

## Prevention costs far less than cure

By: Robert M. Macrae: *Environmental Technology Instructor Selkirk College, Castlegar, BC*

Epidemics such as the Biblical plagues, Black Death, cholera, smallpox, syphilis, influenza, louse-borne typhus, HIV, SARS, and now COVID-19 are not inevitable. Epidemics require (1) a virulent pathogen, (2) a susceptible host, and (3) environmental conditions suited to the spread of disease. Without any one of these three ingredients, epidemics fizzle.

There is little we can do to prevent the evolution of virulent pathogens. Relatively harmless pathogens limited to single hosts regularly, but unpredictably mutate into aggressive strains able to spread and sicken less resistant hosts.

There is more we can do to protect susceptible hosts and much more we can do to limit environmental conditions that favour disease transmission. As COVID-19 winds down, it would be wise to plan how to reduce the risk of future epidemics because, as we are being reminded, prevention costs far less than cure.

Our understanding of epidemics is vastly improved. Today, few believe epidemics to be the punishment of angry deities or the product of vengeful sorcery. Our understanding of microbiology, epidemiology, and immunology is better than even during the 2003 SARS epidemic when precious time was lost identifying the causal agent and its genetic sequence. During the SARS epidemic, there was only one person testing samples in the entire province of Ontario using a clunkier, costlier procedure unable to process nearly the volume of tests run daily across Canada for COVID-19.

Past epidemics occurred when large numbers of impoverished people lived in crowded, unsanitary conditions where basic services such as clean water and sewage were scarce to non-existent. For example, London during the Industrial Revolution, when exhausted, under-paid, over-worked labourers were packed into filthy tenements with cellars overflowing with sewage that saturated the ground, poisoned the water, fouled the air, and precipitated London's Great Stink and tens of thousands of avoidable deaths.

### Lesson one is eliminate poverty.

If this sounds ridiculously idealistic, Bydream bigger. Eliminating poverty is neither impossible nor impractical and a far better investment than assault

(From last column) **Prevention costs far less** rifles, intercontinental ballistic missiles, stealth fighter jets, nuclear aircraft carriers, or Star Wars defence systems.

Eliminating poverty requires a fraction of what we spend on the military and returns an infinitely preferable outcome.

Ontario, during the Kathleen Wynne era, experimented with guaranteed basic incomes. She proved they were cost-effective compared with the patchwork of existing social services programs and they enabled recipients to escape the poverty cycle.

In addition to poverty, war nurtures perfect conditions for epidemics. There were many more deaths caused by louse-borne typhus, typhoid, cholera, and dysentery than by combat during the Crimean, American Civil, Boer, and Great Wars.

**Lesson two** is eliminate war.

**Lesson three** is eliminate environmental conditions suited to the spread of disease. This topic embraces more than I can discuss in this article, but here's a preview.

In his recent book, LIU professor Bill Schutt discusses desertification in Texas and California where researchers gauged soil moisture to assess drought. They determined 2012-2014 to be the most arid period in the past 1,200 years.

Schutt reports, "Across China, Syria, and central Africa, regions that only recently experienced dry seasons are becoming deserts. People in Kenya, Somalia, and Ethiopia, three of the poorest countries in the world, are suffering through the worst drought in 60 years. In parts of Sudan rainfall has fallen by 30 percent over the past 40 years. The Sahara is encroaching into farmland at one mile per year. Famine and diminishing access to fresh water are now daily realities for more than 12 million Africans. According to the United Nations Environmental Programme, many conflicts in Africa are driven by climate change and environmental degradation."

In concluding this article, there is a relationship between poverty, war, environmental degradation, especially climate change, and epidemics. In our plans to reduce the risk of future epidemics, it would be ridiculously unwise to ignore this relationship.



## A UNIVERSAL APPEAL FOR HUMANITY TO END MILITARISM AND STOP WAR

By: Abdallah El Harif and Vijay Prashad, Peoples Dispatch, May 2020: Globetrotter, a project of the Independent Media Institute

Why The Bouficha Appeal Stands For The Aspirations Of People Who Want An End To Militarized Violence On Earth.

While US and other imperial powers continue to ramp up militarization, the international movement against militarism is even more important.

On March 15, 1950, the World Peace Council sent out the Stockholm Appeal, a short text that called for a ban on nuclear weapons and that would eventually be signed by almost 2 million people. The appeal was made up of three elegant sentences:

**--We demand the outlawing of atomic weapons as instruments of intimidation and mass murder of peoples. We demand strict international control to enforce this measure.**

**--We believe that any government which first uses atomic weapons against any other country whatsoever will be committing a crime against humanity and should be dealt with as a war criminal.**

**--We call on all men and women of good will throughout the world to sign this appeal.**

Now, 70 years later, the nuclear arsenal is far more lethal, and the conventional weapons themselves dwarf the atom bomb that was dropped by the United States on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. In 1950, there were 304 nuclear warheads (299 in the United States), while now there are 13,355 warheads; and each of the 2020 warheads is far more destructive than those from the early years of this terrible technology. Something like the Stockholm Appeal is imperative now.

To call for a ban on weapons of mass destruction is not an abstract issue; it is one that points directly toward a bloc of countries, led by the United States of America, that is stubbornly persisting in using force to maintain and extend their global dominance. In the midst of this global pandemic, the United States threatens to deepen conflicts with China, Iran, and Venezuela, including moving a naval carrier group to effectively embargo Venezuelan ports and moving ships into the Persian Gulf to challenge the right of Iranian boats to international waters; meanwhile, the United States has said it will position aggressive missile batteries and anti-missile radar arrays in a ring around China. None of these countries—China, Iran, and Venezuela—have made any aggressive move against the United States; it is the United States that has imposed a conflict on these countries. If an appeal is to be drafted now, it cannot be made in an anaemic, universal fashion. Any call for peace in our time must specifically be a call against the imperialist warmongering that emanates from—but is not only authored by--Washington, D.C.

(Continued next column)

(From last column) **END MILITARISM**

Our assessment of the imposition of a state of a war by the United States relies upon four points:

1. The United States already has the largest military arsenal and the widest military footprint in the world. According to the most recent data, the U.S. government spent at least \$732 billion in 2019 on its military; we say “at least” because there are secret disbursements of funds to the massive intelligence wings that are not publicly available. From 2018 to 2019, the United States increased its military budget by 5.3 percent, the amount of which is the same as the total German military budget. Almost 40 percent of global military spending is done by the United States. The United States has a combined total of more than 500 military bases in almost every country on the planet. The United States Navy has 20 of the world’s 44 active aircraft carriers, while other U.S. allies have 21 of them; this means that the U.S. and its allied states have 41 of the 44 aircraft carriers (China has two and Russia has one). There is no question about the overwhelming superiority of U.S. military force.
2. Yet, the United States is now using its full ability to expand its nuclear and conventional domination into space and into cyber-warfare with its Space Command (re-established in 2019) and Cyber Command (created in 2009). The United States has developed an interceptor ballistic missile (SM-3) that it has tested in space, and it is testing such fanciful weapons as particle-beam weaponry, plasma-based weaponry, and kinetic bombardment. In 2017, Trump announced his government’s commitment to such new weaponry. The U.S. government will spend at least \$481 billion between 2018 and 2024 to develop new advanced weapons systems, including autonomous vehicles, counter-drones, cyber-weapons, and robotics. The U.S. Army has already tested its Advanced Hypersonic Weapon that can travel at Mach 5 (five times the speed of sound), so that it can reach any place on earth within an hour; this weapon is part of the U.S. military’s Conventional Prompt Global Strike program.
3. The U.S. military complex has advanced its hybrid war program that includes a range of techniques to undermine governments and political projects.

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### Our Mission

The Boundary Peace Initiative represents people of diverse backgrounds officially brought together in 2002 because of our mutual concern for the rise in world conflict. Our mandate is to participate in multilateral non-violent conflict resolution in support of global human rights, ecological and environmental sustainability and international law through education, sharing of information, dialogue and activism locally and globally. We encourage and seek your participation in our mutual work for true peace based on social justice, equality, accountability, integrity, honour, respect, etc in order to build a better world today and future generations.

**BPI web site: [www.boundarypeaceinitiative.org](http://www.boundarypeaceinitiative.org)**

***BPI regular meetings are suspended until at least 3 people commit to meet monthly. To commit or for info: (250) 444-0524 or (250) 442-0434 or email [LPeace@telus.net](mailto:LPeace@telus.net).***

(From page 2) **END MILITARISM**

These techniques include the mobilization of United States power over international institutions (such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, and the SWIFT wire service) to prevent governments from managing basic economic activity, the use of U.S. diplomatic power to isolate governments, the use of sanctions methods to prevent private companies from doing business with certain governments, the use of information warfare to render governments and political forces to be criminals or terrorists, and so on. This powerful complex of instruments is able—in the plain light of day—to destabilize governments and to justify regime change.

4. Finally, the U.S. government along with its NATO partners as well as U.S. and European weapons manufacturers continue to flood the world with the deadliest weapons. The top five arms exporters (Lockheed Martin, Boeing, Northrop Grumman, Raytheon, and General Dynamics) are located in the United States. These five firms alone account for 35 percent of the top 100 of the world's arms dealer sales in 2018 (the most recent figures); the total U.S. arms sales account for 59 percent of all arms sales that year. This was an increase of 7.2 percent over the U.S. sales in 2017. These weapons are sold to countries that should instead spend their precious surplus on education, on health, and on food programs. For example, in West Asia and North Africa, the greatest threat to the people is not only the terrorist in his Toyota Hilux, but it is also the arms dealer in the air-conditioned hotel room.

The Stockholm Appeal is now obsolete. A new appeal is needed. We developed it while we were discussing it in Bouficha, Tunisia; let's call it the Bouficha Appeal.

**We, the peoples of the world:**

- Stand against the warmongering of U.S. imperialism, which seeks to impose dangerous wars on an already fragile planet.
- Stand against the saturation of the world with weapons of all kinds, which inflame conflicts and often drive political processes toward endless wars.
- Stand against the use of military power to prevent the social development of the peoples of the world, to allow countries to build their sovereignty and their dignity.

**Abdallah El Harif** is a founder of the Democratic Way (Moroccan radical left party); he was its first national secretary and is now the deputy national secretary in charge of international relations. El Harif is an engineer who studied at Mines ParisTech. He was a member of a clandestine Moroccan organization that fought against the dictatorship of King Hassan II; for his role in the fight for democracy and socialism, El Harif was imprisoned for seventeen years.

**Vijay Prashad** is an Indian historian, editor and journalist. He is a writing fellow and chief correspondent at Globetrotter, a project of the Independent Media Institute. He is the chief editor of LeftWord Books and the director of Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research. He has written more than twenty books, including *The Darker Nations* and *The Poorer Nations*. His latest book is *Washington Bullets*, with an introduction by Evo Morales Ayva.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR TREMENDOUS SUPPORT !**

*From the U.S. Peace Council via ActionNetwork.org*

Dear Friends of Peace and Justice,

Please allow us to express our most sincere thanks to the thousands of activists from around the world who have signed this Open Letter. The response to the letter has been tremendous. Over 6,800 people have already signed the letter and many more signatures are coming in every day. This is a great achievement for our movement.

However, given the gravity of the situation the world is facing, we need many thousands more signatures to guarantee that our voices are being heard. We are hoping that within the next few days we will be able to pass the 10,000 signatures mark. So please take a moment to sign the Open Letter to the Government of the United States and the United Nations if you have not already done so. We need send out as many letters as possible.

Thank You!

**To the Government of the United States and the United Nations** April 9, 2020

Dear Friends of Peace, Justice and Human Rights Around the World,

The global spread of COVID-19 has exposed the illegal and immoral practice of imposing unilateral coercive measures (economic sanctions) by the United States government against more than thirty nations. The economic war against those nations had already resulted in unimaginable suffering of the people in the targeted nations even before the COVID-19 pandemic.

With the devastation of the global pandemic, the targeted countries — especially Venezuela, Cuba, Iran, Syria and Zimbabwe — are finding it prohibitively difficult to protect and save the lives of their citizens in the face of the ongoing global emergency. These sanctions constitute crimes against humanity.

Instead of helping these countries fight the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the government of the United States is now using the public distraction caused by the pandemic to intensify its military actions against the targeted nations. It is increasing its threats against Iran and Syria by engaging in a silent buildup of its military forces in Iraq again, and has dispatched its Naval warships to the shores of Venezuela, demanding the total surrender of the Venezuelan government to the United States.

Only a global wave of popular protest can stop these anti-human policies and actions.

Please use the link provided below to sign the **Open Letter to the Government of the United States and the United Nations**, addressed to the President of the United States and Secretary General of the United Nations, demanding that all U.S. and UN sanctions against the targeted nations be lifted, and all U.S. military threats and actions against them be stopped immediately.

We are dealing with a global emergency and must act quickly. (The BPI & BCSIPC have signed this letter)

## WHAT'S UP?

### PEACE SYMBOL CONTEST

Here's a great way to spend time while self-isolating. **Enter the Peace Quest Regina 2020 Peace Symbol Contest.**

Create a peace symbol on any surface: paper, cloth, a cake or cookies, a sidewalk, a rock....The options are limitless. Take a picture of your entry and email it to

**makingpeace@sasktel.net** . You will, in return, receive a peace gift and become eligible to win a major peace prize. Entry deadline is midnight August 31 2020. Winners will be announced September 21, International Peace Day. Visit the Peace Quest Regina Facebook page and see past and current entries: [https://www.facebook.com/pg/PeaceQuestRegina/photos/?tab=album&album\\_id=2546836035589182](https://www.facebook.com/pg/PeaceQuestRegina/photos/?tab=album&album_id=2546836035589182)

The BPI is exploring organizing an event on August 9<sup>th</sup> for Nagasaki Day. This is an outdoor event, therefore it's possible to physically distance. We'll keep you informed.

We hope to deliver hard copy of the Newsletter locally once we know when and if businesses can accept paper copy. We will keep you informed. In the meantime you can print copies from the website at [www.boundarypeaceinitiative.org](http://www.boundarypeaceinitiative.org) .

*The history of mankind is the movement of humanity toward greater and greater unification*  
*Leo Tolstoy*

## Keeping Things in Perspective

Author is unknown. Submitted by Laverne Semenoff

### Maybe we don't have it that bad?

It's a mess out there now. Hard to discern between what's a real threat and what is just simple panic and hysteria. For a small amount of perspective at this moment, imagine you were born in 1900.

On your 14th birthday, World War I starts, and ends on your 18th birthday. 22 million people perish in that war. Later in the year, a Spanish Flu epidemic hits the planet and runs until your 20th birthday. 50 million people die from it in those two years. Yes, 50 million.

On your 29th birthday, the Great Depression begins. Unemployment hits 25%, the World GDP drops 27%. That runs until you are 33. The country nearly collapses along with the world economy.

When you turn 39, World War II starts. You aren't even over the hill yet. And don't try to catch your breath . Between your 39th and 45th birthday, 75 million people perish in the war.

Smallpox was epidemic until you were in your 40's, as it killed 300 million people during your lifetime.

At 50, the Korean War starts. 5 million perish. From your birth, until you are 55 you dealt with the fear of Polio epidemics each summer. You experience friends and family contracting polio and being paralyzed and/or die.

At 55 the Vietnam War begins and doesn't end for 20 years. 4 million people perish in that conflict. During the Cold War, you lived each day with the fear of nuclear annihilation. On your 62nd birthday you have the Cuban Missile Crisis, a tipping point in the Cold War. Life on our planet, as we know it, almost ended. When you turn 75, the Vietnam War finally ends.

Think of everyone on the planet born in 1900. How did they endure all of that? When you were a kid in 1985 and didn't think your 85 year old grandparent understood how hard school was. And how mean that kid in your class was. Yet they survived through everything listed above. Perspective is an amazing art. Refined and enlightening as time goes on. Let's try and keep things in perspective. Your parents and/or grandparents were called to endure all of the above and .....**YOU ARE CALLED TO STAY HOME AND SIT ON YOUR COUCH**

**WORK  
HARD  
STAY  
HUMBLE**



The BPI welcomes your input. Articles are the author's responsibility and may not be common consensus of members. To submit articles contact Laura at **250-444-0524 or 250-442-0434** or email [L4peace@telus.net](mailto:L4peace@telus.net).

The BPI is a member of: BC Southern Interior Peace Coalition, Canadian Peace Congress, Abolition 2000 and an affiliate of the Fellowship of Reconciliation. We also work with a wide range of local and global peace, social justice and environmental groups.

Voice your opinion to the Prime Minister and all MPs. Free postage: {Name of MP}, Parliament Buildings, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0A6

Go to the Government of Canada website for MP contact information at <http://www.canada.gc.ca>