ackerman](#) (D-NY) and **Bill Delahunt** (D-MA), respectively, presiding. [Mr. Rabih Torbay](#), [Mr. David Holdridge](#), [Mrs. Anastasia Brown](#) provided testimony on "No Direction Home: An NGO Perspective on Iraqi Refugees and IDPs."

On Thursday (5/1) the Senate Foreign Relations Committee held a hearing on the nominations [Mr. Robert Stephen Beecroft](#) to be Ambassador to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, [Mr. James B. Cunningham](#) to be Ambassador to the State of Israel, [Mr. Joseph Evan LeBaron](#) to be Ambassador to the State of Qatar. **Senator John Kerry** presided.

In Washington:

Urging New U.S. Policy in the Region: While some [argued](#) that the United States has succeeded in marginalizing itself as a would-be mediator in the Arab world, others noted the [dire need](#) for a [policy](#) that supports the Lebanese state, not one that assists in

fracturing it. Some also urged the U.S. to address the crisis of the [2 million Iraqi refugees and the 2.7 million internally displaced persons](#), while others feel the Bush Administration need to make it plain to the Turkish government that banning the AKP would cause [serious damage](#) to U.S.-Turkish relations.

Dialogue with Iran over Iraq: While Iraq's **U.N. Ambassador Hamid Al Bayati** and **U.S. Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad** claimed that the [Iranian and Syrian governments](#) are incessantly attempting to destabilize Iraq, [many criticized](#) the U.S. for such [accusations](#) at a time when the Iraqi and Iranian governments are so [closely tied](#) to each other.

Assessing McCain's Foreign Policy: John McCain's "[League of Democracies](#)" idea, one that some [point out](#) is not new, no longer seems to hold much [enthusiasm](#) for the campaign. Some [argued](#) that McCain is a full-fledged neoconservative who had outlined the [Bush doctrine](#) years ago, while others feel his foreign policy is [schizophrenic](#).

Also Worth Reading

Last week POMED held a panel discussion on Capitol Hill entitled, "[Fiscal Year 2009 Appropriations and Democracy, Governance and Human Rights in the Middle East](#)." The panel included POMED Director of Advocacy **Stephen McInerney, Ambassador Edward Gabriel**, and Freedom House Executive Director **Jennifer Windsor**. The group examined President Bush's fiscal year 2009 budget request and the consequences for democracy and governance programs across the Middle East, in the context of the start of the appropriations season.

In the Middle East:

Pakistani Coalition Takes Next Step: Top leaders of the Pakistan People's Party and Pakistan Muslim League-N [announced](#) that they had agreed to reinstate deposed judges, bringing much [praise](#) upon the newly elected Pakistani government. Many discussed Pakistan's new leaders' [policy change](#) in response to terrorism, in particular its own [agenda of compromise with radicals](#), especially considering a popular backlash in the Arab World against [Al-Qaeda tactics](#). Meanwhile, [Mr. Ahmadinejad's visit to Islamabad](#) highlighted areas in which the two countries can move forward.

Urging Change in the Human Rights Arena: While some urged Turkish **Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan** to completely [overhaul](#) Article 301, which criminalizes any insults to "Turkishness," others highlighted Saudi Arabia's [restrictions on press and speech freedoms](#). In light of the Syrian government's [oppression of civil society](#), many called for [increased diplomacy](#) by the United States toward Syria. The Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars hosted a talk examining the state of rights in Morocco and whether [Morocco is on the path to democratization](#).

Looking at Iraqi Politics: Some [analyzed](#) what can be seen as the more constructive role of **Prime Minister Nuri Al-Maliki** as of late, while others noted that a [settlement](#) between Iraqi forces and the Sadr militia is not likely to come soon. Analyses of [the new Sunni landscape](#) and the [continued formation of the Iraqi Parliament](#) also provide for interesting reads.

Violence in Afghanistan: The recent [assassination attempt](#) targeting **Afghani President Hamid Karzai** led some to believe that [such militancy](#) is [present](#) in both

Afghanistan and Pakistan and there is a need to be [cautious](#) in the face of renewed violence.

Also Worth Reading

Last weekend, POMED held a conference in Rabat, Morocco entitled, "**Find Your Voice: A Cross-Cultural Forum on Political Participation and Civic Activism,**" kicking off the 2008 "**Young Global Leaders Forum: Democratic Development in the Middle East and North Africa**" series of conferences. The conference brought together 25 American and 25 Moroccan students and young professionals to explore pathways to youth empowerment through political participation, civil society activism, media and blogging. A preliminary report on the Morocco conference is now available [here](#). Over this past weekend (May 2-3), the second conference in the series was held in Cairo – keep an eye out for reports from Cairo and more details on all of the conferences coming soon.