Sacred Spaces and Accursed Conflicts: A Global Trend?[*]

Chaiwat Satha-Anand[**]

Introduction

On April 15, 2011, a suicide bomber blew himself in an Indonesian mosque situated inside a police compound in the West Java town of Cirebon on April 15, 2011, wounding 26 people, mostly officers. The mangled body of the suicide bomber was found at the scene. According to the Indonesian authorities, the man was apparently wearing a suicide vest beneath his black "Islamic" robes and sitting among dozens of worshippers when he set off the bomb, shouting "God is Great" as he detonated the device. Though militants in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iraq have not hesitated to attack mosques where their enemies have gathered, Mardigu Wawick Prasantyo, an Indonesian intelligence analyst, said this "really worrisome" incident "represents a first for Indonesia", noting also that the bombing during Friday holy prayers points to a "hardening of militants" (*Bangkok Post*, April 16, 2011).

Less than a week later, the Indonesian police bomb squad seized two boxes containing high explosives hidden under a gas pipeline on Jl. SK Keris in the Gading Serpong housing estate. According to a local security supervisor- Aris Setiabudi, the bombs weighed around 150 kilograms each and were equipped with timers, to be detonated to coincide with the Good Friday celebration (April 22, 2011). The bombs were placed within 50 meters of the Christ Cathedral Church (*The Jakarta Post*, April 21, 2011). On April 28, at a national conference in Jakarta, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono said: "We are witnessing radical movements in this country." He warned of the serious threat of "terrorism" and advised all Indonesian stakeholders to take steps to prevent violence. (*The Jakarta Post*, April 29, 2011)

About a week later on May 7, 2011, and five thousand five hundred miles away from Jakarta, in the Imbaba slum of Cairo, a small group of Muslims marched on the Coptic Church of Saint Mena in response to rumors that a female convert to Islam had been kidnapped and was being held there. Local Christians surrounded the Church to protect it. Clashes broke out. Twelve people were killed, 6 Muslims and 4 Christians were killed, 2 others were unidentified. Several churches were smashed and the Church of Saint Mena burned along with Christian-owned shops and homes.

(*The Economist*, May 14, 2011, p.50 ; *Bangkok Post*, May 10, 2011.)

Though the dynamics of these conflicts in Indonesia and Egypt are different, the courses they take are unmistakably similar. Places of worship, and worshippers in them, have become targets of violence at sacred times aimed at maximizing the violence effects. Looking also at Thailand's southern violence which has transpired for more than 8 years now with some similar incidents, I suspect that this phenomenon is more widespread than what happened in these two countries. If such is the case, there is a need to find ways to prevent these conflicts from sliding further within the realm of deadly violence.

In a spectrum of wars and violence, there seem to be two philosophies: that there is no limitation to what one could do in them, and that such limitations do exist. There have been global attempts throughout human history to limit the cruelty of war. On the 50th anniversary of the four Geneva Conventions in 1999, the International Committee of the Red Cross launched a publicity campaign with the slogan: "Even war has limits."(Slim 2008: 12) Its modern precursor, and perhaps most influential, was the Lieber Code of 1863 which tried to balance the protection of non-combatants with the explicit principle of "military necessity". (Slim 2008, 18) Important as they are, these attempts seek to limit war and violence in order to protect the innocents. But if there indeed exists such a trend of violence against sacred spaces and people of cloths, I would argue that the more dangerous problem might lie in the fact that when targets of violence, especially in ethno-religious conflicts, are sacred spaces and people of cloths, they have the tendency to escalate deadly conflicts since it is the communal sense which gives meaning(s) to people that has been attacked and not an individual nor familial loss. For example, when a most revered Sufi Muslim shrine in the Indian part of the divided Kashmir- the 350-year-old shrine of Sheikh Abdul Qadir Jeelani- was set ablaze on June 25, 2012, a woman with tears rolling down

her cheeks cried: "I feel like I've lost everything."(*Bangkok Post*, June 26, 2012) As a result, clashes between the Indian police and angry Muslims took place in Srinagar while businesses were closed across much of India-controlled Kashmir, with protesters demanding Kashmir's freedom from Indian rule. (*Bangkok Post*, June 28, 2012)

This research paper is an attempt to show that there is indeed a global trend of conflicts accursed with deadly violence when sacred spaces-temples, churches, mosques, synagogues, etc., and peoples of cloth –monks, priests, ministers, imams and nuns (?) become targets; and that once these took place, conflicts that are already dangerous turn even deadlier.

The paper begins with a description of violence against Muslim mosques and Buddhist monks in southern Thailand. Then data collected on violence against sacred spaces around the world during 2009-2010 will be presented, strong cases where such violence engenders further violence will be briefly identified. The notion of "sacred spaces" as a special geography vulnerable especially to ethno-religious and other sectarian conflicts will be critically discussed. Finally, the importance of a call for global policy to protect sacred spaces and peoples of cloths as a way to prevent these conflicts from sliding further into violence will be suggested.

Southern Thailand 2004-2010:

killing inside a mosque, attacking monks on the streets

In southern Thailand, from January 4, 2004 until the end of February 2011, there have been 10,660 violent incidents killing 4,621 people and wounded 7,505. More Malay Muslims (59.03%) have been killed but more Buddhists (60.12%) were injured (Strategic Nonviolence Commission 2011). Most of the casualties are overwhelmingly ordinary people (87.4%) rather than government officials (Askew 2010:1113, n.9). If family members of those fallen victims to this violence are included in the calculation of pain and loss, then approximately 53,000 people have already been affected (Srisompob 2010).[1]

This deadly conflict could be understood as two-dimensional: between the Thai state and peoples of southern Thailand, and among different peoples in the south themselves. In a country of primarily Buddhists with more than 60 million people, approximately 7% are Muslims. But the

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[1] *It should be noted that Askew argues that it is important that such statistics should be cited critically since some 30% of violence that occurred in southern Thailand might be unrelated to the problem of insurgency (Askew 2010:1115-1116).*

Malay Muslims constitute the majority of 80% of the 1.8 million in the three southernmost provinces of Yala, Pattani and Narathiwat (McCargo 2008: 5). Due to historical circumstances that forced the former Kingdom of "Patani" into a part of Siam since 1909, the advent of the modern Siamese nation-state in the form of gigantic administrative reform in 1903, geographical proximity with Malaysia, cultural affinity with the Malay cultural world, the Islamic belief among local Muslims, chronic economic problems in the area, and prevalent injustice at the hands of some government officials, violence in the South between the Thai state and some among the local population who have been called "insurgents", has been recurring especially in the past fifty years. What have distinguished the recent violence from what has transpired in the past include the intensity and indiscriminate use of violence and the fact that it has seriously undermined the ties that bind Buddhist minorities and Malay Muslim majority in a once functioning political society (Chaiwat 2006:169-187).

Incidents that seem to fearfully illustrate how such ties have been severed , and violent conflict could become deadlier are attacks against peoples in mosques and monks in the streets.

The case of Al-Furqan Mosque, 2009[2]

In the last seven years since 2004, several mosques have been targets or sites of violence. Here are some examples:

○ On April 28, 2004, some 300 Malay Muslim militants attacked 11 government spots, 7 in Yala, 3 in Pattani and 1 in Sabayoi district, Songkhla. When the violence ended that day, there were 106 Muslim militants killed, while 5 soldiers and policemen lost their lives. The Thai military attacked and killed 32 militants hiding inside the ancient Krue-ze mosque in Pattani.

○ April 5, 2007, a mosque in Yala was shot at by M79 and other assault automatic rifles before a prayer, wounded some 20 Muslims.

○ April 29, 2007, another mosque in Pattani was shot at, killing the Qateb (Friday sermon giver), wounded three others.

○ May 31, 2007, gunmen attacked a mosque in Sabayoi, Songkhla, killing 7 Muslims who just came out after prayers.

○ March 18, 2008, a bomb exploded inside a mosque in Yala, wounded 2 people.

○ May 1, 2008, a bomb was thrown into a village mosque in Pattani while twelve people were praying their sunset prayers, killing two and seriously wounded 5.[3]

But one of the most recent and intense incidents took place on June 8, 2009. At 7.50 p.m. gunmen used war weapons and other rifles to shoot into the Al-Furqan mosque, I-pa-yae village, Cho-Airong district, Narathiwat while the Muslims were offering their prayers. At that time, there were 24 people inside the Al-Furqan mosque offering their Ei-sa (night) prayers. They stood in two rows. While praying in the second raqa-at (praying part) after their sitting position, they stood up following the Imam, there were gunshots' sound from the door shooting at those who prayed from the back. When the gunshots fell silent momentarily, the voices of someone wounded were heard saying "Allah-u-Akbar" (God is great.). Then the perpetrators shot again. Eyewitnesses saw 6-7 perpetrators. All of them were armed and concealed their heads and faces with masks. After this they left by the rubber plantation behind the mosque. Ten people including the Imam were killed on the spot. All but one were local villagers. A youth who sat near the mosque told the Senate subcommittee that: "At the time of shooting, a few of us were sitting in a sala (pavilion) some 15 meters from the mosque. We crawled towards the mosque to see what had happened. We saw the perpetrators walking up the stairs into the mosque and shot at everyone to make sure that they are all dead. One guy was crawling to escape from the left door of the mosque, but he was shot dead by the door. The bullet mark there at the door is still visible." The authority claimed that they found no evidence that anyone was intentionally selected for the kill. Most of the more than 100 shells found were from 3 M16s, 1 AK47 and 2 shotguns.

It is important to understand that this mosque is a village mosque. This village, which the Thai authority considers a "red zone" (plagued with violence from insurgency) and that many villagers are sympathizers of the insurgents, is a Malay Muslim community with a population of some 400. There is no school here and the young have to go to another district (Cho-Airong) for their education. Most villagers are rubber growers. The village nearby is Pa-pai village that is

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[3] *Data collected from press reports by the Nonviolence Witness Group, 2008.*

largely Thai Buddhist with roughly the same size of population. In the past, these two villages had cordial relationship that has since turned sour during the last 3 or 4 years. Now most Buddhists in the Pa-pai village would not go anywhere without their guns.[4]

Before the shooting, villagers noticed unusual activities among Buddhists in the area who came to hunt boars in nearby forests, especially in the morning. On June 8, 2009 at 3.30 a.m., a 36 year-old Thai Buddhist in Ai-pasae village who worked at the Queen's demonstration farm was shot dead by an M16 while going to milk his rubber. After the shooting, the perpetrators left a bomb near his body to be detonated when other Thai officials came to the crime scene. But this time the bomb was successfully defused.

I would argue that this incident is most important for understanding violence against sacred spaces in southern Thailand at present. For those whose deaths come while praying to Allah inside the Lord's house at Al Furqan mosque in June 2009, they died with their empty hands praying to the Almighty. It is said that when a Muslim prostrates before God in prayer, h/she is at his/her most vulnerable position. Killing those who prayed while they were praying is almost like an act of vengeful punishment chosen to carry out to desecrate a sacred place at the time when those who were to be punished were most vulnerable. In the eyes of the killers who killed inside the two mosques, the sacred vanished. Though the use of violence by the perpetrators was meant to be a sacrilege of the mosques, in the eyes of many Muslims, once a place is the house of God, it will always remain so. For those who were killed while praying, their blood would instead cleanse the holy space and heightened its sacred meanings in many believers' imagination. They could be seen as martyrs when their deaths occur before the eyes of God, while praying to Him, and right there in His House.

This is perhaps why after the violence at the mosque, people from other villages wanted to come for a Janaza prayers (for the deceased) but they were blocked from coming by the Thai authority for fear that those who came would stage a protest. Most villagers interviewed by the Senate subcommittee believed that the Thai authority knows well who the shooters are, but they do not think that these people will be brought to justice. All relatives of those who were killed did not want to wash the bodies since they died while performing salat (Muslim prayer) and can be

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[4] *See the changing pattern of relationship between Muslims and Buddhists in southern Thailand since the reemergence of violence in 2004 in Rattiya 2009.*

rightfully considered <u>shahid</u>- those who died in the course of serving God. But the Thai authority pressured religious leaders to wash these bodies. Villagers put the photos of those killed outside the mosque for others who came to pay respect to see. Again the Thai authority was not happy and told them to take down these photos. All Muslim villagers believe that the shooters were armed militia outside the control of the authority who were angry and wanted to avenge the villagers. Contrary to some officials' opinion that this violence was carried out by Muslim insurgents to incite hatred between the Buddhists and the Muslims, none of the villagers believe that any Muslim insurgent would have killed Muslims inside a mosque while praying.

It is not difficult to imagine how local Malay Muslims would feel towards both the Thai state and their fate in it. The Muslim world reacted with grave concern. The OIC, for example, issued a statement indicating that this incident was most serious and calling the Thai government to investigate the incident and hold those responsible accountable (*Matichon*, June 12, 2009 -In Thai). Muhammad Asmi Abdul Hamid, secretary general of SHURA (Sekretariat Himpunan Ulama Rantau Asia) told the press that SHURA was writing the Thai prime minister urging him to establish an independent investigation into this incident. The statement was also signed by representatives of more than 1,000 non-government organizations. [5]

Four days later after the killing at Al-Furqan mosque, as predicted by many including myself, a Buddhist monk was shot and killed in Yala, another seriously wounded in what might be seen as a vengeful response contributing to the escalation of deadly conflict (*Bangkok Post*, June 13, 2009). Then on June 15, a man's body was found in Tarnto, Yala. The head of the 53 year-old Buddhist Mr.Kimsiang Sae Tung was cut off, his body stabbed several times and then burned. Next to the headless body, a piece of paper was found with the following words written in Thai: "This vengeance is for the innocents the authority killed inside the mosque" (*Matichon* On Line, June 15, 2009 -In Thai).

To understand how southern conflict in Thailand has turned to become this deadly, it is important to return to the beginning – with a basic understanding that southern Thailand conflict is not a recent phenomenon but began a century ago. Most analysts would consider January 4,

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[5] *See http://www.isranews.org/cms/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=4709&Itemid=47. See also, Askew, "Insurgency and the Market for Violence in Southern Thailand", p.1128.*

2004 as the date that southern violence re-exploded when armed men launched a surprise attack on a military armory in Cho Airong district of the province of Narathiwat killing 4 soldiers and taken with them 413 firearms – many of these are still unaccounted for at present (*Bangkok Post*, January 6, 2011-editorial). But I would say that January 22, 2004 marked a new beginning in Thailand's southern violence.

<u>Killing monks in the streets</u>

On that day in Narathiwat-southern Thailand, two men on a motorcycle used a long knife to slit the throat of a 64 year-old Buddhist monk to death. The monk just returned from his early morning round of alms-begging. Then on January 24 in another southern Thailand province-Yala, three more monks were attacked, two were dead. A young novice aged only 13 died in a hospital after being attacked in the head by a youth wielding a machete on a motorcycle while another 65-year-old monk was killed in the same manner. A third machete attack put another 25 year-old monk in a hospital with serious injuries.

These unprecedented incidents marked a new beginning of violence because the lexicon of killings as events in southern Thailand has changed when Buddhist monks became targets compared to two decades ago when Thai Buddhist passengers –lay people - were separated from the Muslims and then shot in a bus, or in 2003, when the main targets of killings were policemen, both Muslims and non-Muslims. It should also be noted that in January 2004, the youngest monk who died was 13 and the oldest was 65, and that they were killed while returning from or going through their daily ritual, namely alms-begging in the mornings. Since weapons used by the youths on motorcycles to kill these monks were either knives or machetes, it is not difficult to see that in the eyes of the killers such an attack signifies that neither the religious robes nor the ages, nor the sacred duties the monks were performing could offer cultural protection for the victims, as it might have thought to be (Chaiwat 2004).

Since then there have been numerous incidents of violence against Buddhist monks in southern Thailand. For example, according to data on southern violence against monks and Buddhist temples collected by the Thai Sangha (Order of Thai Buddhist monks), it was found that in 2004, from explosions during alms-begging time, attacks, and arson at a Buddhist temple, 3 monks were killed and one more wounded. In 2005, there were 7 explosions during alms-begging ritual, 1 attack and 1 case of arson, killing 2 monks and wounded 6 others. From April to

November 2006, in Narathiwat alone there were 4 shootings at the temples and two more explosions wounded 6 monks. (*Krungthep Turakij*, June 12, 2009 –in Thai) The latest case of violence against Buddhist monks in southern Thailand, and perhaps a most important this year, took place on a local road in Yala on May 16, 2011. Two monks, aged 47 and 40, were killed and two of their six security escorts seriously wounded in a bomb attack while they were making their daily rounds of alms begging. These two monks, were the last ones at Suan Kaew temple (*Bangkok Post*, May 17, 2011).

Apart from the use of explosive devices with increasing deadly effectiveness by the perpetrators, a trend that the most recent Strategic Nonviolence Commission's report has warned (2011), this latest case needs to be addressed for two significant reasons. First, it could be seen that due to the violence during the past seven years, the number of Buddhists – a minority in the deep south – as well as Buddhist monks have dwindled. These two monks killed were the last of this particular temple and it will be empty, at least for a while. From a symbolic angle, a Buddhist temple in southern Thailand means more than a religious space, but a representation of Thai sovereignty. For this reason, the Thai military who are responsible for southern security would not permit the temple to be without monks. Based on extensive fieldwork in the area, Michael Jerryson has argued that by militarizing Buddhist temples and by deploying soldiers in the guise of Buddhist monks – some are said to continue to bear arms and perform security functions to protect both their fellow monks and the temples they resided, the Thai state (and/or the military) has inserted the religion of Buddhism into the ongoing violence in southern Thailand (Jerryson 2009: 33-47). Second, the timing of the attack-both the hour of attack and the date, are crucial. The hour is 6 in the morning, the time when Buddhist monks go out to perform their functions of alms begging – allowing lay Buddhists to provide sustenance to sons of Sakya in a most common act of merit making. The date is one day prior to the most important date in Buddhist calendar – the Visakha Puja day – the day when Gautama Buddha was said to be born, attained enlightenment when he was 35, and left the world when he was 80. The religious connotation of this violence is crystal clear. The repercussion could be expected if past trends could be seen as an indicator. The question, however, is whether the attacks against sacred spaces and religious personnel that have transpired in southern Thailand are specific to this particular context of deadly conflict or representative of a deadly global trend of ethno-religious conflict at present?

Studying deadly conflict in southern Thailand made me curious about violence against sacred spaces and religious personnel that has transpired elsewhere in the world, especially in Southeast Asia. Based on the data collected in 2008 by the Center for Global Nonkilling and Peace Information Center, from January to December 2008, there have been 111 attacks against religious places and personnel, or using violence inside the sacred compounds around the world. Half of these, or 52 incidents, are Muslim-related. It should be noted that there were 9 such violent incidents in Southeast Asia alone. Mosques were targeted in southern Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines; Christian churches and a religious school were attacked in Vietnam and Indonesia; and there was an explosion in a Buddhist temple in Cambodia. These violent incidents in Southeast Asia resulted in 24 deaths and 39 wounded.[6] But this is based on only one-year data collection. What has happened in terms of violence against sacred spaces and religious personnel in the last two years?

Violence against sacred spaces and religious personnel: a global trend 2009-2010[7]

In 2009, there were 6 incidents of violence against sacred spaces and religious personnel claiming 11 lives and wounded more than 121 in Southeast Asia. Three of these-all of them deadly- were in Southern Thailand: two monks were attacked- one was killed and the other wounded, a Buddhist temple was fired at wounding 8 people inside, and the Al-Furqan mosque in Pattani was attacked killing 10 people and 12 others wounded while praying, the case that was discussed in detailed above. Early in the year, there was an arson at a Protestant church in Malaysia but there was no casualty report; and then vandalism at a Jewish synagogue in Surabaya, East Java also with no casualty. Then in July 2009, the Church of Tam Toa , the Diocese of Vinh – about 334 km south of Hanoi, was attacked by the police and militia. It was reported that more than a hundred including Catholic priests and other church members were wounded.

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[6] *Data collected by Janjira Sombutpoonsiri, Peace Information Center (PIC) and Center for Global Nonkilling (CGNK), September 2009.*

[7] *Data for this discussion are collected by Janjira Sombatpoonsiri, Peace Information Center and Center for Global Nonkilling, April 2011. See Appendices A (2009) and B (2010) in Chaiwat and Urbain 2013, pp. 33-51.*

In 2010, there were 5 incidents claiming one life –an Islamic teacher was shot at a Pattani mosque on October 22, and 8 wounded. Three of these violent cases took place in Indonesia and all were against Protestant churches, in West Java (the Batak Christian Filadelfia Church during Sunday congregation), in the outskirt of Jakarta and in Central Java. In Malaysia, from January 5 to 10, twelve Christian churches in Kuala Lumpur, Sarawak and Perak were vandalized. In the island of Jolo, Philippines, a Catholic church was bombed. What occurred in 2009-2010 Southeast Asia took place in the context of a global trend of violence against sacred spaces and religious personnel that needs to be appraised.

Based on the data collected during 2009 and 2010, it was found that there have been 104 incidents related to sacred spaces and religious personnel around the world, 49 took place in 2009 and it rose to 55 incidents in 2010. In 2010, the number of people killed in relation to sacred spaces increased 19.8% and those wounded increased 29.1%. These incidents combined have killed 1,730 people and wounded 3,671. Most of these incidents took place in Iraq and Pakistan which could be accounted for 77.2% of casualty in 2009 and 71.2% in 2010. If one considers the fact that Iraq is in a state of war and that Pakistan is not, it is important to point out that the number of people killed and wounded in Pakistan is 33.8% more than the number of casualties in Iraq in relation to sacred spaces and personnel. In addition, the year 2010 saw a dramatic increase of 147% in number of casualties in Pakistan resulted from violence against sacred spaces and personnel compared to 2009. (See Table 1)

Table 1: Violence against sacred spaces and religious personnel, 2009-2010

Year	No of incidents	People killed	People wounded	Total casualties	Iraq casualties	Pakistan casualties	P+I casualties
2009	49	693	1300	1993	889	653	1542
2010	55	1037 (+19.8%)	2371 (+29.1%)	3408 (+26%)	808 (-9%)	1619 (+147.9%)	2427 (+57.3%)
2009+ 2010	104	1730	3671	5401	1697 (31% of total C)	2272 (42 % of total C)	3969 (73 % of total C)

Put another way, violence against sacred spaces and religious personnel in Iraq and Pakistan account for more than 70% of all such incidents during the past two years. More importantly, perhaps, is the fact that victims of most of these were Muslims and they took place at Islamic places of worship of all persuasions – Sunni mosques, Shiite processions, and Sufi shrines, among others. In fact, in 2009 and 2010 in these two countries there were only 5 incidents against non-Islamic sacred spaces and religious peoples claiming 221 victims or 4% of all casualties who are non-Muslims. Three of these were in Iraq: the bombing of St.Theresa Convent of Dominican Nuns in Mosul in late 2009 -there was no report on casualty, and Our Lady of Salvation Syriac Catholic Church in Baghdad was attacked twice in 2010, killing 116 and wounded at least 78 believers. Two other incidents occurred in Pakistan in 2009. Blamed for burning the *Qur'an*, Christian residents of Gojra city in Punjab were attacked, 7 were killed and 20 wounded, some were burned alive and their properties destroyed. Then the village Christian church in Jethki, Sialkot district, Punjab was attacked but casualty report was not available.

Table 2 below shows the number of violence against non-Islamic sacred spaces and religious personnel as well as casualty figures that result from these incidents during 2009 and 2010.

Table 2: Violence against non-Islamic sacred spaces and non-Muslim religious personnel, 2009-2010

Year	No. of incidents	No. of incidents against sacred spaces	No. of incidents against religious per.	Casualties
2009	22	17	5	197
2010	18	13	5	457
2009+2010	40 (38% of all incidents)	30 (28.8% of all incidents)	10 (9.6% of all incidents)	654 (12.1% of all casualties)

Here I would like to differentiate violence against non-Islamic sacred spaces and non-Muslim religious personnel or those in congregation/procession into three groups: Christianity

which include Catholic, Protestant and Coptic; Judaism; and others which include Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism.

Violence against churches in Christianity and clergy: In 2009, there have been 9 attacks against Christian, Catholic and Coptic sacred spaces killing 15 and wounded hundreds. Catholic churches were attacked in Vietnam, India, Iraq and Nepal, while Protestant churches became targets of arson, raid, burning and shooting in Malaysia, India, Nigeria and China. In Egypt, a Christian Coptic residents' property were burned in late November. In 2010, there were 16 incidents of attacks against churches killing 220 while injuring 184 Christians of all denominations. The Lady of Salvation Catholic Church in Baghdad was sites of attack twice killing 116 Christians and wounded at least 78. The Nigerian city of Jos saw attacks against Catholic churches thrice, killing 82 people and wounded at least 77. Protestant churches were attacked in Malaysia, Indonesia –thrice, and Palestine. Copts were targets of violence in Egypt, once close to a church, at a Copt center and then on June 30 in the ancient town of Nag Hamadi inside a church after midnight mass.

It is interesting to note three cases: a Catholic bishop was stabbed to death in Turkey; then on Christmas eve there were two violence against Catholic churches in Jos, Nigeria; and in the island of Jolo, the Philippines. The Turkish killing of the Catholic bishop was singular since there was no other report on such violence in Turkey during the time the data were collected. The attacks against Catholic churches in Jos and Jolo, which took place on Christmas Eve, reflect the fact that not only sacred spaces have become targets of violence but also sacred time was chosen, perhaps to maximize the damage from the perpetrators' perspective and to carry the violence effect against the sacred beyond the confine of a specific context.

Violence against synagogues and rabbis: There were 5 incidents of violence against Jewish synagogues in the form of vandalism and firebombs with no casualty reported in 2009 and none occurred in 2010. The Jewish religious places were attacked twice in Paris, once in January and another in November; once each in East Java, Indonesia; Caracas, Venezuela and Riverdale, New York, US.

Violence against temples and monks/priests: In 2009, the Pashupatinath temple in Kathmandhu, Nepal was a site of violence three times in January, May and September wounded 14 people. In southern Thailand, two Buddhist monks were shot at while on their alms-begging

ritual killing one and wounded another on June 12. Ten days later, a Buddhist temple was attacked by gunfire wounded 8. But the strangest incident took place at a Sikh temple with stabbing and shooting which left 1 person killed and 17 others wounded. This was the case of Ravidas Gurudwara in Vienna, Austria on May 24-25, 2009. It could be seen as a "transnational intra-religious conflict" spilling across borders – from Punjab to Vienna and yet took place at a Sikh temple. In 2010, there were only three incidents of violent attacks against Hindus. Two of these took place in India during the Hanuman Jayanti procession at Bholakpur and Kavadiguda killing 1 while 80 others were wounded, then another occurred during the procession site in Varanasi, killing 1 and injuring 20 others. The third incident appeared in Bangladesh against Hindu devotees during the Durga Puja marquees killing 1 and wounded 20 others.

Looking at these 2009-2010 data, the following points could be made.

1. Violence against sacred spaces could take place anywhere not only in the context of violent ethno-religious conflicts-as in Egypt, Nigeria, southern Philippines or southern Thailand, but also in Europe, North as well as South America. For example, there were two attacks against Jewish synagogues in Paris, France in 2009. In the US, there were an attack on a synagogue in Riverdale, New York and vandalism against a rabbi's house in Berkeley; as well as firebombing at an Islamic center in St.John, Florida; and arson against the future site of Islamic center in Nashville, among others. In Caracas, Venezuela, a synagogue was seized and vandalized on January 31, 2009.

2. In tight state-controlled societies such as China and Vietnam, churches could be attacked by government forces if they try to venture beyond the confined space provided by these states as the 2009 attacks against the Golden Lamp Church in Linfen, China, and perhaps the Church of Tam Toa in Vinh, Vietnam.

3. In Nepal, as the country emerges from long years of deadly conflict between the Maoists and the royal governments with the victory for the former, it seems that sacred spaces of all religions could become targets of violence. Indian priests at Pashupatinath temple were attacked by protesters on May 9, 2009. It was reported that the protesters shouted: "We don't want foreign culture." Then on May 23, 2009, the outlawed militant group – United Liberation Front of Asom attacked two mosques and a church killing 2 Muslims

and 3 Christian women. It seems that sometimes the attackers were nondiscriminatory in their use of violence against the "foreign others".

4. Though most of the casualties happened in Iraq and Pakistan discussed above, the highest number of death toll in a single incident took place on July 27-29, 2009 in the city area of Maidugiri, Nigeria when more than a hundred members of an Islamic sect of Al-Sunnah Wal Jamaa were attacked by Nigerian police and the army.

5. Perhaps what one could see from incidents such as those that transpired in Nepal and Nigeria are results of earlier violence against sacred spaces/religious people. If such is the case, then the question at this point is: how can the linkage between violence against sacred spaces/religious personnel and its accursed effects- turning dangerous conflicts deadlier, be identified? To try to move along this course of analysis, there are some "strong" cases where such connection could be meaningfully discerned.

Selected "strong" cases[8]

1) *Pakistan, Northwest Frontier provinces, Pesharwar, and Lahore*

From 2001 until 2010, 54 mosques have been targets of attacks by militant groups killing 773 people and wounded 1719. In July 2010, local papers reported the emergence of a new militant group called "the Ghazi Force". It is said that this group is made up of "vengeful relatives of those killed in the Lal Masjid attack in July 2007 when government troops attacked the mosque killing from 173 (government source) to 1,000 people (local sources). The local papers continue: "It is a measure of the deep sectarian divisions within Pakistan's largely Muslim population that targeting of mosques has emerged as a regular practice in an attempt to terrorize the large numbers that gather in them." [9]

2) *India, explosion in Varanasi on the bank of the Holy Ganges*

On December 7, 2010, there was an explosion at 6:35 p.m. after thousands of worshippers and tourists had commenced evening prayers at the holy Ganges River in Varanasi, northern

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[8] *Data partially collected by Janjira Sombutpoonsiri, Peace Information Center and Center for Global Nonkilling, April 2011.*

[9] *[http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2010-07-03/pakistan/28289366_1_ mosque-attacks-soap-sunni]*

India. Varanasi is one of the holiest places in Hinduism, drawing huge crowds of devotees and tourists all year. Hindus often cremate their dead in pyres along the holy river and gather in the concrete bathing platforms, known as ghats, to dunk themselves for a ritual dip in the holy waters of the Ganges. One person was killed while 20 others were injured, perhaps in a stampede when people panicked after the blast. The Indian Mujahideen (IM) claimed responsibility for the blast in e-mails sent to the media and said it "attributed" the attack to the demolition of Babri Masjid in 1992.

3) Northern Nigeria, the city of Jos

On 12 January, 2010, Muslim youths claimed to have gathered to renovate a house next to St Michael's Catholic Church, owned by a Muslim man, who had allegedly murdered three Christians during the earlier violence in Jos North in November 2008. However, instead of renovating the house, the youths are reported to have launched an unprovoked assault on a female passer-by before attacking St. Michael's Church, killing and injuring several members. They also set fire to a score of local houses and businesses and churches, including a Christ Apostolic Church and an ECWA Church (Evangelical Church of West Africa) in Dutse Uku and another ECWA Church in Rikkos. Angered by the violence, Christian youths gathered to launch a counter attack, and the violence soon spread to other areas of Jos North. "The police have been arresting our leaders , that is why we decided to retaliate," said the man, who gave his name only as Abdullah. Then in March, 2010 Muslim herdsmen from the Fulani and Hausa ethnic groups launched attacks against five Christian Berom Vilages near Jos, killing more than 500 people.

On July 13, 2010, Taraba State Police Commissioner Aliyu Musa says the killings started Tuesday in the community of Bukari after Christian youths became angry about the location of a mosque. He told the Associated Press Wednesday that youths burned down the mosque, which launched a counterattack by Muslims. Four days later on July 17, 2010, seven houses and a church were burned in Mazzah village, near the city of Jos, the scene of previous acts of sectarian violence. Seven people were killed instantly with machetes while three others were seriously injured. One of them died on the way to the hospital. During Christmas on December 24-5, 2010, a series of bombs were detonated in villages near the central city of Jos. Danjuma Akawu, secretary of Victory Baptist Church said about 30 men attacked his church on Christmas Eve, killing five people, including the pastor, two choir members rehearsing for a late-night carol

service and two passersby who were attacked by the mob. He said the attackers came in three cars and dragged the pastor out of his house within the church premises before shooting him to death. They drove off after setting the church and the pastor's house ablaze. Local rights groups claimed that some 1,500 people have died in inter-communal violence in the Jos region in 2010.

Though important in underscoring the connection between violence against sacred spaces and the deadlier conflict it engenders, these "strong" cases can be quite problematic without understanding the local dynamics which constitute their contexts. Take the Nigerian case as an example. It is important to note that Jos, the state capital, is a town with particular local conditions on people's livelihood as well as their political affiliations that are conducive to religious violence. The town is divided demographically between the Christians who are farmers and generally back the People's Democratic Party -in power at the time of violence, while the Muslims who generally speak Hausa or Fulani are often nomadic people who live from rearing animals or petty trade. In Plateau State, they are seen as supporters of the opposition All Nigeria People's Party. Since some 80% of Nigeria's GDP flows through the state and local government system, politicians would do anything to get elected or remain in power, including inciting ethnic and religious hatred. It is also important to note that the situation is exacerbated by Nigeria's system of classifying its citizens as "indigenes" and "settlers". This system is nationwide but in Plateau State it perpetuates the local divisions. The Hausa-speaking Muslims are classified as "settlers" though they have lived there for generations and have no knowledge of their "home" region. "Settlers" are banned from taking some positions in state government and the state does not pay for their education. Therefore it is not unexpected to learn that they often feel discriminated against. Consequently, some may feel that the only way they can change the situation is to use violence. The Christian groups in power, on the other hand, may stop at nothing to retain the advantages they enjoy.[10]

In addition to taking the local dynamics of violent incidents against sacred spaces and religious personnel into account, it is also important to try to understand the theoretical dynamics of how this type of violence exists and in what ways would it have cursed conflict into becoming intractable and deadlier if a global effort to prevent such violence is going to be initiated?

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[10] *(news.bbc.co.uk /2/hi/8555215.stm, March 8, 2010, accessed May 25, 2011)*

Understanding violence against sacred spaces

In the early twentieth century, Ellen Semple wrote *Influences of Geographic Environment of the Basis of Ratzel's System of Anthropo-Geography* (1911) to argue that geography was the study of how environment controls human behavior. Particular environmental conditions lead to particular human behavior. Particular geographies lead to particular kinds of logic or ways of being in the world (Sawatsky 2007: 75). Almost a century later, the late Edward Said has argued along the same line that, "(N)one of us is outside or beyond geography, none of us is completely free from the struggle over geography. That struggle is complex and interesting because it is not only about soldiers and cannons but also about ideas, about forms, about images and imaginings". (Said 1993: 6)

An example of how a particular geography affects a way of being in the world is candidly captured in a contemporary novel about violence in southern Thailand written by an acclaimed author- Wasith Dejkunjorn, a retired police general with close ties to the palace. Here readers encounter a rendition of a Thai government official's feeling through the novel's hero- "Taron"- a feeling so "truthful" under the shadow of violence and present state structure that it could perhaps only be found in a novel.[11]

"Reaching Songkhla, Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat and Satun, Taron feels as though he sets his feet in a foreign country. Apart from Thai language with annoying accent spoken around him, Malay language used is definitely alien to him. Not only does sound of the South bother his ears, its sight also disturbs his eyes. What is seen everywhere is the Islamic mosques that impede and compete with Buddhist temples, at times the former dominates the latter." (Wasith 2008: 64 –my translation)

Reading these lines, I wonder how the sights of mosques –Muslims' sacred space, could inform a person's perception such that the novel's hero could be transported to a geography painted with competing imaginaries between the crescent and the lotus? (Surin 1988) Socialization, social reproduction, historical imposition, cultural domination, or similar concepts could be invoked to account for how a person's perception is shaped. But here I would argue that

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[11] *I have elsewhere argued that one of the effects of violence is to render normal conversation and speech about it meaningless, if not to relegate it to the domain of silence. Facing extreme violence, "truth" about it needs to be managed and novels can sometimes become a better home for "truth telling" (Chaiwat 2008).*

perhaps part of the mystery lie in the notion of "the sacred" itself and the ways in which "the sacred" connect with and transform space.

On the first pages of the celebrated *The Sacred and the Profane*, Mircea Eliade invokes Rudolf Otto's *Das Heilige* or *The Sacred,* first published in 1917 to point out that the sacred embodies a frightening and irrational experience, and that it is the feeling of terror before the sacred that emanates an overwhelming superiority of power and religious fear before the fascinating mystery. These experiences are characterized as "numinous" (godlike) and the numinous presents itself as something "wholly other" (ganz andere) (Eliade 1959: 9). [12]

Building on Eliade's formulation, Peter Berger concludes that, "One of the essential qualities of the sacred, as encountered in 'religious experience,' is otherness, its manifestation as something *totaliter aliter* as compared to ordinary, profane human life. It is precisely this otherness that lies at the heart of religious awe, of numinous dread, of the adoration of what totally transcends all dimensions of the merely human."(Berger 1969: 87) But if the sacred is the "wholly other", how does it manifest itself?

To answer this question, Eliade coins a term "hierophany" to characterize "the act of manifestation of the sacred" especially in some ordinary objects (Eliade 1959: 11). In so being, any object becomes something else, "yet it continues to remain itself". Hence a sacred tree or a sacred stone is not adored as simply a stone or a tree, but "they are worshipped precisely because they are hierophanies, because they show something that is no longer stone or tree but the sacred, the ganz andere."(Eliade 1959:12) Put another way, the sacred is meant here a quality of mysterious and awesome power other than that of a human being and yet related to him/her, and that it could reside in certain objects as well as in space or time as in sacred "localities" or seasons (Berger 1969: 25).

There are at least two problems with Berger's formulation, and also to some extent-Eliade's. First, the difference between "space" and "place" needs to be taken into consideration.

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[12] *Some might argue that Eliade is actually challenging the accepted view of the sacred given by Otto's characterization of the ganz andere and not affirming it. But the point here is that, through Otto's idea, the accepted notion of the "sacred" or the "holy" as good or even "perfect" advanced by Kant was called into question (Otto 1958: 5). As a result, a critical treatment of the sacred, as in Eliade's work, becomes possible.*

There are those who consider *place* as experienced by human beings and therefore different from *space* as something more abstract and thus discourages experiential explorations. For some anthropologists, space comes first but among the natives, place is more important. It could be argued that one of the reasons for this difference is because conventional anthropology relies on Kantian epistemology which considers space and time as basic categories of thinking. Space, for Kant, is a necessary representation a priori as well as the condition of the possibility of phenomena. But if viewed in the light of conventional phenomenology, the lived experience is taken as the starting point of analysis and therefore the recognition of the abstract space comes after the perception of the more concrete place. The sense of space is closely connected with vision while the sense of place may rely on olfaction, acoustic, tactile experiences and tastes (Hung, Stables and Bonnet 2008). Though some might believe that space has an air of neutrality and indifference, space is a largely discursive phenomenon since it is "constituted by the way locations (read-places) are imagined or given meaning" (Shapiro 1992: 5) In this sense, the visual of a religious place is capable of transforming itself into a sight of the sacred space endowed with multitude of feelings and meanings, which in turn, could connect a person with other believers in an imagined community of faith with the possibility that collective actions, violent or otherwise, could be generated accordingly.

Second, this sense of awe or adoration of the "wholly other endowed in a special space" belongs to whom? In the example of the Thai novel cited above, when the Buddhist hero sees Muslim sacred space dominating the geography he has long been taught to represent and defend its symbolic sovereign, it was not "a sense of awe" that was evoked in him, but rage -if not total disgust. This feeling is perhaps not unlike what some Swiss felt at the sight of prohibitive minarets in Switzerland where, following a referendum, they are not allowed to be built by the Swiss constitution. [13] Campaigners for the banning of the minarets in Switzerland see them, and certainly the mosques that generally come with them, as space of total otherness which contained

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[13] *On November 29, 2009, Switzerland became the first European country to vote to curb religious practices of Muslims in a referendum banning the construction of minarets on mosques. The ban was backed by a solid majority of 57.5%. (www.guardian.co.uk, November 29, 2009) As a result, in the present Swiss constitution, Article 72 on Church and State, clause 3 states that: "The construction of minarets is prohibited."*

much that they despise. They claimed that minarets were not a religious but a political symbol, "and the thin end of a wedge that would bring sharia law to the country, with forced marriages, "honour" killings, female genital mutilation and oppression of women." (www.guardian.co.uk)

It could be argued that in ethno-religious conflicts, there are often times two sets of sacredness informed by opposing senses of "total others" in contestation. From one side the mosque, for example, is a sacred space that belongs to a group of citizens of a nation-state, Switzerland or Thailand, and therefore deserves a place in the land of their country. From the other, it is the land of their forefathers that is sacred and the sight of the mosque, its mere existence or its extension, disturbs its sovereignty. Individuals caught in such a sphere of contestation could easily slip into "altered states", a term coined by Barbara Ehrenrich in her *Blood Rites* (1997). In such a state, the thrill of being a part of something bigger transports people from ordinary responsibilities to a pursuit of "noble" causes with the possibilities of violence as evident in wars and ethnic conflicts, fought in the name of patriotism or defending sacred beliefs. Altered state could be construed as a crucial part of deadly conflicts. Although every war is catalyzed, instituted and sustained by political, military and religious leaders with vested interests, entering an altered state of some kind is perhaps "the most effective means of moral distancing in war. It allows us to be *truly other* (my italics) and to do things which are only possible in war." (Slim 2008: 227)

The use of violence against sacred spaces that has occurred around the world as discussed above suggests that when they are attacked people who revere them react with moral outrage, and at times with violence, because it is the sanctity of the space that generates cultural power producing collective identity. One of the reasons why attacking these targets endowed with religious symbolic meanings can be extremely dangerous with the curse of making conflicts more deadly is because once sighted as the abstract space, a communal sense emerges. The site that hurts by violence is not the physical body, but the self – at times collective (Chaiwat forthcoming). This "self" reflects a sense of community with legitimacy for its existence within a specific boundary not unlike a country territory. As a result, when their sacred spaces come under violence or its threat, anger of those communities of faith can be expected as evident in southern Thailand as well as in some of the "strong" cases discussed above. This is the reason why

violence against sacred spaces could oftentimes engender deadlier conflicts that have become increasingly difficult to resolve.

But why have conflicts over sacred spaces been so very difficult to solve, especially when compared to other types of territorial conflict? In *War on Sacred Ground* (2009), Ron Hassner argues that the intractability of religious conflicts especially those involved with sacred spaces is due to the nature of "sacred ground" itself. When a space is sacred, it is indivisible and therefore renders conflict (next to) impossible to resolve between parties contesting the ownership or control of sacred space. Hassner also points out that there are four basic motivations which lead religious groups into conflicts with rivals at these sites. Conflicting parties wish to implement rules regarding access to sacred space, compete for rightful titles, provoke their rivals and target its population. A most important task for religious group is to enforce rules on access and conduct at sacred spaces (Hassner 2010: 147). This type of control over sacred space is not dissimilar to the secular quest for sovereignty over national territory.

To paraphrase Hassner, I would say that when a site becomes sacred for its believers, it is founded on the 4 political pillars: sovereignty, legitimacy, meaning and a sense of community. As a result, attacking the sacred spaces is seen as attempts to undermine the foundations upon which their opponents' identity and faith rest (Hassner 2010: 147-148). It is important to note that among these pillars, while legitimacy can be contested and meanings are often times diverse, both sovereignty and communal sense have a strong tendency towards indivisibility. This is why, Hassner argues, attempts to divide sacred spaces among religious groups fail. The only exceptions are "folk" sites that occupy marginal role in the religious landscape.

But then why was there Muslim-Jewish conflict over tomb of Abraham in Hebron but not over tomb of Moses, or no Muslim-Christian conflict over tomb of John the Baptist, or Jewish-Christian conflict over Adam's burial ground since these personalities are considered venerable among the three Abrahamic faiths? The answer lies in the fact that while both Jews and Muslims believe that Abraham's tomb is in Hebron and therefore violence did explode there in the past, John the Baptist's tomb is in Damascas in the Muslim's mind, but for the Christians, his tomb is in Ephesus, Turkey. (Hassner 2010:153). Hassner suggests therefore that the key to resolving conflicts involving sacred sites lies not in managing tensions between rival groups but in separating them from one another (Hassner 2010: 147).

He concludes that "The more important a sacred site the more likely it will provide crucial functions, the more likely the friction with other groups and the greater the odds of large-scale violence"…."At important sacred sites, conflict is inevitable. Peaceful coexistence is only possible where it matters least." (Hassner 2010: 149) If Hassner's "pessimistic" conclusion were uncritically accepted, does it mean that there is no way out of the cul-de-sac arrived at through the use of violence against sacred spaces?

Conclusion: containing violence with the sacred?

There was no conflict between the Muslims and the Jews over the sacred space that is Moses' tomb because Muslims believe that Musa's tomb in the Judean desert while the Jews maintain that his tomb is somewhere near Mount Nebo, East of Jordan. Hassner's proposal of separation of the sacred among religious groups sounds plausible if conflict is directly about the sacred spaces and between those who revere similar sacred sites. But much of the violence against sacred spaces as evident from the trend outlined above seems different from Hassner's type of conflict. Causes of these conflicts are complex and oftentimes fueled by their own local dynamics which, in turn, give rise to petrified polarization that renders violence against the "wholly other" highly probable. But to suggest that conflicts involving sacred sites are inevitable and extremely difficult to deal with does not mean that they cannot be contained in such a way that further violence could be prevented.

Since I have argued that conflict would become deadly when sacred spaces and religious personnel turn out to be targets of violence, the problem here is how to prevent violence from contaminating the sacred with its curse? Separating the sacred as suggested by Hassner is irrelevant in violent cases such as the attacks on southern Thailand mosques or assaulting the rabbi in a New York subway station. Trying to locate the sacred beyond the reach of violence might be more logical. But can this be
carried out?

Perhaps one could ponder a pearl of wisdom from the ancient story of Moses.

When Moses went to the far side of the desert and came to Horeb in the Sinai Mountain, he encountered the burning bush which he called "this strange sight" and he wanted to go across to look. God called him from the bush by name and he answered: "Here I am." Then God said:

"Come no nearer, Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." (*The Bible*, Leviticus: 5-6)

This story is sometimes told to teach how a human being should feel before the presence of God. In a way this is a story of how a human being could be connected to the Almighty with some codes of conduct specified –identification of the person (God called Moses by name.), appropriate proximity ("Come no nearer") and right conduct – in the name of cleanliness? ("Take off your sandals"). Moses is called to the bush by the "strange sight" and then by God's calling, yet he should not be too close; and he had to take his sandals off. Such discursive practice could be seen as the ordering of the relationship between a human being and the sacred.

It is interesting to note that according to Peter Berger, the other opposite of the sacred is not the profane but chaos. He writes:

"The sacred cosmos emerges out of chaos and continues to confront the latter as its terrible contrary. This opposition of cosmos and chaos is frequently expressed in a variety of cosmogonic myths. The sacred cosmos, which transcends and includes man in its ordering of reality, thus provides man's ultimate shield against the terror of anomy. To be in a "right" relationship with the sacred cosmos is to be protected against the nightmare threats of chaos. To fall out of such a 'right' relationship is to be abandoned on the edge of the abyss of meaninglessness " (Berger 1969: 26).

If it is indeed important for the world to find a way to contain violence, to prevent conflicts from sliding further into the abyss of violence, the other question is: how can it be done? Once upon a time, violence against the innocents, the sick, and the religious were not permitted in conducts of war between conflict parties of different faiths. Then with destructive weapons that respect no rules of conduct, the line separating barbarity from civility evaporates. After the great war of the last century, initiatives were taken to prevent the innocents from falling victims to wanton violence. Certain spaces were considered off-limit to violence – kindergartens, schools, hospitals, among others. But sacred spaces continue to be sites of violence.

Based on the above discussion, I would argue that there is a profound difference between existing off-limit spaces and the need to protect sacred spaces suggested here. For the former, the limit is necessary on ethical ground, namely the "innocents" need to be protected since they are no threats to conflicting parties. But for the latter, sacred spaces should be placed

outside the sphere of violence because of its potential to further deadly conflicts and render them intractable.

In the thirteenth century, Pope Gregory IX came up with a list of who should be protected in war: priests, monks, friars, and other religious; pilgrims; travelers; merchants; peasants cultivating the land; and those who are "naturally weak", namely- women and children; and animals, goods, and land of the peasantry (Slim 2008: 12-13). At present, Article 8 of the Rome Statute which established the International Criminal Court states that deliberate attacks against undefended civilian buildings which are not military objectives are a war crime. Some ICC officials claim that this includes attacks against historical monuments as well as buildings dedicated to religion (Bangkok Post, July 4, 2012). But this is due to an interpretation. The global trend delineated in this paper suggests that violence against sacred spaces and religious personnel need to stop.

The call for such cessation was once heard through the initiatives of JUST headed by President Chandra Muzaffar. Maybe the initiative which began in 2002 was ahead of its time.[14] Given the present global trend of violence against sacred spaces and religious personnel, perhaps the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century is the right time to re-imagine a world where ethno-religious conflicts could be contained by locating sacred spaces outside the curse of violence. A global effort to again propose a convention or a UN resolution to protect sacred spaces and religious personnel might be attempted.

To undertake this peace work at present is to imagine a collective effort, regional or global, to foster an atmosphere conducive to relocating the sacred space outside the curse of violence. But this will be possible only if those who care to work on this global project allow themselves to be re-enchanted with the beauty of the sacred that manifest themselves in different human cultures.

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[14] *See the report of this initiative in Muzaffar 2012 in this issue of Peace & Policy.*

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