

Active Duty U.S. GIs, Israeli Soldiers and Palestinian Fighters Declare:

'We're Done With War!'

All urge U.S. military personnel to tell Congress "Stop Funding Gaza Genocide!"

By Mike Ferner

A group of former fighters from Palestine and Israel, plus active duty U.S. GIs, have announced that they are conscientious objectors and urge U.S. soldiers, sailors and airmen to tell Congress to stop funding Israel's genocide in Gaza.

During an online news conference Aug. 15, three active-duty U.S. military members, an Israel Defense Force (IDF) veteran and a former Hamas member each explained why they decided to stop participating in war and will urge U.S. military members, via the "Appeal for Redress v2," to demand Congress call a ceasefire in Gaza.

Elik Elhanan, a special forces soldier in the Israeli military from 1995 to 1998, served in south Lebanon, the West Bank and Gaza. In 1997, his 14-year-old sister was killed by a suicide bomber in Jerusalem. He joined Courage to Refuse in 2002, co-founded the Israeli-Palestinian

group Combatants for Peace in 2005 and now serves on the board of American Friends of Combatants for Peace.

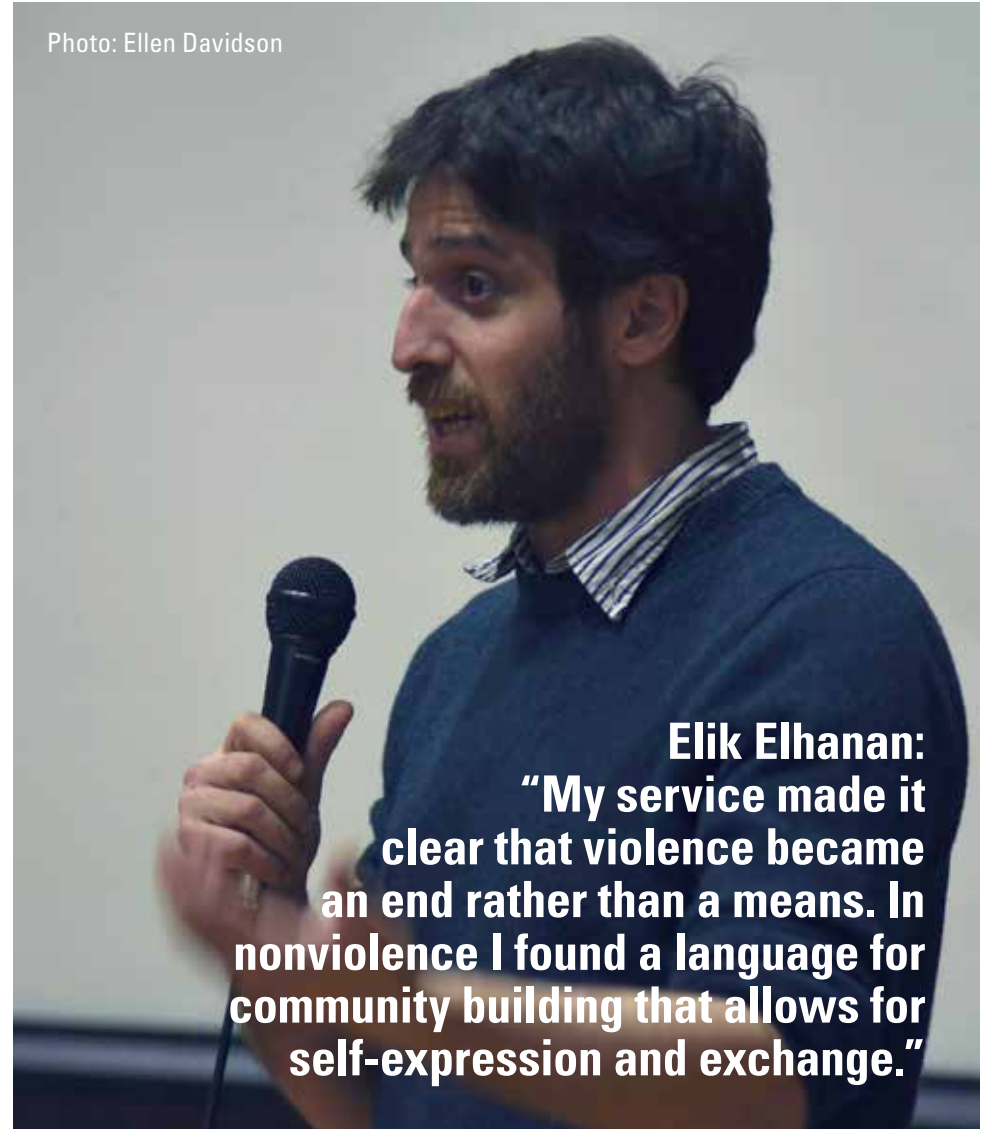
He said, "My service made it clear that violence became an end rather than a means. In nonviolence I found a language for community building that allows for self expression and exchange, while engaging in fierce resistance against the hegemonic discourse."

Sofia Or, 19, spent 85 days in an Israeli military jail for refusing to join the Israeli Defense Force. Granted conscientious objector status and released in June, Or wrote in her statement of refusal, "I refuse to enlist in order to show that change is needed and that change is possible, for the security and safety of all of us in Israel-Palestine, and in the name of empathy that is not restricted by national identity. ... I want to create a reality in which all children between the Jordan River and the [Mediterranean] sea can dream without cages."

Ahmed Helou, now 52, living in the West Bank and a member of Combatants for Peace, said, "I was born to a refugee family that was forced to flee from their home in 1948. Most went to Gaza while my parents fled to Jericho. They told me how Palestinians were killed right in front of them and how they passed by many bodies as they ran for safety.

"At 15, I was invited to join a group
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Photo: Ellen Davidson



Elik Elhanan:
"My service made it clear that violence became an end rather than a means. In nonviolence I found a language for community building that allows for self-expression and exchange."

Nobody Would Vote for Any of This Bullshit Without Extensive Manipulation

By Caitlin Johnstone

One of the biggest lies we are sold in Western politics is that election results paint an accurate picture of what the public truly wants. We are told that candidates who promote peace and economic justice lose elections because their platforms are unpopular with the wider public, as though the people are organically coming into worldviews that support poverty, inequality, war and militarism all on their own.

"Socialism just isn't popular!" we are told, as though we don't live under a capitalist empire that has spent generations violently stomping out socialism wherever it pops up and brainwashing the public into despising socialism at home.

"Americans just don't care that much about foreign policy," we're told, as though Americans aren't being propagandized to the gills every day of their lives into seeing their government's bloodthirsty warmongering as normal and acceptable.

It is a well-documented fact that under the Western empire not only are our political systems aggressively manipulated by the rich and powerful for the benefit of the rich and powerful, but public opinion is as well. Insane systems that rely on exploitation, injustice, ecocide, militarism, and war are actively normalized via mass-scale psychological manipulation, and we are then presented with candidates and platforms that support those systems and told that anything else is fringe commie extremism.

If left to their own devices nobody would organically come to the conclusion that there should be people living on the streets while investment properties are left empty, that normal people should be working two jobs to feed and house their families while Machiavellian plutocrats amass billions of dollars, that we should be destroying the ecosystem we depend on for survival to increase

One of the biggest lies we are sold in Western politics is that election results paint an accurate picture of what the public truly wants.

profits for corporate shareholders, or that we should be encircling the planet with war machinery to terrorize and murder any population on earth who disobeys the dictates of Washington. But that's what our elections serve us up year after year, decade after decade—because no part of this is organic.

So now we're seeing a U.S. election where two tyrants
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From the Editors



PeaceWalk 2024 crosses over the Delaware River into Pennsylvania in June.
Photo: Ellen Davidson

'The Spring of Hope, The Winter of Despair'

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair."

Those words written by Charles Dickens more than 165 years ago still ring true. This spring, Veterans For Peace organized PeaceWalk 2024, a journey of 600 miles from Ogunquit, Maine, to Washington, D.C., to combat despair by walking for peace and planet. We walked for the wellbeing of all people, for peace and the living earth, for an end to the threat of nuclear war and all wars, and for an environment that supports all life. We walked in solidarity with the people of Gaza, determined to survive a brutal genocide, and with West Bank Palestinians living, resisting, and dying for 75 years under Israeli apartheid and occupation.

Speaking at the start of our peace walk Sherri Mitchell of the Penobscot Nation

reminded us to mindfully bring the sacred into our journey. "There have been a lot of reasons why people have marched throughout time. Those reasons have historical significance. And so when we think about the reasons why people have marched or been in processions, on pilgrimage—at the heart of those walks, those journeys, there was an element of the sacred that was present." Mitchell's profound opening remarks are included in at right.

Speaking with groups that hosted us at times during the walk, I emphasized what is often left out of peace and justice events. I encouraged people to remember that our struggle for peace and the planet, to end wars and genocide is not just about us. That we humans were just one part of the web of life. No more or less important than "all our relations"—the winged creatures, the four-legged, those who crawl on the earth, and the ocean and river dwellers.

The Lakota expression, *Mitákuye Oyás'in*, stresses the interconnectedness of all life. That if we neglect or forget to honor, respect, and learn from this sacred web of life including the living and conscious earth, we do so at our own peril.

—Tarak Kauff

'Mindfully Bring the Sacred Back into Your Journey'

Remarks by Sherri Mitchell of the Penobscot Nation set the tone for the start of PeaceWalk 2024 on May 7 in Ogunquit, Maine. Transcription by Sam Rios.

Good morning. [Native greeting] Hello, everyone. [Native language]. My name is Sherri Mitchell. My name in my language, Weh'na Ha'mu Kwasset. I am from the Penobscot Nation. My family is Bear clan from the Penobscot Nation and Crow clan from the Passamaquoddy tribe.

[Native language] I'm happy to be here with you today. It felt really important for me to come and support what's happening here for many reasons. As I've been thinking about what I wanted to say in these brief comments this morning, there are a lot of things that I thought about. I have a very dear friend who is currently doing a pilgrimage through territories where only the bones of her ancestors remain: through the Warsaw Ghetto and Auschwitz. And she's currently in a small town called the Vilnius. And somebody came up to her at a restaurant and said, do you have family here? And she said, only in the cemeteries.

And you know, Tarak [Kauff of Veterans For Peace] talked about walking on stolen land. But one of the things that my friend talked about was this connection to a story that I tell about the place where I'm currently living, which is a place called Wicuhkemultine Kinship Community (on reclaimed land that I bought back in 2020, that was originally Penobscot Territory and was given away by the state of Maine the year that Maine became a state in a land grant). We have formed a learning community there.

Wicuhkemultine, means "let's help one another." We had looked at a lot of places before we were called by Wicuhkemultine, and one of the things that happened, I had two other board members with me from the Land Peace Foundation, which is my organization, and we were walking there and I said to them in the language, "this land is beautiful." And they turned around and they responded to me, "you know, it is very beautiful here." And when we were speaking to each other in our language, we both felt the land sit up and take notice. And we could feel the energy of that coming up through our feet. That land was saying, "we recognize this language from millennia. Where has this voice been?" And so we feel like the land ... [crying tears] ... sorry ... We feel like the land there reached up and grabbed our feet. And so I like to tell people, there are a lot of places that captured my imagination, a lot of places that tugged at my heart, but this was the only place that literally reached up and grabbed my feet. And so we knew it was the right place for us to be.

And as my friend was recounting her story of her last few weeks of her journey, she said that she was walking on these cobblestone streets in this city in Poland, and she literally started to feel the earth rumbling beneath her feet. There was no earthquake going on. No natural event that was taking place. She realized that what was happening was that her ancestors were tapping her on the bottom of her feet, letting her know that they were with her on her journey.

There have been a lot of reasons why
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Photo: Ellen Davidson

Veterans For Peace is an international organization made up of military veterans, military family members, and allies. We are dedicated to building a culture of peace, exposing the true causes and costs of war, and healing the wounds of war.



For more information or to join or support our work, scan the QR at left or visit veteransforpeace.org.



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U.S. War Machine Pushes Planet Toward Climate Catastrophe

This article is based on a talk given at an Ecosocialism conference on Aug. 24, 2019 in Albuquerque, N.M., organized by the Party for Socialist Liberation. We felt it is more valid than ever.—The editors

By Marcus Nells

Anyone concerned with climate change and the ecological crisis we face has to be concerned with the United States military for several reasons.

The most obvious reason is that the U.S. military’s carbon footprint is gigantic. If the U.S. military was a country, it would be a bigger greenhouse gas emitter than 140 other countries, and there’s only 195 countries in the world!

This should not come as a surprise. It takes a lot of oil and gas to keep the U.S. empire’s 800 military bases running, not to mention their Navy and air fleets, which are scattered across the globe. In 2017 alone, the military purchased 260,000 barrels of oil per day. Just one of its jets uses about 3,334 gallons per hour, about what the average car driver uses in seven years.

On top of that, U.S. military bases—both foreign and domestic—are among the most polluted places in

the world. Jet and rocket fuel frequently contaminate sources of drinking water and aquifers, like right here in Albuquerque. All three military bases in New Mexico have contaminated the water in nearby areas, and all three have refused to correct the problems. The U.S. Navy recently dumped 94,000 gallons of hazardous fuel into a Virginia waterway that empties straight into the Atlantic Ocean.

Retired congressperson John Dingell recently stated that “almost every military base in the U.S. is contaminated.” In fact, the military has 39,000 contaminated sites on over 19 million acres of land in the United States alone! Nine hundred of those sites are designated by the Environmental Protection Agency as Superfund sites. And we haven’t even begun talking about the bases outside of the United States.

The Department of Defense produces more hazardous waste than the five largest U.S. chemical companies combined.

The United States has conducted more nuclear tests than all other countries in the world combined. These tests have made parts of the planet almost uninhabitable, like parts of the Marshall Islands.

What is worse than the U.S. empire’s far-flung bases are

their actual wars. From the so-called Indian Wars to the genocidal war against Iraq, the U.S. military leaves a path of destruction that endures for generations, from the annihilation of native ecosystems and agricultural systems to the physical liquidation of millions of human beings.

It is abundantly clear that the U.S. military is the most destructive force, militarily and environmentally, in the world.

While the U.S. military is the single largest organizational consumer of hydrocarbons in the world, recently it has been running around boasting about “greening” some of its operations. No one should be fooled by this. We know that the answer isn’t a green capitalist war machine. The answer is no capitalist war machine!

To understand why a green war machine is not part of a response to climate change, we have to understand what the ruling class mobilizes the military for in the first place.

The U.S. Army, Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps are deployed for one reason and one reason alone: to threaten, bully and punish any state or movement that exercises too much independence and dares to stand in the way of corporate profits. The military is the fist that allows the global system of capitalism to keep going. In other words, the military’s function is to preserve the system of accumulation and exploitation that is destroying the planet. Greening it won’t change its function.

If the effects of climate change are not reversed, it will lead to greater instability, which will bring a militarized response from the ruling elites. They are building walls around the United States to keep the global masses out. They are arming themselves to the teeth to preserve the United States at the center of global power in scenarios of global climate crisis. The military budget annually is now almost \$1 trillion. A new scramble to dominate and exploit the resources opened up by receding ice and permafrost is now underway.

This preparation for conflict is giving rise to a new arms race. The U.S. is withdrawing from all Cold War-era weapons treaties. They are upgrading their nuclear stockpile and weaponizing space. This is very serious.

The potentially devastating impacts from climate change mean we have to radically reorganize society so that working people are in charge, not the rich, and we must do this quickly! There is no way to fathom a path toward climate justice, sustainability and people’s power without taking on the global security threat of the U.S. military.

Marcus Nells is a member of the Party for Socialism and Liberation.

Climb It!

A huge mountain before us—could we climb it?
Can we face the crisis of our climate?
Though the mountain seems impassable,
The project feels impossible,
Imagine that we could climb it.

In our lives and work, we’ve known cooperation.
That we need between people and among all nations
Inspiration—and preparation
To scale that mighty peak.

Work for change alone, you won’t succeed.
Millions pulling together is what we need.
To climb past the ridges of war and greed,
As we scale that mighty peak.

A huge mountain in our way, we must climb it.
And face the crisis of our climate.
Though the mountain seems impassable,
The project feels impossible,
What choice is there but to climb it?

Droughts, fires, floods, and sweltering heat
So many challenges that we meet.
Exhaustion, hunger and blistered feet,
Yet we will scale that mighty peak.

Onward! ¡Adelante! Allons-y!
Sharing a healthy planet, it will be,
A better life for you and me
Once we scale that mighty peak.

A huge mountain before us, we will climb it.
As we engage the crisis of our climate.
Though the mountain seemed impassable,
The project felt impossible,
We make the decision to climb it.

Steve Morse is a veteran (1969–71) of the war in Viet Nam, GI Resistance and Army stockades. He co-founded Veterans For Peace’s Climate Crisis and Militarism Project and Veterans and Labor for Sensible Priorities.

The Slide Into Authoritarianism

The loss of civil liberties is almost always incremental

By John Kiriakou

All of us who care about civil liberties, civil rights, human rights and freedom of the press have had a front-row seat lately to a slide toward what can only be described as authoritarianism. The governments of the U.S., UK and even Canada have been working hard, sometimes in a coordinated fashion, to silence dissenting voices. The governments' tactics have been heavy-handed, to say the least.

Most recently, journalist Richard Medhurst was arrested in August by British authorities. Richard, who is one of the loudest and most important voices in support of human rights for Palestinians, was arrested at Heathrow Airport.

Detaining a journalist is not terribly unusual in the UK, unfortunately. What usually happens is that the journalist is held for several hours, their phone and laptop are taken from him, they are given a variety of threats that they must appear to answer questions at some future date, and they are eventually released. Things were different for Richard, however.

Our colleague Chris Hedges wrote, "After being taken into custody by six police officers, having his electronic equipment seized, and then questioned, he was placed in solitary confinement for almost 24 hours. He was released on pre-charge bail. He will remain under investigation for at least three months and he faces the prospect of being charged with an offense that could carry a prison sentence of up to 14 years."

And what is the charge that Richard is facing? It's terrorism. He is being threatened with a charge under Section 12 of the UK's Terrorism Act for his reporting.

Richard Medhurst is not, of course, a terrorist. He's a journalist working to publish the truth on the ground in Gaza. There are a lot of Western governments

that simply don't like that.

Here in the United States, *The New York Times* reported in August that the Justice Department has begun an investigation into employees of RT, formerly known as Russia Today. RT America ceased to exist more than a year ago.

But a lot of Americans, including this writer, often appear on RT International via Zoom to comment on global developments, like the wars in Ukraine and Gaza and on U.S. elections.

Former U.N. weapons inspector Scott Ritter, a frequent RT guest, has said publicly that he occasionally writes op-eds for RT.com for \$150 per article. His house was raided by more than a dozen FBI agents and a local SWAT team, apparently for his work with RT and for the gall of trying to travel to Moscow to sit on a panel at an academic event about Ukraine.

Scott never made it to Moscow. His passport was seized before he could depart, and he was taken off the plane.

In an impromptu press conference immediately after the raid on his house, Scott opined that the raid was part of a Foreign Agent Registration Act (FARA) case that the Justice Department may be trying to build against him.

Why? As with Richard Medhurst, the government doesn't like his politics, and it especially doesn't like the fact that he's public about his position on the Ukraine war.

Tulsi Gabbard on Terror Watch List

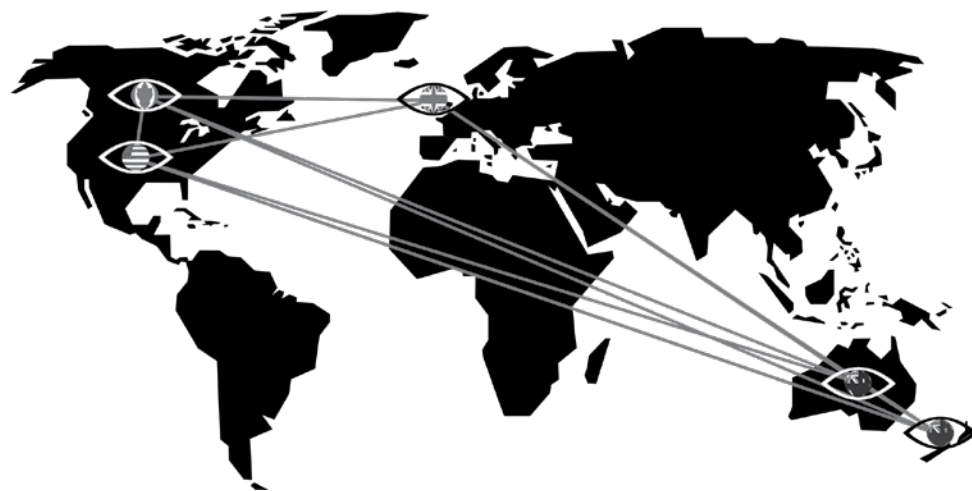
Earlier this month, a TSA whistleblower reported that a former Democratic congresswoman and former presidential candidate, Tulsi Gabbard, had been placed on the Department of Homeland Security's terrorist watch list.

Gabbard told journalist Matt Taibbi that she and her husband are routinely given boarding passes with the "SSSS" security moniker on them, they are pulled into secondary screening, which takes as long as 45 minutes, and that she has encountered "multiple obstacles" on recent trips to Dallas, Austin, Nashville, Orlando, and Atlanta.



Richard Medhurst
Independent Journalist

Richard Medhurst on his X feed on Aug. 19, announcing details of his arrest.



The "Five Eyes" intelligence network that includes Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the U.K., the U.S. (@GDJ, Openclipart)

The TSA whistleblower added that federal air marshals, sometimes as many as three of them, were assigned to fly on all flights that Gabbard was on, a ridiculous, infuriating, and irrational waste of the taxpayers' money.

Several members of Congress and the entire Hawaii legislature are now demanding that TSA Director David Pekoske explain himself.

Last October, journalist, human rights whistleblower, and former British ambassador to Uzbekistan Craig Murray was arrested at Glasgow Airport in Scotland upon returning home from a meeting in Iceland that I had also attended. After interrogating him about his political beliefs, the police seized Craig's laptop and cell phone.

Most of the questions Craig was forced to answer were about Julian Assange and WikiLeaks. He was also grilled about a pro-Palestine rally at which he had spoken in Reykjavik.

Like Richard Medhurst, Craig was interrogated under the UK's draconian Terrorism Act. He was later released, but he has possible terrorism charges hanging over his head, and he has no idea why.

In my own case, I recently traveled to Greece at the invitation of a think tank there to talk about the situation in the Middle East. The Greeks rolled out the red carpet for me, and I ended up visiting five different think tanks, each associated with the major political parties represented in the Parliament.

The Greeks paid my expenses, which included a flight from Washington to Athens through New York. The return trip was from Athens to Washington through Toronto.

As it so happens, I am banned for life from Canada because I'm a "dangerous felon," having blown the whistle on the CIA's torture program. Canada is a so-called Five Eyes country.

The United States, Canada, the UK, Australia, and New Zealand, which make up the Five Eyes, share criminal justice information with each other, and any citizen of one who has been convicted of a felony—any felony—and sentenced to 18 months in prison or more, is automatically banned from entering the other Five Eyes.

I didn't think that was going to be a problem because I was simply transiting

Toronto. I wasn't actually entering Canada. When the plane landed in Toronto, I filed out like everybody else.

The moment I stepped off the plane, though, two members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, or Mounties, grabbed me by the arms and said, "Come with us." To make a long story short, those were the only words they spoke to me.

They wouldn't answer a single question. They didn't even look at me. Instead, they took me to my connecting flight, still holding my arms, put me on the next plane, and finally left. I was clearly not welcome in Canada.

But the story doesn't end there. When I arrived in Washington, Customs and Border Patrol officers stopped me and questioned me. Where did I go? Why was I there? With whom did I meet? What are their addresses and phone numbers? (Seriously.) I finally told them that I was represented by counsel and wasn't answering any more questions.

They told me that they could hold me for days if they wanted. I told them that was nonsense and that there was no legal way that they could keep me from re-entering my own country. Forty-five minutes later, they let me go.

There's no good news in these stories. This is the future, unless we stand up to fight it.

The loss of civil liberties is almost always incremental. But I, for one, don't want to answer to whomever happens to be in the White House or at the Department of Homeland Security or in the CEO position at Facebook or Twitter or Google. I won't do it. And I won't justify my politics to anybody.

We have rights. And we have to force our elected officials to force those who would take those rights away from us to respect the Constitution. This is a fight worth fighting.

This article was first printed in Consortium News.

John Kiriakou is a former CIA counterterrorism officer and a former senior investigator with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. He became the sixth whistleblower indicted by the Obama administration under the Espionage Act—a law designed to punish spies. He served 23 months in prison as a result of his attempts to oppose the Bush administration's torture program.

By W. D. Ehrhart

In a recent essay in the *Kitsap Sun*, my friend former enlisted Marine and now-retired Major Ed Palm pointed out that in spite of minimum starting salaries 20 times higher than my \$88 a month back in 1966, “signing bonuses” as high as \$40,000, and generous educational benefits, the U.S. military has been unable to meet its enlistment needs in the era of the All-Volunteer Force (AVF).

The AVF was supposed to ensure that the United States would never again suffer another humiliating defeat like the American Fiasco in Vietnam, when reluctant and unwilling soldiers ultimately engaged in open revolt that left the military effectively dysfunctional (see 1971’s *The Collapse of the Armed Forces* by Colonel Robert D. Heinl, Jr., or the documentary film *Sir! No, Sir!*).

But why would anyone other than a starry-eyed idealist, a pathological pugilist, or a person completely hard-up for a job enlist in the military services today? Let’s look at the military’s track record since the end of the American Fiasco in Vietnam.

First came Gerald Ford’s failed rescue attempt of the *SS Mayaguez* (anybody remember that one?). How about Jimmy

Uncle Sam Wants You!

Why would anyone other than a starry-eyed idealist, a pathological pugilist, or a person completely hard-up for a job enlist in the military services today?



did manage to arrest Panama’s Manuel Noriega, who had been on the American payroll for nearly two decades, but only

his *Guests of the Ayatollah*.)

The attacks of September 11, 2001, temporarily reversed the fortunes of U.S. military recruiters as large numbers of outraged patriotic young Americans stepped up and enlisted, reminiscent of the response to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor nearly 60 years earlier.

But as the endless wars in Afghanistan and Iraq dragged on year after year with U.S. military personnel getting sent back into one or both war zones over and over again, young Americans coming home in

and active duty personnel reaching epidemic proportions, it didn’t take long for enlistments to decline steeply again.

Meanwhile, U.S. military involvement in Syria hasn’t gotten Bashar al-Assad out of power, U.S. military involvement in Libya has left that nation a failed state, American soldiers have been killed in Nigeria (what the heck were they doing there, anyway?), and the U.S. military has just been unceremoniously kicked out of Niger (what the heck were they doing there?).

The U.S. military’s attempt to build a temporary pier to provide Palestinians with humanitarian aid while the Pentagon supplies the Israeli Defense Forces with bombs ended up as a very expensive failure.

All in all, over the past half-century, the U.S. military’s track record isn’t particularly distinguished. It is, in fact, a pretty shabby succession of failures and fiascos that have hardly made the world a better or safer place. The Navy used to advertise itself as “a Global Force for Good.” At least they’ve had the good sense to drop that particular recruiting pitch.

But who has the U.S. military been good for? Well, the stockholders and senior executives of U.S. military contractors have done pretty well. Lockheed Martin got \$68,590,000 last year. Raytheon got \$27,820,000. General Dynamics got \$22,965,000. Boeing got \$21,790,000. Northrop Grumman got \$15,094,000. (No wonder the VA hasn’t got enough money to take care of America’s Wounded Warriors.)

But it gets even better. According to the *Washington Post*, 26 of 32 four-star admirals and generals who retired between June 2018 and July 2023 were later em-

[T]he incidence of suicide among veterans and active-duty personnel reaching epidemic proportions, it didn’t take long for enlistments to decline steeply again.

Carter’s failed attempt to rescue the hostages being held by Iranian students at the U.S. Embassy in Tehran? Then there was Ronald Reagan’s attempt to intervene in Lebanon’s civil war, resulting in the deaths of 241 Marines, sailors, and soldiers.

Our armed forces did manage to conquer Grenada, which had a military the size and firepower of the Providence, Rhode Island, police department, but U.S. forces on the island had to call the Pentagon from a phone booth in order to relay messages to U.S. ships within sight offshore (think I’m kidding? Look it up). And a few years later, U.S. forces under George Herbert (Hoover) Walker Bush

after killing between 300 and 500 Panamanian civilians.

Bush and Stormin’ Norman Schwarzkopf followed that one up by putting the Emir of Kuwait back on his gold-plated toilet while the U.S. military stood by and watched as Saddam massacred thousands of Iraqi Shiites who had openly rebelled against him in response to overt U.S. encouragement.

And of course, let’s not forget Bill Clinton’s attempt to bring aid and comfort to Somalia, an adventure that resulted in the book and movie *Black Hawk Down*, making Mark Bowden both rich and famous. (Bowden is, by the way, a very good writer. Speaking of Iran, I especially like

All in all, over the past half century, the U.S. military’s track record isn’t particularly distinguished. It is, in fact, a pretty shabby succession of failures and fiascos that have hardly made the world a better or safer place.

caskets or horribly mangled (ever watch those Wounded Warrior ads asking for your money because the Veterans Administration seems to be short on cash?), and the incidence of suicide among veterans

employed in roles including executive, adviser, board member, or lobbyist for companies with significant military business. That’s 80% of the top brass.

So the poor bastards they send off to do the dirty work have to go begging for prosthetic devices and physical therapy while the generals and admirals get cushy jobs with the guys who make big bucks producing the weapons the poor bastards use to make the world a better and safer place.

Do you really wonder why the U.S. military is having major problems persuading enough young Americans to enlist in our All-Volunteer Forces?

W. D. Ehrhart received the Purple Heart Medal and the Navy Combat Action Ribbon for his service in Vietnam. He holds a PhD from the University of Wales at Swansea. His most recent book is What We Can and Can’t Afford: Essays on Vietnam, Patriotism, and American Life (McFarland, 2023).

Vietnam Redux: Going Back

By Doug Rawlings

for Josh, my son

I look twice now where I used to look only once like where routes two and four merge with route 156 or when my imagination takes me to a little village just on the other side of the river Styx.

Where there truly was hell to pay those many years ago across that river and up and down those swirling tides where Beelzebub got to play with his gift box of GI Joes as we desperately hung on for his Satanic little ride

I went back to that land of my fifty-year-old dreams thinking I’d finally put some nightmares out to pasture hoping to quiet down those mama san betel-mouthed screams looking for that proverbial sense of closure

But who am I to expect more from this madly tortured land that once swallowed up my illusions of masculine grandeur and spat out a soldier boy who had tried to become a man only to become a tool of that mindless, endless slaughter?

Doug Rawlings is a co-founder of VFP who returned to Viet Nam in August 2023 with his son, Josh. Rawlings was invited to speak at the 19th annual Vietnamese Cultural heritage convention.

Students Pledge Not to Interview or Work for a War Company

By Jack Gilroy

On August 23, 100 students, some with masks to hide their identity, joined in a semicircle at Binghamton University's Library Tower and pledged not to interview or ever work for a war company. Students are using social media to encourage university students and high school students everywhere to take the pledge:

Conscientious Objection to Interview or Work for the War Industry

I renounce and reject all allegiance to any firm that produces, sells, or gives weapons or weapons systems or hardware or software to any entity. I shall never interview for or accept any offer to work for any such firm.

I decided to attend the Student Rally Against Genocide. I parked my car a quarter-mile away and gathered together our large black-and-white Veterans For Peace flag, a long banner noting local arms makers BAE Systems and Lockheed Martin, and a medley of signs with respect for workers and great disrespect for what they make.

As I approached the place where the students would gather, two men in plain clothes came to me and said, "Mr. Gilroy, may we speak with you?" I asked them how they knew my name. The older man said they had photos of me. They were campus detectives and wanted to know the students' names. I told them if I knew their names, I wouldn't give them to the police. "We are here to protect everyone" they said.

A band of students wrapped in Israeli flags and waving small blue-and-white flags stood behind a ring of state police and tried to drown out the Rally Against the Genocide speakers. I later offered the students our VFP audio system for future events, but they said the university had just issued a rule banning amplified sound systems.

The young people are so intimidated that some do not want to be photographed for fear of reprisal at the school. I asked one vocal woman, whose face was hidden with a keffiyeh, her name, and she said, "Just call me A for anonymous."

Binghamton University is an incubator for war-profiting companies. Three of the top ten U.S. defense (sic) factories are near Binghamton University. BAE Systems



is just across the Susquehanna River from campus and ranks as the #7 war-profiting company worldwide. Citing ongoing wars, BAE chief executive Charles Woodburn said the weapons manufacturer was expecting "sustained growth in the coming years."

The #1 war products company in the world is Lockheed Martin. This giant profiteer from death and destruction has three war factories just a short drive from the Binghamton campus. Sen. Bernie Sanders notes that Lockheed Martin's war profits rose 37% in the past year.

General Dynamics, #5 war profiteer, is a one-hour

but it is successful in keeping communities beholden to the war profiteers and the military.

Binghamton University is just one example of the war industry's devious ways. A University news story tells how BAE and Lockheed Martin work with students to train dogs as companions for disabled military veterans. This is all tax deductible and good community relations for industries profiting from ingenious ways to blow things up. And it's an inside track to hire Binghamton University engineer students with high salaries to design killing tools.

Students for Justice in Palestine at Binghamton Univer-

As I approached the place where the students would gather, two men in plain clothes came to me and said, "Mr Gilroy, may we speak with you?" I asked them how they knew my name. The older man said they had photos of me.

The Cost of Living

By Arundhati Roy

To love. To be loved.
To never forget your own insignificance.
To never get used to the unspeakable violence and the vulgar disparity of life around you.
To seek joy in the saddest places.
To pursue beauty to its lair.
To never simplify what is complicated or complicate what is simple.
To respect strength, never power.
Above all, to watch.
To try and understand.
To never look away.
And never, never to forget."

Arundhati Roy is an Indian writer best known for her novel *The God of Small Things*, which won the Booker Prize for Fiction in 1997. She is also a political activist for human rights and environmental causes.

drive down Interstate 81 from Binghamton University. General Dynamics in Scranton makes 155mm shells, the most wanted ammo by the Israeli military.

BAE Systems manufactures the howitzer systems to fire the 155mm shells made in Scranton. 155mm shells cost about \$10,000 each, but BAE Systems offers an upgrade to 155mm laser-guided shells that cost \$100,000 a round.

BAE Systems masks its violence-making presence in Endicott, NY, by showcasing its production of electric buses. Most school districts can't afford the \$352,000 price tag for one bus. BAE has just 4% of its work in non-military contracts.

Lockheed Martin has one of its 139 U.S. war contract factories in Archbald, Pennsylvania, which is one hour away from Binghamton University. The Lockheed Martin factory makes Paveway 1 and Paveway 2 bombs that have made Gaza a land of death and rubble.

The pervasiveness of the war industry in the United States is well known and, not so curiously, accepted by the general public. Professor Joan Roelofs best describes why that is so in her book, *The Trillion Dollar Silencer—Why There is So Little Anti-War Protest in the United States*. Prof. Roelofs clearly illustrates how the war profiteers share their blood money with well-paid workers who refuse to consider or care that their skilled work results in torn bodies and millions of people killed, as homes, hospitals, schools, and markets are obliterated by the products they make.

Roelofs illustrates how war manufacturing companies infiltrate the culture with donations to almost every segment of society, from the Boy Scouts to the Girl Scouts, the Red Cross to Little League Baseball, the YMCA, and the U.S. Olympic committee, etc. The philanthropy of the arms industry may be a tiny part of their war profits,

sity followed up on their Conscientious Objection to interviewing for or working for war profiteers Sept 5, surrounding the Job Fair on campus with signs illustrating jobs needed to enhance life, not to destroy and to kill. Some students offered handbills at the door of the fair identifying eight of the corporations as war-focused industries. A Grim Reaper carried a sign saying "Electric Boat is Death," referring to the General Dynamics subsidiary that designs and builds Columbia Class nuclear submarines with 18 nuclear missiles, each multitargeted to break apart into many missiles capable of incinerating dozens of cities. General Dynamics trolls campuses for engineering students to be paid well for using their education to bring about earth's ending.

Most signs carried the QR code for Conscientious Objection to interviewing or working for war companies as well as a QR code for the Veterans For Peace (VFP) letter documenting six laws being violated by companies supplying weapons to Israel. Students added their action to their firm call for boycott, divestment, and sanctions against Israel.

Binghamton area VFP assisted, along with members of Peace Action of Broome County, NY, Jewish Voice For Peace, and Pax Christi Upstate, NY.

The September Days of Solidarity with the People of Palestine were on the first week of September. VFP will also participate in actions the third week of the month against nuclear weapons. For information, email GerryCondon@veteransforpeace.org.

Jack Gilroy has been organizing justice actions since the 1960s. He was honorably discharged from the U.S. Navy and U.S. Army Infantry, and converted to nonviolence during the Viet Nam War. Nonviolently standing for justice has led to him spending time in Southern jails, federal prisons, and more recently Jamesville Penitentiary.

Open Letter from Veterans For Peace to Kamala Harris

Call for a permanent ceasefire and emergency food and medical aid to Gaza

Dear Vice President Harris,

We are reaching out to you as military veterans who have fought in multiple U.S. wars, and who continue to uphold the U.S. Constitution and international law, to organize for justice and equality in our home communities, and to advocate for a peaceful foreign policy.

We are appalled by the ongoing Israeli slaughter of tens of thousands of Palestinian men, women and children and by the maiming of tens of thousands more. We are outraged by the systematic blocking of food, leading to malnutrition, starvation, disease and the deaths of many more, particularly babies and young children. These are unbearable and unacceptable crimes that will go down in the history books as a terrible genocide—a holocaust.

Vice President Harris, many veterans listened carefully to your remarks after your recent meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu. You said:

“What has happened in Gaza over the past nine months is devastating—the images of dead children and desperate, hungry people fleeing for safety, sometimes displaced for the second, third, or fourth time. We cannot look away in the face of these tragedies. We cannot allow ourselves to become numb to the suffering. And I will not be silent... It is time for this war to end and end in a way where Israel is secure, all the hostages are released, the suffering of Palestinians in Gaza ends, and the Palestinian people can exercise their right to freedom, dignity, and self-determination... So, to everyone who has been calling for a ceasefire and to everyone who yearns for peace, I see you and I hear you.”

Veterans For Peace wholeheartedly concurs with these sentiments, Vice President Harris. We applaud you for expressing sympathy with the Palestinian people. We also refuse to become numb to their suffering, and we cannot be silent. Like so many of our fellow citizens, including Jewish Americans, we are deeply disturbed that our government continues to provide Israel with a steady supply of bombs, and to provide political cover for Israeli leaders charged with war crimes.

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) has documented actions by Israeli leaders up to the crime of genocide, and has ordered Israeli leaders to take all necessary measures to avoid repeating such crimes. Yet the Israeli government and military have doubled down on slaughter and starvation. Recently the ICJ declared Israel’s occupation of Palestinian territories to be illegal and called on all the nations of the world to take action to end that illegal occupation.



Photo: Ellen Davidson

Veterans For Peace in Bil’in, West Bank, Palestine.

As Veterans For Peace has stated in letters to the State Department and President Biden, the Biden Administration is violating multiple U.S. laws when it sends bombs to Israel to be dropped on innocent Palestinians: Conventional Arms Transfer Policy, the Foreign Assistance Act, the Arms Control Export Act, the U.S. War Crimes Act, the Leahy Law, and the Genocide Prevention Implementation Act.

people of color and young voters. Listen to Arab Americans. And listen to veterans who know the horrible reality of war.

Don’t wait until January. Do the right thing NOW, even as you are campaigning for president. Please urge President Biden to change course in Gaza, to support an immediate, permanent ceasefire, and to stop sending weapons to Israel as long as this massacre continues.

end to the unfathomable suffering in Gaza.

Veterans For Peace believes that justice and humanity require an immediate, permanent ceasefire in Gaza, the release of all Israeli hostages and Palestinian prisoners, the opening of Gaza’s borders for massive humanitarian and medical aid, and the end of U.S. arms shipments to Israel.

Like you, Ms. Vice President, we are calling for Palestinian self-determination, which requires the dismantling of apartheid and occupation, guaranteed equal rights for all who live in Israel/Palestine, and recognition of the right of return of refugees who are living in exile. Without these elements, there will never be peace and security for anyone living in that land.

Vice President Harris, you said you would work to “earn and win” your party’s nomination for president, as well as the trust and support of the American people. We ask you to take our concerns very seriously. We believe that the majority of people in the United States and around the world share these concerns. We have seen enough of war, colonization, apartheid and forced starvation. It is time to usher in a New Era of Peace, International Cooperation and Human Rights for All People. Let it begin with Gaza. Let it begin NOW.

Sincerely,
Susan Schnall, President

Veterans For Peace is a global organization of military veterans and allies who work to build a culture of peace. VFP has over 100 chapters worldwide, and its work includes educating the public on the causes and costs of war, advocating dismantling the war economy, providing services that assist veterans and victims of war, and, most significant, working to end all wars.

... the Biden Administration is violating multiple U.S. laws when it sends bombs to Israel to be dropped on innocent Palestinians: Conventional Arms Transfer Policy, the Foreign Assistance Act, the Arms Control Export Act, the U.S. War Crimes Act, the Leahy Law, and the Genocide Prevention Act.

Our many members in over 100 U.S. cities were outraged by the invitation of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to address a joint session of Congress, and we were apoplectic upon hearing Netanyahu’s bellicose and divisive remarks. Vice President Harris, we took some solace from your decision not to preside or be present at this embarrassing spectacle. You were the first member of the Biden administration to call for a “ceasefire.” So we are cautiously optimistic that, if elected President, you will work to end the criminal siege of Gaza.

However, your presidency would not begin until January 20—almost six months from now. We urge you to listen to your most avid supporters—women,

Veterans For Peace is also concerned about the hostages. We unite with the Israeli families who are demanding the release of their family members who are captive in Gaza, and we unite the Palestinian families who are calling for the release of thousands of Palestinian political prisoners in Israeli jails.

As you must know, Vice President Harris, continued U.S. support for Israel amid the Gaza genocide also risks further regional and global escalation, with potentially irreversible consequences, even the unthinkable horror of nuclear war. We urge you to demonstrate the kind of leadership for which so many people are waiting—for which we are hoping and praying. Please use all your influence to bring an

Mindfully Sacred

... continued from page 2

people have marched throughout time. Those reasons have historical significance. And so when we think about the reasons why people have marched or been in processions, on pilgrimage—at the heart of those walks, those journeys, there was an element of the sacred that was present.

We used to have runners that would go from here. Dud [Hendrick] mentioned Oren Lyons, who is a former Faithkeeper for the Onondaga Nation, an elder that I worked with for over 30 years, through the American Indian Institute's Indigenous Youth and Elder Circle. Oren talks about: as we step and walk upon the earth, we see the faces of our grandchildren looking back at us, all those waiting to be born. But also the faces of our ancestors are there, watching us, walking with us.

And so when I'm thinking about what you're doing, when I'm thinking about the many reasons why people march today, it's largely for political action, social action. It's largely with the hope that the practice and the process, the procession of the walk, will lead to some type of political change that will bring about some type of peace. And what I want to say to you today is that if you endeavor upon this journey with the focus of political action, creating peace at the end, the futility of that march will defeat you before you arrive. And what needs to happen is there needs to be a reintroduction of the sacred into the heart of your walk. So with every step that you take, think about the future generations. Listen for their voices. Those who are beckoning to be born. Think about all those who have laid down their lives in order for us to exist.



Sherri Mitchell speaks at PeaceWalk 2024 kickoff in Ogunquit, Maine, May 7.
Photo: Tarak Kauff

Linda Hogan, who is a Chickasaw poet, says that "we are the result of the love of thousands." And so when we think about those thousands that led to our existence

blood of my beloved dead." And so the dust, the bones and the blood of the beloved dead, of all those who have lived in this territory, loved in this territory, carried

So as you get ready to head off, I want to encourage you to mindfully bring the sacred back into your journey. Keep it the heart of what you're doing; not the anger over those who are causing harm, but for the love of those who you seek to protect.

across time, we think about the fact that their blood is in the soil beneath our feet. There is an elder named Curly Crow who said, "the soil beneath your feet is not ordinary soil. It is the dust, the bone, and the

life forward in this territory, are going to be walking with you beneath your feet. And what's at the heart of all of these processions, these marches, these actions that we take, is a recognition of the sacredness of

life. If we can reinstitute a depth of awareness about the sacredness of life into the actions that we take, and have that walk with us and in front of us, not with the mind of bringing in the spirit of a vengeful God, but bringing in an expansion of our heart-based awareness, our compassion, our empathy, our understanding, to give us the opportunity to create a real opening that can create realistic change in the hearts and minds of those who are making the decisions that are making all of us more unsafe.

The actions that are taking place in Gaza right now are making everyone in the region unsafe. There is a genocide going on, we know this, in Palestine, but the actions of the Israeli government are also making Jewish people unsafe for generations. And so we need to hold all of those people, generations forward, in our hearts. We need to hold all of those who are suffering here, in our hearts; and listen to the rumblings of the ancestors and all those waiting to be born beneath our feet.

So as you get ready to head off, I want to encourage you to mindfully bring the sacred back into your journey. Keep it the heart of what you're doing; not the anger over those who are causing harm, but for the love of those who you seek to protect. And our deep reverence for the sacredness of all life. So thank you so much [Native language] for having me here, and I just want to say [Native language]: "I offer these words for all my relations." Thank you.

Sherri L. Mitchell Weh'na Ha'mu Kwas-set is a Penobscot lawyer, author, teacher, and activist from Maine. Mitchell is the author of Sacred Instructions; Indigenous Wisdom for Living Spirit-Based Change, a narrative of Indigenous wisdom that provides "a road map for the spirit and a compass of compassion for humanity."

No One Votes ...

... continued from page 1

nical capitalist warmongers are squaring off against each other, appealing to the votes of America's two mainstream political factions, which are only mainstream because vast fortunes have been poured into propaganda manipulations to make them mainstream. Then you've got can-

didates like Jill Stein saying normal, sane and common sense things about peace and justice while being framed as an extremist lunatic by the consent manufacturers of the mainstream press. And when Stein loses in this aggressively manipulated information environment within this aggressively manipulated electoral system, it will be framed as evidence that her politics were seen as too fringe and kooky for the mainstream public.

Whenever I talk about this dynamic during a high-profile election season I am always inundated with a deluge of kneejerk point-missers asking, "Well who SHOULD we vote for then?" which is kind of like Morpheus telling Neo he's been living his whole life in the matrix and Neo going, "Okay but how do I get my boss to give me a raise in my cubicle job where I work?" It doesn't matter, Neo. The whole thing's an illusion. What matters is getting

people to open their eyes to this reality so that real meaningful action can be taken.

If you're having a dream about being chased by a lynch mob, your only concern is making sure your own interests win out over the interests of the mob. When you wake up from the dream, you don't spend the rest of your day wondering how you're going to get away from the mob. You concern yourself with your real material interests in your waking life.

That's what this should be like. If you really grasp what's being pointed to here, you won't keep getting swept up in the mass psychosis of election season hysteria, and party politics won't have any gravitational pull on your mind. Instead, your focus will be on helping people to realize that this is all a carefully manufactured illusion, because until enough of us are awake to the real world, there'll be no chance of using the power of our numbers to overthrow the tyrants who've been pulling the wool over our eyes this entire time.

Caitlin Johnstone is a journalist, guerrilla poet, and utopia prepper living in Australia with her American husband and two kids. She writes about politics, economics, media, feminism, and the nature of consciousness. She is the author of the illustrated poetry book Woke: A Field Guide For Utopia Preppers. Her website is caityjohnstone.medium.com/.

Weep

By Caitlin Johnstone

Weep, sisters, for the child with the blown-out skull,
for the other child burned alive,
for the limp, lifeless, tiny bodies
and the piles of unrecognizable carnage.

Weep, brothers, for the cackling politicians,
for the apathetic westoids,
for the human drones chanting "We love Joe"
and the DNC attendees covering their ears
to avoid hearing the names of murdered children in Gaza.

Weep for this fraud-faced civilization,
this microplastics civilization,
this OnlyFans civilization,

this Moloch civilization Ginsberg wrote about in Howl,
this civilization with enormous forced grins
over plates full of shredded children
in selfies with AOC and Tim Walz.

Weep with careless abandon.
Weep til the sobbing wrings you out like a sponge.
Weep with head back, screaming sloppy and snot-nosed,
ribcage splayed open to the heavens
and human heart beating unguarded and unhidden.

There are no answers in the weeping.
There are no solutions in the tears.
There is only the release of something that needs release,
and an act of sacred solidarity,
and an act of unauthorized humanity,
and the small, private victory
of having gone one more breath
without being assimilated
by the machine.

Gracefully Saving Eastern Lowland Gorillas



Kighoma, rescued Eastern Lowland Gorilla at GRACE Gorillas.

By Eddy Daniel

Stolen from his family as a baby, Kighoma was held captive by an armed militia in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Until his rescue, this tiny gorilla was kept as a “mascot,” serving as a status symbol for the rebel group. Unlike most illegally captured young gorillas, Kighoma managed to survive. It is estimated that for every captured baby gorilla, three or more of their family members are killed in the process. After being rescued, Kighoma spent several years living in a temporary care center while the world’s first and only sanctuary for Eastern Lowland Gorillas was being constructed. Located adjacent to the Tayna Nature Reserve, the Gorilla Rehabilitation and Conservation Education Center (GRACE Gorillas) is now home to 14 rescued Eastern Lowland Gorillas.

“Eastern Lowland Gorillas are under severe threat from instability, poaching, mining, conflict and deforestation,” says Jackson Kabuyaya Mbeke, GRACE DRC director. “This has led to an increase in the illegal trade of young gorillas. GRACE started because we needed a long-term solution for orphaned Eastern Lowland Gorillas. The goal is to rehabilitate them and eventually reintroduce them into the wild. The community in eastern DRC is the future for Eastern Lowland Gorillas.”

Today, these rescued Eastern Lowland Gorillas have been integrated into a healthy and thriving family group at GRACE. Kighoma has now matured into a dominant silverback gorilla and confidently leads the group of rescued gorillas at GRACE. His caregivers refer to him as a gentle but effective leader, always looking out for the safety of the other gorillas. Kighoma’s story serves as a reminder of the vital work that GRACE Gorillas does to ensure that Eastern Lowland Gorillas are protected and can thrive in the forests of the DRC.

Endemic to the eastern DRC, only 20% of the original Eastern Lowland Gorilla (also known as Grauer’s Gorilla) population remains. Habitat loss, mining, disease, and poaching have all contributed to

the decline of these primates, which are classified by the International Union for Conservation of Nature’s Red List as critically endangered. But one organization in particular has set out to work alongside Congolese communities to promote the conservation of Eastern Lowland Gorillas and their habitat, ensuring a bright future for these apes.

“We are thrilled to collaborate with GRACE Gorillas in protecting Eastern Lowland Gorillas in the DRC,” says Mary Brown, Re:wild senior manager of Africa program and conservation partnerships. “Their work acts as a lifeboat for these critically endangered primates. Their model of working hand in hand with local communities offers an ‘oasis of hope’ that we hope to see replicated for other species in need.”

GRACE Gorillas has put community at the heart of its mission since its founding over a decade ago. GRACE’s sprawling Eastern Lowland Gorilla sanctuary was built on land donated by the local community, with the blessing of two traditional kings (called Mwamis). Highly respected cultural leaders in DRC, the Mwamis continue to partner with and help guide GRACE today. Internationally recog-

nized for its excellence in gorilla care, the GRACE sanctuary laid the foundation for the organization’s education, engagement, and conservation programs, which reach thousands of Congolese residents each year. From growing food for the 14 rescued gorillas at the sanctuary to teaching primary school students about gorillas and forests, GRACE does everything hand in hand with the surrounding communities.

Recovery to Sanctuary

“Upon arrival we assign a caregiver to each new orphan, someone who plays the role of a parent to the baby so we can help rebuild the baby’s confidence. When the baby feels, ‘Ah, ok, I found my guardian,’ that’s when we move to the next step: getting to know the other gorillas here at GRACE,” explains Mbeke. “Our dream is for no more orphans to arrive at GRACE, a future where these gorillas are thriving in the wild without any threats.”

The rehabilitation process for these gorillas is both physical and emotional, as they recover from the stress and trauma of losing their families. GRACE is committed to ensuring a smooth recovery for each individual rescued gorilla, providing them formula and round-the-clock care when they first arrive. As soon as they are ready, rescued gorillas are integrated into the larger gorilla group, where they continue to learn the skills required for survival in the wild. Rehabilitation is a critical first step towards GRACE’s overall goal of rewilding these Eastern Lowland Gorilla orphans to prevent their extinction in eastern DRC.

GRACE is proud to be accredited by the Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries, a testament to the dedicated caregivers who work tirelessly to ensure these gorillas receive the utmost excellent care and welfare.

“Caring for gorillas means providing a second chance at life for these orphaned babies, and rehabilitating them after the stresses of being separated from their families,” says Dalmas Kakule Syangeha, GRACE animal care manager. “Our days might be long and the work can be difficult, but we are proud of the importance of our role. We are conserving gorillas

for future generations, so that people may have the chance to see this species.”

The gorillas at GRACE spend their days in a large, natural forest habitat, where they forage for food, climb, play, build nests, and rest together. To ensure each gorilla receives proper nutrition, their forest diet is supplemented with vegetation grown on a special food farm at GRACE. Beet root, carrot, elephant grass, and passion fruit are some of the gorillas’ favorite treats.

Thriving Community Partnership

“In order for conservation to be successful, we need to work hand in hand with the local community to develop solutions that improve both human and gorilla welfare for both the present and future generations,” says Mbeke.

Through GRACE Gorillas’ partnership with Réserve des Gorilles de Tayna, over 47 local community members have been hired and trained for gorilla protection and monitoring in Tayna Nature Reserve. Significant data on gorilla diet, group size, composition, and behavior, as well as information on potential threats to gorillas, their habitat, and other wildlife species in the region, have been gathered by the monitoring and protection teams. This community-led biomonitoring program ensures that 222,3948 acres of primary tropical forest remain protected for Eastern Lowland Gorillas. GRACE is now working with Congolese and international partners to extend this important gorilla habitat to an area of over 500,000 acres through community-led conservation designed to benefit both people and wildlife.

“GRACE works hard to understand the underlying drivers of the threats facing Eastern Lowland Gorillas, and to implement solutions addressing both wildlife and human needs,” says Katie Fawcett, GRACE program director. “For example, we have worked with women’s groups on projects that will support fuel-efficient stoves, which will reduce the need to enter the forest to collect firewood and also improve the health of the people who are cooking.”

GRACE educators, who have strong roots in the local community, engage more than 30,000 people in conservation education each year. With a focus on community empowerment, they lead school programs, youth conservation clubs, sustainable livelihood workshops, tree plantings, special events, and radio broadcasts. GRACE educators strive to foster empathy, raise awareness about gorilla protection, and co-create sustainable conservation solutions that benefit people and wildlife.

Ultimately, GRACE Gorillas seeks to promote a peaceful coexistence where people and gorillas thrive. As Jackson Kabuyaya Mbeke says, “Eastern Lowland Gorillas have always been a part of our community. Protecting them brings a great source of pride for us all.”

Eddy Daniel is an environmental toxicologist and writer who is passionate about the environment and health. As an environmental writer, she writes to create awareness on environmental issues and tells stories of people and the work they do to protect the environment.



Caregiver Kambale carries vegetation grown on the gorilla food farm for rescued gorillas.

Israeli War on Gaza Is an Environmental Catastrophe

Toxic waste, water-borne diseases, vast carbon emissions: Dr. Mariam Abd El Hay describes the myriad harms of Israel's assault on the region's ecosystems.

By Nathalie Rozanes

Ever-worsening shortages of water and electricity. Catastrophic flooding in dense urban areas. Food insecurity exacerbated by drastic temperature increases, reduction in overall rainfall, and the long-term impact of toxic chemicals.”

This is what climate researchers Khalil Abu Yahia, Natasha Westheimer, and Mor Gilboa, writing in *+972 Magazine* more than two years ago, predicted was in store for Gaza's near-term future. Israel's ceaseless bombardment of the Strip over the past 11 months has caused unspeakable humanitarian consequences, but it will also have dramatic and lasting effects on Gaza's already imperiled natural environment—and indeed, that of the entire region.

“It is near impossible to think

at the Arava Institute for Environmental Studies published an extensive new report on the environmental impact of Israel's ongoing assault on Gaza. The report covers myriad environmental harms of the war—from the vast amount of toxic dust released by bombing buildings, to the breakdown of waste management, and the destruction of water treatment facilities and proliferation of water-borne illnesses.

While it is Palestinians in Gaza who face the most severe threat, the report makes clear that the entire territory between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea is part of one ecosystem, in which health and environment are interconnected in a vulnerable equilibrium. This was made particularly evident by the recent discovery of poliovirus in Gaza's wastewater. The Israeli army set about delivering polio booster

East, temperatures are rising on average twice as fast as the rest of the world.

To better understand the environmental impact of the war, *+972* spoke with Dr. Mariam Abd El Hay, a researcher in social dynamics and the environmental impacts of conflicts and a Palestinian citizen of Israel from the city of Tira. Abd El Hay is the author of the new report, to which Elaine Donderer and Dr. David Lehrer, the center's director, also contributed. The interview has been edited for length and clarity.

Nathalie Rozanes: What is the environmental situation in Gaza right now?

Dr. Mariam Abd Ek Hay: The situation is extremely alarming. Before October 7, Gaza's environment was already very precarious. Years of Israeli bombing campaigns, Israeli and Egyptian import restrictions, and dys-



Displaced Palestinians in tents next to sewage water in Deir a
Photo: Abed Rahim Khatib/Flash90

and soil, and groundwater contamination from waste leakage.

But during the war, environmental degradation in Gaza has worsened exponentially: as Israel's bombardment destroys infrastructure, an inordinate amount of toxic dust has been released into the air, and wastewater management has entirely collapsed due to the shortage of fuel.

By April, the destruction of buildings throughout the Gaza Strip had produced an estimated 37 million tons of debris. As buildings are damaged or collapse, they release clouds of noxious smoke, toxic dust, and fumes into the environment.

Explosions crush building materials into tiny pieces, which releases toxic particles into the environment that are then absorbed by humans. Even though the highest exposure to these toxins occurs at the time of the explosion, the microparticles of dust and toxic ash are dispersed by wind, and picked up by footsteps and moving vehicles. The Israeli army has also used white phosphorus, an incendiary weapon which is highly toxic. As a result, while Gazans face the most dire health risks, Palestinians, Israelis, and all other living beings in the region will continue to suffer the consequences for years to come.

In Gaza, asbestos, which is highly carcinogenic in the form of dust, is commonly used in construction, further elevating the risk of cancer through inhalation. It was already found in toxic dust following Israel's bombardment of the Strip in 2021.

Due to the ongoing war, it is impossible to validate our findings in the field, but we can estimate the type and amount of chemicals released into Gaza's environment from extensive bombardment using our knowledge of local building materials, historical data from conflict areas, and past incidents such as the attacks of September 11 in New York. Over two decades later, people are still grappling with health issues related to the debris and dust, which include aerodigestive diseases and cancers.

NR: What are the environmental and health concerns associated with the collapse of Gaza's waste management infrastructure?

MAEH: Tens of thousands of tons of residential waste have been accumulating in the streets and informal dumpsites, due to the shortage of fuel needed to operate waste management machinery. This can lead to soil and groundwater pollution, as well as contribute to excessive algae blooms along the coast, endangering marine life and bathers.

Inadequate waste management is also attracting animals, such as rats, that can transmit diseases to humans. The high temperatures and humidity in our region in the summer also create perfect conditions for the growth and reproduction of bacteria.

With the collapse of Gaza's healthcare system, Palestinians have been unable to seek proper care since the outbreak of the war. It is a miracle that we are not yet seeing even worse epidemics in Gaza and throughout Israel-Palestine, but it is bound



Palestinians walk next to destroyed buildings and pools of stagnant water in Khan Yunis, July 19, 2024.
Photo: Abed Rahim Khatib/Flash90

about the climate crisis amongst this much death and destruction,” Westheimer wrote this past November, after Abu Yahia was killed in an Israeli airstrike. “But the reality is, this last month has set Gaza even deeper into a humanitarian crisis, and its two million residents are more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change than ever.”

In June, the Center for Applied Environmental Diplomacy

shots to Israeli soldiers, before eventually agreeing to a vaccination campaign for Palestinian children in the territory under the age of 10; Israel has also taken a sudden interest in reconstructing the wastewater management infrastructure that it destroyed.

The report also highlights the link between armed conflict and global warming. On July 21, the planet experienced the hottest day on record; in the Middle

functional governance had led to chronic electricity shortages and delayed the construction of essential facilities. Access to clean water was critically low, with Gaza dependent on three pipelines from Israel and 97% of drinking water was contaminated and unsafe. Waste and water management infrastructure was already fragile, which resulted in uncontrolled burning of waste in landfills, polluted air

tastrophe



l-Balah, August 19, 2024.

to happen.

NR: Do we know how much toxic waste has been produced?

MAEH: It is projected that the current war already yielded a minimum of 900,000 tons of toxic waste. These pollutants—which include radioactive and carcinogenic materials, heavy metals, pesticides, and other chemicals, emitted both through the use of military munitions and in the destruction of buildings—persist in the environment, posing a threat to all forms of life, including animals and vegetation. They contaminate soil, air, and water sources, endangering ecosystems.

One ecosystem that is particularly threatened by toxic waste runoff is Wadi Gaza, a nature reserve within the Strip. Rich in biodiversity, this nine-kilometer-wide stretch of land runs westward from the border fence to the sea. It is an extension of the Besor Stream, which flows from Hebron in the West Bank through Be'er Sheva in Israel, into the Mediterranean Sea. Local water birds and migratory birds traveling across continents both rely on the coastal wetlands in this area as their habitat.

NR: Can you say more about the status of water treatment in Gaza?

MAEH: The situation was already extremely fragile given that Israel has long controlled Gaza's water supply, but it has been severely worsened by the war. The now damaged or destroyed infrastructure includes drinking water wells, water networks such as pumps and towers, sanitation and hygiene facilities, sewage networks, de-

salination plants, stormwater infrastructure, marine sewage outlets, and wastewater treatment plants. Furthermore, by mid-November, the lack of fuel made it inevitable that all five of Gaza's wastewater treatment plants and most of its 65 sewage pumping stations would close, as Oxfam reported.

Before the war, 13,000 cubic meters of raw sewage flowed into the sea from Gaza every day. But now, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) estimates that this figure has skyrocketed to 130,000 cubic meters daily. And due to the breakdown of the wastewater treatment facilities, people are forced to consume brackish and contaminated water and use it for cooking, cleaning, and personal hygiene.

The health consequences of drinking contaminated water are disastrous—especially for children, who comprise 47% of Gaza's population. It significantly increases the risk of cholera, typhoid, polio, and other water-related diseases. Even in November, the World Health Organization warned that infectious diseases associated with water scarcity and contamination may eventually kill more people in Gaza than military violence.

In addition, researchers and medical professionals have recently raised concerns about the emergence and spread of bacteria resistant to antibiotic treatment, or antimicrobial resistance (AMR). Contaminated water can also facilitate contact between bacteria and the heavy metals released from explosives, which are a contributing factor to AMR.

NR: How are these waterborne illnesses spread?

MAEH: The bacteria causing these illnesses can live in brackish water streams and coastal waters, and once transmitted to humans, are spread by consuming water or food that is contaminated by an infected person's feces.

Sewage permeates roadways and water streams and is seeping into the soil, contaminating food and crossing the fence between Israel and Gaza through Wadi Gaza, the Mediterranean Sea and the coastal aquifer, an underground water source spanning from Egypt's Sinai Peninsula to Israel's eastern Mediterranean coast. The aquifer is permeable, shallow and unconfined, with groundwater flowing from the hinterland to the Mediterranean Sea.

The flow of coastal water is also important here: due to the Mediterranean currents, waste-

water that reaches Gaza's coast flows southward, and can infect people along the Egyptian coast.

NR: Can you explain how war and greenhouse gas emissions are related?

MAEH: Our planet simply cannot sustain armed conflict. The use of weapons themselves and the detonation of explosives release large amounts of greenhouse gasses—the main driver of climate change—and particulate matter into the atmosphere. An estimated 5.5% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions is the result of military activity.

On the day of October 7 alone, the Hamas attack emitted around 646 metric tons of carbon dioxide. Then, in just the first two months of the war, Israel's aerial bombardment and ground invasion of Gaza emitted approximately 281,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide.

This volume of emissions caused by the Israeli army in those first two months equates to burning around 150,000 tons of coal. I did a quick calculation so that we can visualize something concrete: burning that amount of coal represents about 24,772 years of electricity usage for one household.

In addition, according to Israel's Nature and Parks Authority, Hezbollah strikes from across the Lebanese border—over 7,500 rockets, missiles, and drones since October 7—have resulted in 8,700 hectares burned in northern Israel as a result of more than 700 wildfires. This is an area 12 times larger than previous years' wildfires, already burns more frequently every summer.

These forests and agricultural land are home to rare animals and plants, which absorb an estimated seven tons of carbon diox-

ide per hectare per year—roughly equivalent to the emissions from one and a half cars in an average year. So we already lost an absorption capacity equivalent to the average annual emissions produced by 5,800 cars.

According to the Land and Natural Resources program at the University of Balamand, Israeli strikes in southern Lebanon have burned about 4,000 hectares—meaning the loss of an absorption capacity equivalent to the emissions from roughly an additional 2,600 cars. For comparison, each of the two previous years, the total area burned by wildfires in Lebanon was 500 to 600 hectares. With the threat of further escalation on the Israeli-Lebanese border, this could be only the beginning.

NR: When we think of cars it seems clear how emissions are produced. How does the military produce such high emissions?

MAEH: The sources of those emissions include the manufacturing and detonation of explosives, artillery, rockets, as well as aircraft operations, tank maneuvers and vehicle fuel consumption. From October 7 to the end of December alone—and we are now eight months of bombardment later—Israeli forces dropped over 89,000 tons of explosives on the Gaza Strip. In addition, 254,650 military flights took place during those first three months.

As Amitav Gosh has argued, “in the era of global warming, nothing is really far away.” How will the effects of climate change and global warming be felt across Israel-Palestine and the wider region?

Over the next 50 years, hotter temperatures combined with higher levels of humidity are predicted to make large areas of

the globe impossible to live in, among them parts of the Middle East, which is warming twice as fast as the global average. The Israeli Environment Ministry forecasted a 4 degree rise in average temperatures by the end of the century.

Those who are displaced and seeking shelter somewhere in Gaza are now less prepared than ever to face higher temperatures in the summer and floods in the winter. But even in Israel, the effects of climate change are already felt to a certain extent. For example, the West Nile Virus has already killed at least 440 people in Israel this summer. The virus, which is spread by migratory birds all over the world and transferred to humans by mosquitoes, and can be deadly for the elderly and immunocompromised, is a direct result of the higher temperatures and humidity of this past spring.

NR: What are the anticipated environmental consequences of the effort required to rebuild Gaza?

MAEH: An additional estimated 30 million metric tons of greenhouse gasses are predicted to be produced during the anticipated postwar construction needed in Gaza to repair 100,000 damaged buildings. The construction industry worldwide is responsible for about 11% of global carbon dioxide emissions and encompasses activities such as producing concrete and steel, material transportation, machinery operation, and building demolition.

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Palestinians collect drinking water in Khan Yunis, July 6, 2024. Photo: Abed Rahim Khatib/Flash90

Thou Shalt Not Commit Genocide

By Chris Hedges

There is only one way to end the ongoing genocide in Gaza. It is not through bilateral negotiations. Israel has amply demonstrated, including with the assassination of the lead Hamas negotiator, Ismail Haniyeh, that it has no interest in a permanent ceasefire. The only way for Israel's genocide of the Palestinians to be halted is for the U.S. to end all weapons shipments to Israel. And the only way this will take place is if enough Americans make clear they have no intention of supporting any presidential ticket or any political party that fuels this genocide.

The arguments against a boycott of the two ruling parties are familiar: It will ensure the election of Donald Trump. Kamala Harris has rhetorically shown more compassion than Joe Biden. There are not enough of us to have an impact. We can work within the Democratic Party. The Israel lobby, especially the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), which owns most members of Congress, is too powerful. Negotiations will eventually achieve a cessation of the slaughter.

In short, we are impotent and must surrender our agency to sustain a project of mass killing.

Genocide, the internationally recognized crime of crimes, is not a policy issue. It cannot be equated with trade deals, infrastructure bills, charter schools or immigration. It is a moral issue. It is about the eradication of a people. Any surrender to genocide condemns us as a nation and as a species. Genocide is in a category by itself. And to not, with every fiber of our being, combat genocide is to be complicit in what Hannah Arendt defines as "radical evil," the evil where human beings, as human beings, are rendered superfluous.

The plethora of Holocaust studies should have made this indelible point. But Holocaust studies were hijacked by

Zionists. They insist that the Holocaust is unique, that it is somehow set apart from human nature and human history. Jews are deified as eternal victims of anti-Semitism. Nazis are endowed with a special kind of inhumanity. Israel, as the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington concludes, is the solution. The Holocaust was one of several genocides carried out in the 19th and 20th centuries. But historical context is ignored and with it our understanding of the dynamics of mass extermination.

The fundamental lesson of the Holocaust, which writers such as Primo Levi stress, is that we can all become willing executioners. It takes very little. We can all become complicit, if only through indifference and apathy, in evil.

"Monsters exist," Levi, who survived Auschwitz, writes, "but they are too few in number to be truly dangerous. More dangerous are the common men, the functionaries ready to believe and to act without asking questions."

We must stand, no matter the cost, with the crucified of the earth. If we fail to take this stand, whether against the abuses of militarized police, the inhumanity of our vast prison system or the genocide in Gaza, we become the crucifiers.

To confront evil—even if there is no chance of success—keeps alive our humanity and dignity. It allows us, as Vaclav Havel writes in *The Power of the Powerless*, to live in truth, a truth the powerful do not want spoken and seek to suppress. It provides a guiding light to those who come after us. It tells the victims they are not alone. It is "humanity's revolt against an enforced position" and an "at-



Flesh and Blood by Mr. Fish

tempt to regain control over one's sense of responsibility?"

What does it say about us if we accept a world where we arm and fund a nation that kills and wounds hundreds of innocents a day?

What does it say about us if we support an orchestrated famine and the poisoning of the water supply where the polio virus has been detected, meaning tens of thou-

What does it say about us when we watch Israel escalate attacks on United Nations facilities, schools—including the Al-Tabaen school in Gaza City, where over 100 Palestinians were killed while performing the Fajr, or dawn prayers—and other emergency shelters?

What does it say about us when we permit Israel to use Palestinians as human shields by forcing handcuffed civilians, including children and the elderly, to enter potentially booby-trapped tunnels and buildings in advance of Israeli troops, at times dressed in Israeli military uniforms?

What does it say about us when we support politicians and soldiers who defend the rape and torture of prisoners?

Are these the kinds of allies we want to empower? Is this behavior we want to embrace? What message does this send to the rest of the world?

If we do not hold fast to moral imperatives, we are doomed. Evil will triumph. It means there is no right and wrong. It means anything, including mass murder, is permissible.

A moral stance always has a cost. If there is no cost, it is not moral. It is merely conventional belief.

"But what of the price of peace?" the radical Catholic priest Daniel Berrigan, who was sent to federal prison for burning draft records during the war in Vietnam, asks in his book *No Bars to Manhood*.

The question is not whether resistance is practical. It is whether resistance is right. We must stand, no matter the cost, with the crucified of the earth. If we fail to take this stand, whether against the abuses of militarized police, the inhumanity of our vast prison system or the genocide in Gaza, we become the crucifiers.

Chris Hedges is a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, Presbyterian minister, author, and television host. His books include *America: The Farewell Tour*, *American Fascists: The Christian Right and the War on America*, and *War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning*, a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award for Nonfiction. He previously worked overseas for the Dallas Morning News, the Christian Science Monitor, and NPR, and hosted the Emmy-nominated RT America show *On Contact*.

The Advantage of Being a Corporation

By Paul Cox

Julian Assange's biggest mistake may have been that he was not incorporated. An article from *Defense One* is an example of what an advantage it can be to be a corporation.

RTX, the parent company of Raytheon, Pratt & Whitney, and Collins Aerospace just agreed to a \$200 million fine to the State Department for 750 (!) violations of the Arms Export Control Act and International Traffic in Arms Regulations, for exporting or taking 'secret' technology to (...wait for it...) Russia, China, Iran, Lebanon, and elsewhere. That \$200 million represents a whopping 5% of their 2023 net profits. Moreover, they will pay it over three years! Credit card companies charge more than 5% divided by 3, and just try to get your towed car back on a payment schedule.

If Julian had just incorporated perhaps he would not have had to spend years running from the "law" or in prison. Hell, RTX chiefs weren't even named much less shamed. Let me fix that:

- RTX CEO and chief gun runner is the well-compensated (\$12.7 million) Christopher T. Calio
- Raytheon Prez and chief bombardier, Phil Jasper
- Pratt & Whitney Prez and head rocketman, Shane G. Eddy
- Collins Aerospace Prez and low-orbit space laser Troy Bunk.

Would it be too (or just enough) paranoid to suggest that sluffing off (or selling) weapons systems and tech secrets to 'enemy' countries is a well-developed business practice by many if not most weapons manufacturers? After all, if the Ruskies have "developed weapons systems on a par with 'ours,' then, heck, we need to ramp up our efforts to get ahead of them! Throw money and be quick about it!"

As if this little news item needs a punchline, note that half of that fine will remain with RTX for "remedial compliance measures." Right.

Paul Cox is a Viet Nam Marine combat veteran. He is a lifetime member of VFP and currently serves as the VFP National Board secretary.

Outrunning the Second Invasion of Shuja'iyya

'On that endless day, all I could do was put my legs in motion, trying to get us all as far away as possible....'

By Yusuf El-Mobayed

Early morning on Thursday, June 27, 2024. We were all asleep—14 of us—at my sister's house in Al-Shuja'iyya, east of Gaza City. We'd been taking shelter here since January 2024, after our home and farm had been destroyed by Israel's offensive forces in its first assault on Al-Shuja'iyya in December 2023.

We were awakened by the heaviest, most intensive bombardments that I had experienced since October 7. When the hateful shelling ended, I didn't care what was coming next. All I could do was go back to sleep.

I managed to get up about 7:30 am, wash my face, and have breakfast. I felt weary and bedraggled.

My brother Mohammed and I headed to our family's destroyed home and torn-apart farm, not far from my sister's. We wanted to see if anything more had happened there overnight, and Mohammed wanted to take a shower. He found a place amid the piles of rubble and doused himself with water he'd brought from my sister's. It gave him a shred of privacy and dignity.

For me, our property was the best place to escape from the chaos and noise of the ugly night I had just lived through. It was a place of comfort, where I could recall the happiest moments of my life and dwell on favorite memories. I thought about my family, my friends, and relatives while wandering on what had until recently been our breathtakingly beautiful farm.

Allowing myself a flight of fancy, I could hear birds serenading my spirit, lifting me on wings of euphoria. I looked skyward, marveling at the expanse of clear blue, a limitless canvas of hope. I could remember the fragrant perfume of blossoming trees—a symphony of scents. It was as if the air embraced me with the sweetness of grapevines, lemons, peaches, pomegranates, figs, and oranges in the gentle breeze upon my face. This for the moment was a place of tranquility.



The family farm. Photo provided by Yusuf El-Mobayed

(In reality, it was all I could do to keep my wrenching anxiety inside me. My only outlet for all those feelings of terror and fear is writing. For me it is the only means of gaining a measure of relief. I keep asking, am I going to survive this genocide? Will I get to live the rest of my life happily with the remains of my family and my beloved people?)

Return to Terror

Going back to my sister's neighborhood, I ran into my youngest brother, Zakarya, and asked him why he was there rather than at the farm, where he usually works taking care of things until after 7 in the evening. He said he had a bad feeling about what was going to happen, that he felt something terrible was about to unfold.

Not long after that, without any prior warning, Israeli



Shuja'iyya before and after its destruction by Israel.

occupation fighter jets unleashed a devastating assault on my neighborhood—my relatives' homes and our farm—with a massive amount of artillery shells. I realized that this was the beginning of a horrific onslaught, and I was terrified. I didn't know what to do or where to flee. There was no place to take cover, so I just started running under a rain of bullets. I called out for my brother Mohammed; I thought he was near me, but he was gone.

When I got to the entry of my sister's street, there was an occupation helicopter shooting straight down on the people in the middle of the street. I quickly saw the direction they were shooting in and managed to escape that danger.

Getting to my sister's place, I ran up the stairs to see what might be happening there. I found my 11-year-old nephew, also named Mohammed, in hysterics. He had been severely injured back in mid-October and is now unable to walk. He was further frightening the others, who were already in a panic at the noise and clamor. I tried to calm him down. All I could say was, "Maybe it's just a random attack. All we can do is wait and see what might come next."

Leaning out a window to take in the whole targeted area, I witnessed the killing of one of our neighbors: An artillery shell hit him in the face where he was standing at the entrance to his building. His brother, filling water tanks on the roof of the building, reacted in fear by leaping off the three-story building, breaking his legs but avoiding his own death.

Worse and Worse

I could tell that the bombardment was now coming closer to our place. Turning back inside, I went straight to my traumatized nephew, picked him up despite the severe pain in one of my arms from an injury six months earlier, and went right out the door with him. He was screaming in terror. The rest of my family followed, but in the street shrapnel and stones were flying in all directions, hitting everything in front of me. Still, I managed to protect him, and we all fled the area, taking only our lives with us.

The overhead Israeli forces were destroying everything in advance of the ground forces and committing an unimaginable number of bloody massacres against humanity. Where could we go to get away? To be safe?

After the better part of an hour of ongoing, devastating, and terrifying bombardment, the ground invasion was launched, leaving many innocent people bleeding and dying in the streets. For some time, I and many others were trying to be of use, jumping over bodies, screaming for help, but getting none. The ambulance crews were prevented from reaching our location because of the ongoing danger, so these martyrs were left without medical care. It was heartbreaking.

On that endless day, all I could do was run. I put my legs in motion, trying to get us all as far away as possible from that harrowing place, heading into the unknown. Thankfully, we managed to find temporary safety of a

sort in the next neighborhood. We settled in to wait impatiently and uncomfortably until we would be able to return to our own place, or somewhere safe. What we'd been through—bombing, helicopter gunships, drones, tanks; people wounded, bleeding, dying before our eyes—was more than enough terror for one day—for a lifetime.

(As I wrote this, my mental relief was in believing that I was only describing scenes for a movie, but I was physically shaking uncontrollably. This was no movie. We people of Gaza, homeless and starving, have continually in mind the need to evacuate where we are and find another place to shelter. I wish deeply to head to our destroyed home now, so sick and tired am I of being a refugee in my own country, believing that I have basic rights yet having none.

(Till now, I've been trying hard to digest if not forget the ugliness of those scenes my family and I have experienced, but unfortunately, they are engraved in my mind. What we must have is an end to all of this.)

Yusuf El-Mobayed works as a freelancer reporter and writer with charity institutions in Gaza. He has survived more than six deadly onslaughts against humanity in Gaza. He was a student at the Islamic University of Gaza, although he has not been able to complete his degree due to domestic issues and poverty. He worked as a writer and reporter for Palestine Now and the 16th October Group in Gaza before taking on a two-year stint as a language trainer and then returning once again to journalism. Since childhood, he has been insanely passionate about becoming an internationally famous reporter who tells the unheard stories of Palestine to the outside world. He believes it is "only a matter of time" until his dreams come true, that is, "if I survive the genocide." Yusuf describes himself as a big dreamer, achiever, risk-taker, trouble-maker, opportunity-hunter, and a reporter. He also describes himself as "a guardian of truth, a weaver of narratives, and a relentless advocate for justice. In my hands, the power of storytelling becomes a force to be reckoned with, piercing through the shadows and illuminating the untold stories that lie buried beneath the rubble."

Nurturing Seeds of Freedom in Palestine

By Martha Vidal

Surrounded by a 26-foot-high separation wall, barbed wire, and a watchtower, a group of young Palestinians prepares a 3.5-acre piece of land for the growing season in spring. The noise of their hoes shaping the soil mixes with the humming of construction cranes from the nearby Israeli settlement of Modi'in Illit. Established in 1996 on land appropriated from Palestinian villages, the Israeli settlement



Volunteers at Om Sleiman Farm in Bil'in, Palestine. Photo: Om Sleiman Farm

is illegal under international law but continues to expand.

The Om Sleiman farm in the village of Bil'in is part of a growing agroecology movement in the occupied West Bank that is turning to sustainable farming as a way to resist the Israeli occupation and stay rooted to the land. Established in 2016, Om Sleiman—Arabic for “ladybug”—aims to connect Palestinians to the produce they consume and to promote food sovereignty.

“We share the yield of the farm with 20 to 30 members, depending on the season,” explains Loor Kamal, a member of Om Sleiman, as she prepares raised beds where eggplants, tomatoes, watermelons, peppers, and beans will be sown. The farm operates on a community-supported agriculture, or CSA, model in which members pay for their share of the produce at the beginning of each season, sharing both the yield and the risks of production.

One day in April, Kamal shows us around the property, which is located in Area C of the West Bank, under full Israeli military control. Here vegetables are grown alongside olive and fruit trees, but Kamal, who works at Om Sleiman with a team of five other women, mentions that a part of the land is inaccessible. “In March, we were walking around the farm, checking the carob trees inside our land, and suddenly soldiers started shooting at us,” she recalls.

Growing food under military occupation has become increasingly dangerous as settler violence and repression escalate. Even with the world's attention focused on the war in Gaza, Israeli soldiers and settlers have killed more than 563 Palestinians in the West Bank since October.

Despite the dangers, Om Sleiman's team is determined to

continue their work. “We have to go on, even when there is fear, because our presence here is important,” says Kamal as she picks eggplants, apples, and mulberries from the farm.

The land on which they grow organic produce has special significance. The concrete wall that cuts through the West Bank expropriated hundreds of acres of Bil'in's agricultural land in 2005. After years of protest and legal action, residents managed to regain about half of the lost farmland, a victory that turned the village into a symbol of popular resistance.

A part of the reclaimed land was donated for the establishment of this agroecology farm. For members of Om Sleiman, growing food in defiance of the encroaching wall and settlements is a way of continuing the struggle for freedom.

“If we want to be free, we need to plant our own food,” says Angham Mansour, who is from Bili'in and joined Om Sleiman two years ago. The farm aims to promote independence from the occupier's economy but also to reconnect Palestinians with the land. “Farming is part of our heritage. Going back to the land is going back to our roots, to our identity,” she says.

Palestine is part of the historical region of the Fertile Crescent, seen as the birthplace of agriculture, where people

ment and dispossession of Palestinians—meant farmers lost most of their lands and livelihoods.

Since the occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in 1967, the remaining Palestinian territory became a captive market for Israeli products. The local food system was transformed from a food-producing to food-buying one, deepening Palestinian dependence on the occupying forces.

In the decades since then, Palestine's diverse agricultural heritage has been in decline, as Palestinian growing traditions have been increasingly displaced by monocultures and industrial agriculture, which are reliant on agrochemicals and genetically modified seeds, particularly after the Oslo accords signed in 1993.

“Israel wants to destroy Palestinian agriculture, so [Palestinians] become dependent on them and on humanitarian assistance,” says Moayyad Bsharat, project coordinator at the Union for Agricultural Work Committees, or UAWC, an organization supporting Palestinian farmers. “If Palestinians are food secure and don't depend on Israeli products and Israeli markets, they will dream of freedom, and Israel doesn't want it. It wants Palestinians as slaves working for them.”

The importance of food sovereignty has been highlighted by the catastrophic situation in Gaza over the past 10 months. According to human rights reports, Israel has been using starvation as a weapon of war by deliberately blocking the delivery of food and by destroying farmlands.

As dependence on Israeli produce and agribusiness grows under occupation, so does the land grabbing. This year, Israel has declared a record 2,743 acres of land in the occupied West Bank to be state-owned—a move that paves the way for continued settlement construction.

“The occupation keeps trying to take the land from us, to restrict our access to it, and prevent farmers from reaching it,” Mansour says. “The goal is to make our lives here impossible, to make us leave. They want to uproot us.”

The systematic appropriation of land and water resources by expanding Israeli settlements, the separation wall, and the military have all alienated Palestinians from the land and caused the loss of native seeds and traditional practices.

But despite farmers' continuous dispossession and the widespread destruction of agricultural land, Bsharat says farmers haven't been defeated. “We will rebuild again. We will support farmers with local seeds and continue our projects to build food sovereignty. We will use all our efforts to dismantle the colonial project by sowing local seeds, taking care of the land, and teaching our children not to forget.”

The Union for Agricultural Work Committees is collecting and distributing 60 varieties of heirloom seeds and is working on the rehabilitation of agricultural land in Gaza and the West Bank. In recent years, it has helped establish agroecology projects and trainings in some of the villages most affected by settler violence.

“We are still present in the land, despite the restrictions imposed on us and the violence of the settlers,” says Ghassan Najjar, who manages an agroecology cooperative in Burin, a village surrounded by extremist Israeli settlers who regularly attack Palestinian farmers, burning orchards and uprooting olive trees.

“Agriculture is resistance,” says Najjar, standing in a greenhouse where members of the cooperative grow cucumbers and tomatoes using agroecology techniques.

Despite the growing settler violence and repression, Dagher says he is motivated to “do more and more.” He considers the fact that many Palestinian workers have lost their Israeli jobs since last October to be “an opportunity to encourage more people to work in agriculture.”

The farmers at Om Sleiman will keep sowing the land, spring after spring. “These days when the situation is so difficult, we feel this project is even more important. We feel we have to continue, we have to be present,” Mansour says.

“Every day we come and we work the land because we have hope,” adds Kamal. “Because we believe that we will be free.”

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For Israel, the War Itself Is the End, Not the Means

By B. Michael

Now, after around 100 [more] Palestinians donated their bodies to better glue Bibi's derriere to his deerskin armchair, we may begin to tell the truth: Israel has not been a state for some time. It is an army base. Nothing but an army base.

All that most of its inhabitants are concerned about is the vital question of who shoulders the greater burden when "carrying the stretcher," but are hardly bothered by who is on the stretcher, who is lying on it. What and who are they all carrying, those obedient stretcher carriers? And to where?

Had they bothered to check, they would have found only two groups of spoiled nuisances lying there. The one lies there because it received permission and funding to be as idle as it wishes. The other is waiting there for the coming of the Messiah, making everybody else miserable in the meantime. Why? Because God told them to. He speaks to them regularly.

And under the stretcher, millions of wild weeds crowd together. Those on whom it is permissible to step, to spit, to collect the taxes needed to finance the trappings of power. In return, the wild weeds get gurnisht. Here and there, they are allowed to die in war or to be taken hostage, which is really the same thing, and then they are praised to the skies. After all, sooner or later the government will once again need suckers who will die for it, so as to renew the holy war.

Nobody is telling them the depressing truth: The war is not a means to some end. The war itself is the end. Why? Because it is much easier to control a country that is at war. Then, everything is so sacred. Forbidden. Secret. "Not now." "Only when it's over." But it will never be over. War is our life. We have no existence without it.



With God's help—we shall always devour the sword, we shall always feed the sword, and we shall always sell a sword to anybody who wants one.

In fact, from its very first day the state has been in one, long, continuous war. Why? Because that's how we like it. Because if you were take our war away, in an instant we would completely fall apart. And so, there is only one fitting name for this 80-years' war: the "Peace for War" war.

Above all, we like to fight the Palestinian people. Not only with bombs and cannons, also with settlements. And discrimination. And dispossession. And with the simple pleasure of harassment. Why? Because it's there. Because this seems easiest to us. Because it's what God said to those who talk with him regularly. And who wants to argue with God?

My army base no longer interferes in the missions of "the state." I don't want to. What, now? When there's a war on? When soldiers are dying? Health? Education? Welfare? High prices? Police? Infrastructure? Forget it!

We're only dealing with stretchers now.

Eight one-ton bombs to kill one man. For fun. For revenge. So that everyone knows that it's permitted to kill 100 innocent people in order to assassinate one man. It won't help in any way but it's good for morale, it will iron out some of the wrinkles in our ego, it will gladden the nation and rescue Bibi.

The strikes were precise, of course. Ask all the military reporters. Surgical, even. Bravo. If emergency rooms used such precise surgery, Israel's population would be halved in no time. You know how much money that would save Smotrich?

It won't be easy to get out of the hole we fell into, maybe it's already impossible. A hole is no place to raise children.

B. Michael is renowned as Israel's most sardonic commentator. Nothing is sacred as he exposes so many of Israel's central myths and sacred beliefs as thinly veiled tissues of misrepresentation.

Israeli and U.S. Governments Know Who Assassinated Peace Activist Aysengur Eygi

By Colonel (ret) Ann Wright

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the U.S. was working to "gather the facts" about U.S. citizen Aysengur Eygi's killing by Israel military forces.

Blinken doesn't need time to "gather the facts."

The facts are already known to the Israeli military, the U.S. military and the U.S. government.

They know exactly who assassinated International Solidarity Movement (ISM) member and U.S. citizen Aysengur Eygi on September 6, 2024.

"I don't know how to say this, there is no easy way. I wish I could say something meaningful, but I can't when I'm sobbing," a fellow ISM volunteer, who requested anonymity, told the group about Eygi. "My friend, comrade and traveling partner to Palestine has just been shot in the head and killed by Israeli occupation forces. May she rest in peace. She is now one of the many martyrs in this struggle."

They know which unit was in Beita village for the peaceful prayer demonstration against the illegal Israeli settlement of Evyatar. They know the names of the snipers who fired the shots.

They also know the names of the Israeli soldiers who killed the 17 Palestinians who have been assassinated in Beita in the past four years since 2020.

The Israeli military has the records of what unit was assigned to Beita every day that a Palestinian was murdered.

They have the names of every person in the unit and they know which persons fired tear gas and which persons fired live ammunition.

After each time live ammunition was fired they inter-



'One of the sweetest, gentlest souls.'

viewed everyone who fired ammunition.

Additionally, and not surprisingly, the soldier who saw his bullet knock someone down would take credit for it each time.

So the Israeli military knows perfectly well who killed Aysengur and they also know who killed the 17 Palestinians who have been murdered by Israeli military in Beita since 2020:

- Mohammed Hamayyel, age 15 (March 11, 2020)
- Islam Dwikat, 22 (April 9, 2020)
- Karam Amin Dwikat, 17 (October 15, 2023)
- Issa Sliman Barham, 40 (May 14, 2021)
- Tareq Ommar Snobar, 27 (May 16, 2021)
- Zakaria Maher Hamayyel, 25 (May 28, 2021)
- Mohammed Said Hamayyel, 15 (June 11, 2021)
- Ahmad Zahi Bani Shamsa, 15 (June 16, 2021)
- Shadi Ommar Sharafa, 41 (July 27, 2021)
- Imad Ali Dwikat, 38 (August 6, 2021)
- Mohammed Ali Khbeissa, 27 (September 24, 2021)

- Jamil Jamal Abu Ayyash, 32 (December 1, 2021)
- Fawaz Ahmad Hamayyel, 47 (April 13, 2022)
- Immad Jareh Bani Shamsa, 16 (October 9, 2023)
- Mohammed Ibrahim Adili, 13 (November 23, 2023)
- Maath Ashraf Bani Shamsa, 17 (February 9, 2024)
- Ameer Ghaleb Said al-Jaroub, 34 (March 22, 2024)

As someone who spent 29 years in the U.S. Army, I know the Israeli military knows the names of all of its snipers, just as the U.S. military knows the names of those who have been trained as U.S. snipers and who killed Afghans and Iraqis in the past decades.

However, if one had access to the data base of snipers, as well as drone operators, and the names of the Israeli and U.S. military who have been arrested for assaults, domestic violence and those who have committed suicide, I feel quite certain there would be a high correlation.

But the military, neither Israeli nor U.S., will not do such a survey as the results would be bad for extremely recruitment.

For those in Israeli society who believe that the genocide of Palestinians in Gaza and now in the West Bank must continue, get ready for your returning military.

As the saying goes, "You reap what you sow" and the Israeli government is already reaping a domestic backlash over the fate of the hostages and international backlash from the horrific genocide with more and more countries finally stopping sending weapons to Israel.

A bigger backlash is awaiting Israel with its assassin and killers coming home.

Ann Wright served 29 years in the U.S. Army and Army Reserve. She was a U.S. diplomat for 16 years and served in U.S. Embassies in Nicaragua, Grenada, Somalia, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Sierra Leone, Micronesia, Afghanistan and Mongolia. She resigned from the government in March 2003 in opposition to the U.S. war on Iraq. She is the co-author of Dissent: Voices of Conscience.

What Nuclear Annihilation Could Look Like

‘The survivors would envy the dead’

Annie Jacobsen is a Pulitzer Prize finalist and New York Times bestselling author. Her books include *Area 51*; *Operation Paperclip*; *The Pentagon’s Brain*; *Phenomena*; *Surprise, Kill Vanish*, and *First Platoon*. Her latest book is *Nuclear War: A Scenario*. Sean Illing interviewed her on his podcast *The Grey Area*.

Sean Illing: I suspect the image most of us still have of nuclear bombs is the image of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but that was a long time ago. How much more powerful are the thermonuclear weapons we’re talking about today?

Annie Jacobsen: To give you an idea of a thermonuclear weapon, I went to one of the ultimate sources, a 93-year-old nuclear weapons engineer named Richard Garwin, probably the most famous nuclear weapons engineer, physicist, presidential adviser, still alive. Garwin drew the plans for the very first thermonuclear weapon. Its code name was Ivy Mike; it’s on the cover of my book. It was 10.4 megatons.

So consider that the Hiroshima bomb that you referenced was 15 kilotons and then think about 10.4 megatons. It’s about 1,000 Hiroshima-sized bombs detonating at the same time from the same center point. Garwin explained it to me in the simplest of terms when he asked me to visualize this fact: A thermonuclear weapon uses an atomic bomb as its fuse inside of the weapon. That’s how powerful it is.

SI: Paint the picture for me, as you do in the opening pages of the book, where you imagine a nuke is dropped on Washington, DC. What happens next?

AJ: So with a 1-megaton bomb on Washington, DC, what happens in the very first millisecond is that this thermonuclear flash expands into a ball of fire that is one mile of pure fire. It’s 19 football fields of fire.

Then the fireball’s edges compress

You’re talking about 100 to 300 square miles of fire per bomb where everything ... is burning until it doesn’t exist anymore. This is because, of course, there are no first responders anymore. There are no fire trucks, there’s no way to put anything out.

into what is called a steeply fronted blast wave—as dense wall of air pushing out, mowing down everything in its path three miles out, in every direction, because it is accompanied by several-hundred-mile-an-hour winds.

It’s like Washington, DC, just got hit by an asteroid and the accompanying wave. When you think about this initial 9-mile diameter ring, imagine every single en-

gineered structure—buildings, bridges, etc.—collapsing.

There’s also a thermonuclear flash that sets everything on fire and melts lead, steel, and titanium. Streets nine miles out transform into molten asphalt lava. The details are so horrific; it’s important to keep in mind these are not from my imagination. These are sourced from Defense Department documents because the Atomic Energy Commission and the Defense Department have been keeping track of what nuclear bombs do to people and to things ever since the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings of 1945.

SI: When all that happens, we’re in what you call “Day Zero,” and then the nuclear winter begins. What does that look like?

AJ: One of the big premises of the book was to take readers from nuclear launch to

pounds of soot gets lofted into the troposphere. That is enough soot to block out 70% of the sun, creating a dramatic temperature plunge up to 40 degrees Fahrenheit, certainly in the mid-latitudes.

Those areas, for example, from Iowa to Ukraine, that whole band of the mid-latitudes, the bodies of water in those areas become frozen over in sheets of ice. With that temperature drop, you have the death of agriculture and that is why nuclear winter after nuclear war will result in what is now estimated to be 5 billion dead.

SI: And if I remember correctly, those models also estimated that in places like Iowa and Ukraine temperatures basically wouldn’t go above freezing for something like six years at least. Is that right?

AJ: That’s right.

I was reading Carl Sagan, who was one

United States learns that it is being attacked by an ICBM or a sub-launched ballistic missile, the president then has six minutes to decide how he should respond, with nuclear weapons. That’s what Guterres is talking about when he talks about a miscalculation.

SI: How much room is there for human agency in these command and control protocols? You always hear people say in presidential elections, “Do we really trust that guy with the nukes?” But is that the right way to think about this?

AJ: You’re raising an existential question that everyone should be raising.

We’ve been living in what some call a 79-year experiment. Yes, you could say, “Deterrence has held all these years.” Never mind the fact that there used to be two nuclear-armed nations, and there are now



nuclear winter and the nuclear launch up to Day Zero takes place over this horrifying 72-minute period. As STRATCOM Commander General [C. Robert] Kehler said to me in an interview when we were talking about a nuclear exchange between Russia and the United States: “Yes, Annie, the world could end in the next couple of hours.”

So nuclear winter begins in essence after the bombs stop falling and there is a process of mega-fires. The area around

of the original five authors of the nuclear winter theory, who wrote about how after these bodies of water that get frozen over for years, after they thaw out and expose all the dead people, you then have to deal with the pathogens and the plague. Nikita Khrushchev, the Soviet premier during the Kennedy administration, once said to Kennedy when the two of them talked about this, that “after a nuclear war, the survivors would envy the dead.”

SI: After all the reporting you did, are you confident that there are enough checks and guardrails in place to ensure that we’ll avoid a nuclear exchange if it’s at all possible?

AJ: Let me answer that question with a quote from the current secretary-general of the United Nations, António Guterres, who said, “The world is one misunderstanding, one miscalculation away, from nuclear annihilation.”

SI: What does that really mean?

AJ: What it means is exactly what he said: that we could just have a mishap. We could have a mishap caused by a misinterpretation. A miscalculation would be one nuclear-armed nation thinking another nuclear-armed nation was doing something that maybe it wasn’t doing.

This gets us into some of the crazy policies that exist on the books, things like “launch on warning” whereby once the

nine; never mind the fact that you have new technology factors coming into the mix.

Never mind the fact that nuclear saber-rattling has suddenly become acceptable among world leaders. This is astonishing. If you look at history, this was never part of the rhetoric, particularly out of the mouth of a U.S. president, as happened with the former President Trump.

When I began reporting this book, the fundamental question that I was trying to answer was not, “Is deterrence great?” but rather what if deterrence fails? The Defense Department predicates its nuclear arsenal on this idea that deterrence will hold. That is the fundamental assumption. It’s written everywhere. “Deterrence will hold.”

Well, I also found a discussion with the deputy general of STRATCOM talking to his colleagues, not in a classified setting but in a somewhat rarified setting. What he said was this: “If deterrence fails, it all unravels.”

SI: I think it was former CIA Director Michael Hayden who told you explicitly that this process is designed for speed and decisiveness. It is not designed to debate the decision. On some level, I get that. But the automaticity of the whole process, given the stakes, is more than a little terrifying.

AJ: You better believe it is. And Hayden actually told that to members of

continued on next page ...

Annihilation

... continued from previous page

Congress. And by the way, I believe that with the rhetoric from the former president, Donald Trump, all that talk about “fire and fury” with North Korea, it worried Congress to such a degree that they issued a number of reports that drilled down on a couple concepts that the public was not clear on.

One of them had to do with what’s called sole presidential authority. So when Trump was saying, “I have a bigger button,” and that kind of rhetoric, Congress released a couple reports making clear that the president of the United States does have sole presidential authority. That means he needs to ask permission of no one to launch a nuclear war—not the secretary of defense, not the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and not Congress.

SI: You write something near the end of the book imagining that the secretary of defense, who’s the acting president in this hypothetical situation, what if this person has a crisis of conscience and wonders, “Is there really any point in firing these bombs and wiping out the other half of humanity?”

And it’s pretty clear that there really isn’t any room for that because the whole logic of deterrence is predicated on the absolute promise that the process is fixed and automatic. That’s what makes it a deterrent. But then again, it imprisons the actors in this process so that they don’t really have any control over it.

AJ: Let me add something because Dr. Glen McDuff of the Los Alamos Laboratory, who is both a nuclear weapons engineer who worked on the Star Wars program during the Reagan administration and has served as the historian at the classified library at the lab. I asked him, “Do you think anyone would defy orders?” And he said, “Annie, you have a better chance at winning Powerball.”

SI: Is there some near-future where in order to further reinforce the automaticity of this process, we just have AI controlling the whole thing from start to finish?

AJ: I can’t imagine a worse nightmare scenario than bringing AI, or more machine-learning technology, into the mix. There’s an incredible amount of machine learning that is built into the system. For example, the satellite detects the launch and then that data is processed in space. About one-tenth of the way to the moon is where a geosync satellite sits and that data is processed and streamed down to the nuclear command and control bunkers in the United States. This is happening in seconds. But to the idea of putting an “AI” into the mix on the human decision-making level or identifying level, that seems like a recipe for disaster and is a reason why so many of the systems within the triad are still analog, not digital. In other words, they continue to be similar systems to when they were invented decades ago so that they can’t be hacked.

Sean Illing is host of the podcast *The Gray Area* and a writer for *Vox.com*. He explores the ambiguities and complexities of the world with his guests.

Nuclear War May Be Imminent

Unless the U.S. Embraces Peace—and Soon!



Photo: Ellen Davidson

By Gerry Condon

The world is headed toward nuclear war. The horrific nightmare of global destruction that has haunted humanity ever since Hiroshima and Nagasaki is nearly upon us. For decades, peace activists and nuclear experts have warned about the “growing danger of nuclear war.” The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists has moved the hands of their Doomsday Clock all the way to 90 seconds! How much closer can we get? Are these dire warnings being dismissed like the man with the sign shouting “The End Is Near?”

The original nuclear powers, the U.S., Russia, China, France and the UK—the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council—never followed the commitment they made when they signed and ratified the 1970 Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), which required them to “begin good-faith negotiations for the total elimination of nuclear weapons.” Instead they have poured billions of dollars into “modernizing” nuclear weapons. In the meantime, four more countries have joined the nuclear club—India, Pakistan, North Korea and Israel.

After the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact military alliance of the Soviet Union, there was an opportunity for a broad peace in Europe. NATO, an anti-Soviet military alliance led by the U.S., should have disbanded at that point. Instead, it pursued an aggressive policy against a weakened Russia, surrounding it with hostile military forces, including nuclear weapons.

In 2002, President George W. Bush unilaterally removed the U.S. from the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, while placing a U.S. missile base in Romania. In 2019, President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew the U.S. from the Interme-

diat-range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty that had lowered nuclear tensions in Europe, while placing another U.S. missile base in Poland. What were the Russians to think? The U.S. is clearly seeking a dominant nuclear position.

Neoconservative war hawks—or “Neocons”—have captured the foreign policy machinery of Democratic and Republican administrations. Given the declining economic power of the U.S. vis-à-vis a rising China, the Neocons believe the U.S. must aggressively employ its military superiority to maintain global dominance. The U.S. maintains 850 foreign military bases in over 80 countries (compared to a handful each for Russia and China).

Western politicians and pundits frequently accuse Russian president Vladimir Putin of making “nuclear threats.” Indeed, Putin keeps reminding the world of Russia’s nuclear rules of engagement. Russia reserves the right to use nuclear weapons first if it is attacked by the superior conventional forces of NATO. The U.S. has a similar nuclear posture—it will use nuclear weapons first, even against non-nuclear threats such as a cyber-attack. As Daniel Ellsberg reminded us, to possess nuclear weapons is to use them every day, like a gun pointed at someone’s head.

Apparently oblivious to the imminent threat of nuclear war, President Biden continues to pour billions of dollars of weapons into its proxy war against Russia in Ukraine, while blocking peace negotiations. The Biden administration is simultaneously sending billions in weapons to Israel as it commits a horrific and ongoing genocide in Gaza. Israel threatens other Middle Eastern countries with its U.S.-backed military, including nuclear weapons. Can anybody now doubt that they

would use them?

The Neocons are also actively preparing for a war against China. The U.S. is encouraging Taiwan’s independence from China, conducting provocative “freedom of navigation” operations in the Taiwan Straits and South China Sea, and building anti-China military alliances throughout the Pacific. One of the few foreign policy debates in Congress is which war should take precedence—the war against Russia or the war against China. Both are nuclear powers. Then there is the joint U.S./South Korean military exercises aimed at the “decapitation” of the government of North Korea, another nuclear power. What could possibly go wrong?

The threat of nuclear war does not exist in a vacuum. It is directly related to aggressive military competition, much of it being driven by the U.S. Nuclear annihilation will come from a specific war, whether by miscalculation, accident or otherwise.

If we are serious about avoiding a nuclear war, we must demand that the U.S. stops sending weapons to Ukraine and Israel, and instead supports ceasefires and negotiations to stop the killing. We must call for an end to the reckless U.S. confrontation with China and North Korea. It is critically important that these conflicts are ended as soon as possible and replaced with negotiations for peaceful co-existence.

In the longer run, as detailed in the Veterans For Peace Nuclear Posture Review, the U.S. must make a sea change in its foreign policy. We must stop intervening in other countries. We must stop playing “nuclear chicken.” We must demand a peaceful U.S. foreign policy that respects the sovereignty of all nations and the human rights of all people.

The U.S. should sign the U.N. Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, and reach out to the other nuclear powers, saying “let’s all get rid of our nuclear

As Daniel Ellsberg reminded us, to possess nuclear weapons is to use them every day, like a gun pointed at someone’s head.

weapons together.” Let’s pursue the interests of all humanity by replacing competition with cooperation. Let’s stop spending precious resources on the military and take care of our peoples’ needs instead. Let’s work together to stop global warming, the other imminent existential threat. In order to avoid nuclear annihilation—and climate catastrophe too—we must abolish war once and for all.

Gerry Condon is a Vietnam-era veteran and war resister who serves on the Board of Directors of Veterans For Peace and coordinates its Nuclear Abolition Working Group.



July 5, 1943, the largest tank battle in history began near the southern city of Kursk.

Kursk, 1943; Kursk, 2024

An Update on the Russia-Ukraine War

By Bill Astore

In July 1943, the Nazis launched a colossal assault at the Kursk salient on the eastern front. The Soviet Red Army was ready. After roughly two weeks of massive battles, the Red Army prevailed as the Nazi offensive stalled. Hitler's army never again took the offensive in a major way on the eastern front. Two years later, Hitler had committed suicide as the Soviet Army reduced Berlin to rubble.

In August 2024, Ukrainian forces launched a far smaller assault into Russian territory near Kursk. The limited offensive seems to have taken Russia by surprise; what remains unclear is the objective and staying power of the offensive. Meanwhile, Russian forces are advancing further into Ukraine, with some reports suggesting that Ukraine unwisely weakened its forces on the main battlefield to launch its assault near Kursk.

Since truth is the first casualty of war, it's very difficult to get at exactly what's happening in the Russia-Ukraine War. Both sides continue to suffer. Neither side, it appears to me, holds a decisive war-winning advantage. But things can happen very slowly in war, then very quickly. Unpredictability is the very nature of war. All that's really certain is that the longer the war lasts, the worst the killing and destruction will get.

Consider this report written by a friend and colleague, Paul Schwennesen. He recently visited the Kursk region and sees Ukraine as winning an important moral victory there. Russia, he opines, has already lost the war: Putin just doesn't know it yet. Ukraine will fight to the last man, he notes, and that level of determination will lead them to victory.

Here is his concluding paragraph:

"Wars are won in the heart of a people, not through the rational calculations of military planners. While there is momentum left in the Russian war machine, it is only a matter of time before reality sinks in that the Russian heart is not in this fight. Whether the war ends in the shattering of its fragile federation or in some half-hearted armistice measures to mitigate its appalling losses, Russia simply cannot go on. The Kursk offensive, for all

Ukrainian forces back toward Pokrovsk. There are reports of Ukrainian conscripts being thrown into battle after only a month's training. The Kursk advance itself may have been a gambit by Ukraine to show progress to Western allies, especially the U.S., thereby garnering more aid, while at the same time exerting pressure on Putin to negotiate. Yet, which side is under the most pressure? Again, it remains very much unclear to me.

It's always interesting to consult the

Ukraine continues to ask for even more offensive weaponry and greater latitude to employ it deep within Russia. Russia's response to such weapons, if deployed and used, is unpredictable, but tactical nuclear weapons are conceivable.

its complexities and contradictions, has, if nothing else, opened a clear window into the popular wills of each side."

I'd be very careful extrapolating from Ukraine's local successes near Kursk that "Russia simply cannot go on." Russian forces, after all, are going on, driving

corporate media in the U.S., so here's a summary courtesy of CBS News with the headline, "U.S. Announces More Aid for Ukraine at 'Critical Moment' in War with Russia, but Zelenskyy Says More Is Needed." It seems the war is always at a "critical moment"; it also seems Zelen-

skyy always wants more aid, especially long-range missiles and air defense systems. Even before Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin met recently with Zelenskyy, the Biden administration announced another \$250 million in aid, a commitment that didn't placate the Ukrainian leader.

Meanwhile, former President Trump continues to suggest that, assuming he's re-elected in November, he will magically end the war even before he'd take office as president next January. Presumably, that means he'd greatly reduce or cutoff aid to Ukraine, forcing that country to seek an armistice with Putin before an inevitable collapse.

Zelenskyy frames such an event as a calamitous surrender to Russian terror that would embolden Putin to expand his empire at the expense of the former Baltic states and possibly countries like Poland. Whether this nightmare scenario for NATO has any validity is unknown. It's certainly persuasive to those who fear Putin and a revival of some form of a revanchist Russian empire.

What remains true, at least to me, is the dangerous escalatory potential of this war. Remember when the U.S. was only going to provide defensive weaponry to Ukraine? How quickly that escalated to main battle tanks, fighter jets, and longer-range offensive missiles like ATACMS. Ukraine continues to ask for even more offensive weaponry and greater latitude to employ it deep within Russia. Russia's response to such weapons, if deployed and used, is unpredictable, but tactical nuclear weapons are conceivable.

With that possibility, I just don't see a decisive, war-winning, military offensive for Ukraine, so how long will it take to reach a diplomatic settlement? The usual U.S. response is that Ukraine is in the driver's seat and that as long as they're willing to fight and die, we'll keep sending them more weapons and aid. This is a recipe for more war, for sure, but also for far more misery for Ukraine and Russia, and to what end, precisely?

William Astore is a retired lieutenant colonel (USAF) and professor of history, a TomDispatch regular, and a senior fellow at the Eisenhower Media Network, an organization of critical veteran military and national security professionals. His personal blog is Bracing Views.

To My Mother

By Mahmoud Darwish
Translated by A.Z. Foreman

Dearly I yearn for my mother's bread,
My mother's coffee,
Mother's brushing touch.
Childhood is raised in me,
Day upon day in me.
And I so cherish life
Because if I died
My mother's tears would shame me.

Set me, if I return one day,
As a shawl on your eyelashes, let your hand
Spread grass out over my bones,
Christened by your immaculate footsteps
Fasten us with a lock of hair,
With thread strung from the back of your dress.

I could become a god
A god is what I'd be
If I but touch your heart's deep breadth.

Set me, if ever I return,
In your oven as fuel to help you cook,
On your roof as a clothesline stretched in your hands.
Weak without your daily prayers,
I can no longer stand.

I am old
Give me back the stars of childhood
That I may chart the homeward quest
Back with the migrant birds,
Back to your awaiting nest.

Mahmoud Darwish was a Palestinian poet and author who was regarded as Palestine's national poet. In 1988, Darwish wrote the Palestinian Declaration of Independence, which was the formal declaration for the creation of a State of Palestine. Darwish won numerous awards for his works.

'No More War'

... continued from page 1

called Hamas, to fight for the freedom of my people. It was 1987, the First Intifada. I threw rocks and made Palestinian flags. In 1992, I was sentenced to seven months in an Israeli military prison as a political detainee. When my parents visited they told me about the Oslo process and I couldn't stop thinking about how we could have another life.

"In 2004, a friend invited me to participate in a workshop with Israelis. I was shocked and angry. How could you ask me to meet my enemy who killed my people, took my land, and made me a refugee? By the fourth day, I found myself asking them, 'Are you really Israelis?' I had never met any who were not in uniform or carrying out violence—until then, I could not see their humanity. After the seminar, I wanted to know more about the 'other side,' to hear their stories and understand them. Then I found Combatants for Peace.

"My wife and I have lost over 80 members of our extended family, including parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, and cousins in this war. My one remaining sister, Eman, and her five children are still alive. We are desperate to save them. Every day we awake in fear of what news will come. I hope I will be able to reunite with my sister and her family and be able to live together in peace, safety, and security. All we want is to live together without fear. We are scared for our children's lives and are doing all we can to protect them from the violence."

USAF Senior Airman Larry Hebert said, "As an active duty servicemember who joined believing our military was a force for good in the world, I'm horrified by the position of the United States government to fully support the genocide and occupation of civilians in Palestine. I'm also horrified by the true nature of war and its motives. The men and women who recognize their morals and beliefs and act on them are sometimes mistakenly taken as emotional. The truth is that having morals and standing firm on them is a sign of moral intelligence that many people seem to lack. Our complacency towards human suffering while seeing who profits from it is intolerable. I extend my heart to Palestine and those suffering from the country I used to have pride in. These are my views, not those of the Department of Defense."

USAF Senior Airman Juan Bettancourt said, "After 311 days, the death toll is appalling: nearly 41,000 innocent lives brutally taken, the majority women and children. Excruciating reports estimate a devastating total of 186,000 deaths, with almost 93,000 more suffering from severe injuries. Stories of widespread sexual violence, merciless executions, torture, and an endless list of war crimes flood the news, and yet our government remains apathetic to the suffering of Palestinians and the cries of millions calling for a lasting ceasefire and justice. As conscientious objectors, as advocates for peace and human rights, as service members with a shred of moral decency left in us, we adamantly refuse to be accomplices in



A demonstrator holds a sign with Aaron Bushnell's portrait and his last words written on it during the Global Days of Action for Palestine outside the Israeli Embassy on March 2, 2024, in Washington, D.C.

this genocide. We demand an immediate, unilateral ceasefire and the cessation of all weapons transfers to the reprehensible state of Israel. These are my views, not those of the Department of Defense."

USAF Second Lt. Joy Metzler said, "As an active duty service member, I have been told repeatedly that military strength is the only way to counteract the threats we face in the world. But once again we see that vi-

fuse to be pitted against each other as enemies. We support peace, freedom and dignity for all peoples between the river and the sea and an end to the occupation harming both Palestinians and Israelis. Our ultimate goal is collective liberation because we know that the fate of Israelis, Palestinians and all of us is intertwined. Every day, CfP activists live out the values of nonviolence, empathy and mutual recogni-

porting this Appeal for Redress."

Ariel Gold, executive director of Fellowship of Reconciliation said, "Despite the pro-war hysteria that countries use to justify their military endeavors, conscientious objection remains a courageous option for those committed to peace. The Fellowship of Reconciliation supports resistance to war as we know that war is an abomination in the eyes of God and inherently unable to birth peace."

Diana Oestreich, a Army combat medic in the Iraq War, was a conscientious objector and is development coordinator for Red Letter Christians. She said, "As soldiers we gave an oath to serve our country. Seeing the destruction in Iraq firsthand showed many of us our duty to be a conscience to our country. To stand up, instead of stand down when lives and our country and faith's integrity is on the line. We are serving our country by refusing war. These military members today are following in the Sfootsteps of courageous soldiers before them who are countering the failed narrative that we can bomb our way to peace."

To increase the awareness of this campaign among members of the military, civilian supporters of the appeal are encouraged to share it on social media and to ask peace and justice organizations to share it with their membership.

Initiated by active-duty military members, veterans and GI rights groups, "Appeal for Redress v2," is modeled after the 2006 Appeal for Redress conducted during the highly unpopular occupation of Iraq, to allow GIs to tell their representatives they are opposed to U.S. policy.

Mike Ferner was a Navy corpsman during the Viet Nam War. He is a former member of the Toledo City Council and national director of Veterans For Peace. He now serves as special projects coordinator.

"My wife and I have lost over 80 members of our extended family, including parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, and cousins in this war. My one remaining sister, Eman, and her five children are still alive. We are desperate to save them."

olence, this time perpetrated by the Israeli government, only leads to death and destruction in an ever growing conflict. Hate begets hate, so I am calling for a ceasefire and an end to the growing humanitarian crisis in Gaza. These are my views, not those of the Department of Defense."

I added VFP's voice to the statements, saying, "It is highly significant that former fighters from Israel and Palestine have joined American GIs to say 'war is not the answer.' A growing number of GIs tell us they are disturbed about being in the military while our government funds the bombing of innocent people in Gaza. Now we can see that soldiers from all sides of this conflict are sickened by a war run by tyrants benefitting only weapons makers, that is both morally repugnant and violates U.S. laws with every weapons transfer to Israel."

Tiffany Goodwin-Van Camp, Executive Director of American Friends of Combatants for Peace shared a message from the Combatants for Peace movement, "We re-

tion, holding each other's grief and pain. The trauma is endless and ongoing but our community provides hope. It shows that another way is possible; that violence is not inevitable but a human choice that we can change. The only real solution is a hostage/prisoner deal now and a political agreement based on our shared humanity."

Civilian defense attorney James M. Brannum said, "Too many service members are wrongly told by their commanders that they 'have no right' to speak out about what is happening in Gaza. This is not true as communications to Congress, such as the Appeal for Redress v2, are 'protected communications' under military regulations."

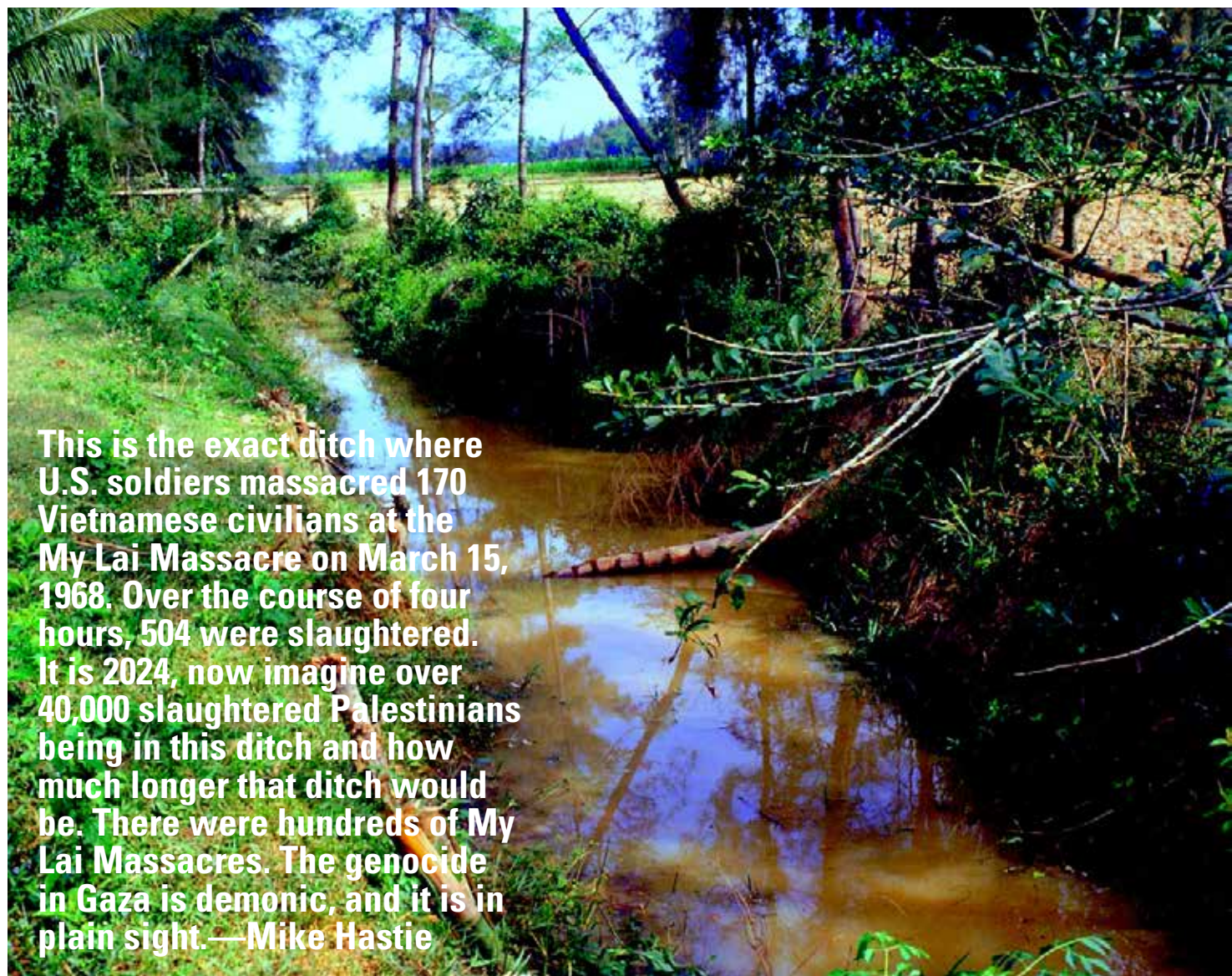
Bill Galvin, counseling coordinator at the Center on Conscience and War, said, "Our office has received calls from six new conscientious objectors in the past week. Some of them have said they feel complicit in the violence happening in Gaza. All of them have clearly said that participating in that conflict is morally wrong. That's why the Center on Conscience and War is sup-

My Lai to Gaza

By Mike Hastie

A couple of months ago I spoke at a college rally at Portland State University. There were over 250 people there, mostly college students. I decided to go back in history and speak about the Viet Nam War, and how it relates to the Genocide in Gaza. I told some of my stories, but focused mostly on graphic stories by other Viet Nam veterans who shared their stories with me. One of the stories I told was the Brian Willson story. I focused on the details of those stories, so that the students would feel the visceral truth.

I talked about the My Lai Massacre, and that there were hundreds of My Lai Massacres in Viet Nam. I talked about the weapons of terror that the U.S. used on the Vietnamese people. I told them that the U.S. committed mass murder against the Vietnamese people every single day. I told them that the killing of innocent civilians were high-value military targets, just like what is happening in Gaza. You do not win wars by just killing military combatants, you ultimately win wars by killing innocent civilians. And the reason the general public does not believe this, is because whenever the truth threatens one's core belief system, there is an urgent need to deny its reality.



This is the exact ditch where U.S. soldiers massacred 170 Vietnamese civilians at the My Lai Massacre on March 15, 1968. Over the course of four hours, 504 were slaughtered. It is 2024, now imagine over 40,000 slaughtered Palestinians being in this ditch and how much longer that ditch would be. There were hundreds of My Lai Massacres. The genocide in Gaza is demonic, and it is in plain sight.—Mike Hastie

I was looking at the faces of the students when I was talking. They were glued to every word. You could have heard a pin drop on the grass. Most of them had never heard this kind of information, especially from someone who was actually in Viet Nam. Now, they could connect the dots to

what the U.S. was doing in Gaza.

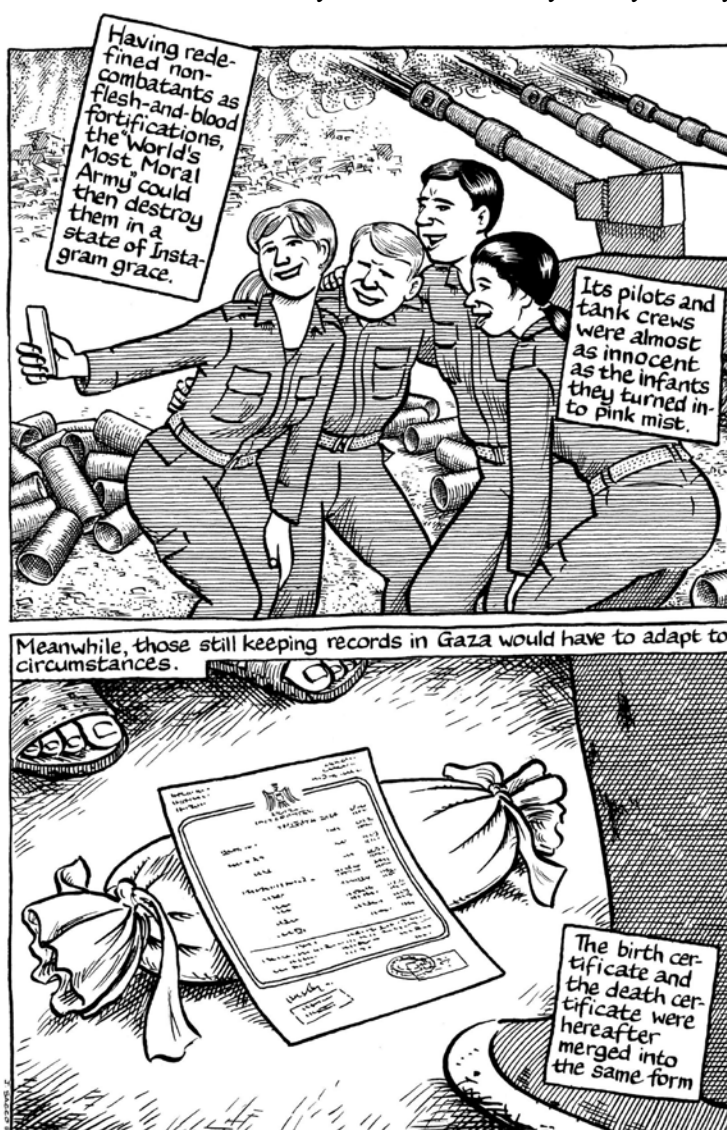
In a way, I validated their raging anger toward their own government. After I spoke, many students came up to me and thanked me for what I said. I could see the pain and tears in their eyes, as so many of them felt betrayed. My history

now became their history. As the Viet Nam generation, we forget sometimes how long ago the '60s were, when we ourselves were so traumatized by that powerful era. It took us many years to re-define our lives, and the realization that the U.S. government was the most dangerous nation in the history of the world. These are facts that the younger generations are still coming to grips with, because it is so frightening to their core belief system. When I quoted Martin Luther King Jr. to them, especially as someone who was 23 at the time of his murder, it opened their eyes even more: "The greatest purveyor of violence in the world today is my own government." That quote coming from me made King more alive.

I continue to work on my photo book about the Viet Nam War, and how it is very important for me to use simplicity in explaining what really happened. The most powerful military force the world has ever seen, used every kind of weapon of mass destruction to annihilate the Vietnamese people, one of the poorest countries in the world. What is wrong with this picture? Well, that is a book I hope my pictures with text will help explain. That work will be dedicated to young people, who absolutely must know why their own government is supplying Israel with billions of dollars of weapons to destroy Gaza.

I am 79, my off ramp is in the near future, just like most of us from the '60s. For all of us who were politicized from the Viet Nam era, our work at Veterans For Peace has been miraculous and life saving.

Mike Hastie is a photojournalist. He served as a combat medic during the Vietnam War. He is a lifetime member of Veterans For Peace.



Fantagraphics has released a series of graphic commentaries and reflections by Joe Sacco, author of *Palestine* and *Footnotes in Gaza*. This, from "The War on Gaza" graphic commentaries, is reprinted with the permission of Fantagraphics and Joe Sacco.