



EACE

A PUBLICATION OF THE PEACE EDUCATION CENTER

NOTES

SUMMER 2021

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Peace Notes

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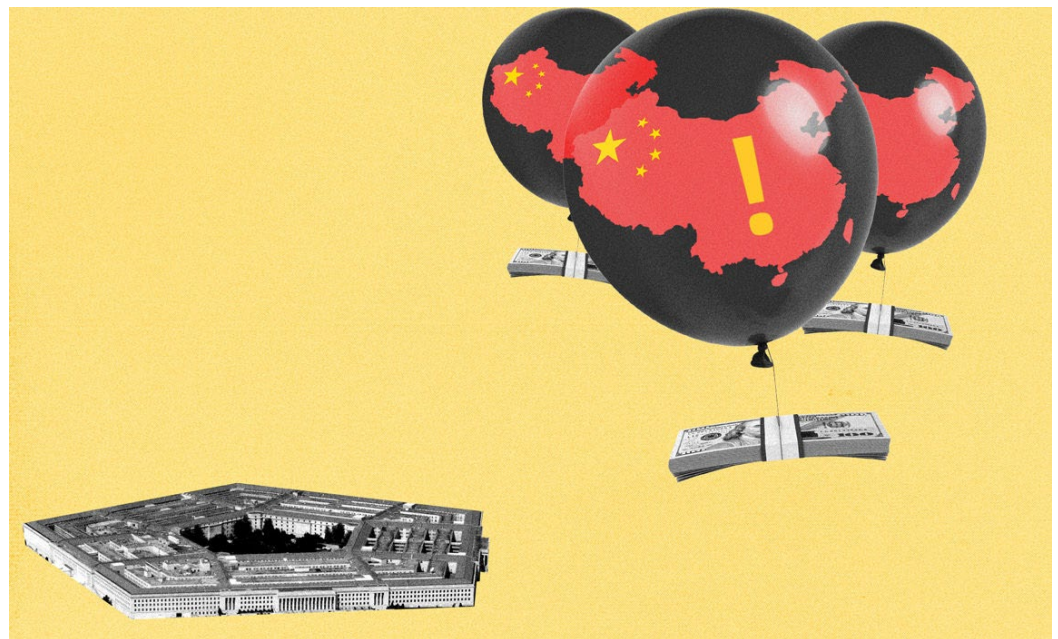
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*Peace Notes is a publication of the
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Ma\$\$ive mon\$oon \$ea\$on for military \$pending

By Terry Link

We are entering the season of wrestling over the federal budget and nowhere are the vested interests more active than in the military spending sector. It makes up half of all non-discretionary federal spending. Various committees and subcommittees in both houses of Congress are having hearings with generals and admirals and Pentagon lobbyists trying to sell their new toy list. The vast majority of the public remains ignorant of these skirmishes. Individual members of Congress, besides accommodating visits from the lobbyists, are trying to determine which new gizmos will bring home the bacon to their district or state. These proponents of additional funding cloak themselves in the mantra of rising fears – not of climate change or increasing inequality or gun violence, but of the [old recycled boogeymen](#) of Russia and China, sometimes including the evil twins of Iran and North Korea. (www.pogo.org/analysis/2021/06/inflating-china-threat-to-balloon-pentagon-budget)



Between June 21 and June 25 there were at least seven different Congressional hearings related to defense spending. Lobbyists for that industry and the hawkish groups and think tanks that are often funded by them are flooding Capitol Hill. In 2020, the [industry spent more than \\$100,000,000](#) convincing government officials to spend more and more money for their wares of war. Luckily, more and more civil society groups with tiny budgets have coalesced to change the landscape. But without us supporting their work by calling and writing and visiting with our elected representatives, their efforts to reduce and reallocate the funds to human needs will likely fall short.

<https://www.opensecrets.org/industries/lobbying.php?ind=D>

Ma\$\$ive military \$pending \$till in \$eason (cont.)

No such well endowed lobby exists for those struggling with poverty and the myriad concerns that accompany the shortfall of funds. Yet, thanks to a small but quickly growing group of challengers to the status quo, there is increasing pressure from both conservative and liberal organizations and a new [Defense Spending Reduction Caucus](#) in Congress that is putting the spotlight on where significant cuts can be made without diminishing our national security. (www.citizen.org/news/50-house-lawmakers-are-right-excessive-pentagon-spending-wont-make-us-safer)

Here's a short list of some of those:



Win Without War - A coalition of 25 transpartisan groups calling for an [\\$80 billion reduction](#).
<https://winwithoutwar.org/policy/25-transpartisan-orgs-identify-80-billion-in-pentagon-budget-cuts>



National Taxpayers Union - Has highlighted [cuts totaling \\$338 billion](#) over four years.
<https://www.ntu.org/publications/detail/the-bipartisan-map-for-congress-and-biden-to-trim-the-defense-budget-by-338-billion>



Poor People's Campaign - Calls for a [\\$350 billion redirection](#) of funds from the military towards human needs. <https://www.poorpeoplescampaign.org/resource/poor-peoples-moral-budget/>



Cato Institute - [Pumping more money into military spending](#) doesn't bring us more security.
<https://www.cato.org/commentary/cut-military-spending-restrain-foreign-policy-first>



Friends Committee on National Legislation - identifies [\\$1 trillion reductions over 10 years](#). In one year the Pentagon loses, wastes, or misspends at least \$102 billion!
<https://www.fcnl.org/updates/2021-06/fcni-calls-house-appropriators-cut-wasteful-defense-spending>



National Priorities Project - The president's budget request [takes what should be a "peace dividend"](#) from the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan and squanders it on costly weapons and military bloat by perpetuating the nuclear weapons threat into a new century with the new ICBM and throwing good money after bad for the F-35 jet fighter, a money pit that has gone billions of dollars over budget and has yet to meet expectations.
<https://www.nationalpriorities.org/analysis/2021/forever-increasing-pentagon-budget-undermines-american-security/>



Project on Government Oversight - shows the true military budget is [closer to \\$1.2 trillion](#), not the \$753 billion that goes just to the Department of Defense.
<https://www.pogo.org/analysis/2019/05/making-sense-of-the-1-25-trillion-national-security-state-budget/>



Code Pink - slash the \$2 trillion earmarked for upgrading nuclear weapons over the next decade and [cut annual budget by 10 percent](#).
https://www.codepink.org/codepink_statement_pentagonbudget2022



Center for International Policy - Details \$150 billion dollar-reduction as the initial part of a \$1.2 trillion dollar-reduction over 10 years. https://3ba8a190-62da-4c98-86d2-893079d87083.usrfiles.com/ugd/3ba8a1_84180a1b3cdf478f8023d8ca96cb682a.pdf

Celebrating the Life of Julia Bishop

Long-time PEC supporter Julia Bishop died in March at the age of 94. Julia spent her life furthering the interests of justice and peace. She showed her independence early by riding her bicycle from Chicago to Florida when she was 19! A strong and determined person, she raised six children mostly alone after she was widowed early. Her work for justice included a trip to Nicaragua when in her 60s where she observed the political situation and lobbied for change on her return. She was a long-time member of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) and the Greater Lansing United Nations Association (GLUNA).

Julia's generosity was remarkable. Besides supporting the GLUNA store for many years, along with her many other charitable contributions, we at the PEC knew her through her gifts to us. Every year, she ordered a large supply of holiday cards and other merchandise from UNICEF, then donated them to us to resell at our Alternative Holiday Sale – therefore benefitting two organizations with one purchase!

We send our wishes to her family and to the world that Julia's lifelong commitment to a better world will pay benefits for years to come.

Young Tom Schneider Peacemaker Award Winner Jumps into Politics

Graham Diedrich won our Tom Schneider Peacemaker Award in 2019 as he was graduating from Haslett High School. Now, just three short years later, he has declared as a candidate for State Representative for the 69th district. If elected, Graham would be the youngest ever Michigan State Representative. Just as impressive, he received his bachelor's degree from MSU in two years, and is now working toward a Master's degree in public policy.



The Tom Schneider Peacemaker Awards are given every year to high school seniors who demonstrate a commitment to peace and justice. In the process of choosing award winners, we've met some extraordinary young people. Some have returned to work with us and some keep in touch as they light out into the world. We are proud to have met this young man and wish him well as he takes this step toward making the world a better place.

According to Diedrich, "I'm running because I feel like we deserve leadership that represents us and demands solutions to issues like climate change is a big one for our generation, class inequality, racism, just countless other issues. I feel like people deserve change that will boost their quality of life. I feel like especially younger people, we have the perspectives that are needed to solve these issues. I feel like as a working-class, young person in this district, I have the perspective that's needed to lead it to the future."

(Quote via Rane Claypool, State News)

PEC Hires a New Office Coordinator

Becky Payne and Nelson Brown, co-chairs

The PEC just took a big step. We've hired a coordinator! Samantha Dillon will help us spend more time and energy on programming, outreach and just making the world a better place. Samantha came to us highly recommended, as she is also the executive assistant for the Greater Lansing United Nations Association and works with several other like-minded non-profits. A Lansing native, Samantha studied psychology and is excited to help further the goals of PEC.

Keeping on top of breaking news and responding with education, events or actions, as well as maintaining a small office is sometimes too much for us volunteers. Managing media outlets like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, etc., takes time and skill. We are thrilled to have Samantha's help with organizing our media as well as taking over some of our office work. We haven't needed much cash in the last few years – and we certainly don't have a lot. Our annual budget would probably not be enough to buy a screwdriver in the US military. Adding in the salary for this position will tax our reserves. But we feel this is important. For over fifty years, we have kept the fires burning in this area for seeking peace and rooting out injustice. As the military budget continues to rise beyond anything reasonable and human rights issues abound, we don't intend to stop now.

This is not a plea for more money (though we certainly wouldn't turn it down), but mainly to report that we are still going strong. We are making plans for a conference this fall on military spending, expanding our efforts during September's PeaceQuest, bringing back our Alternative Holiday Sale, and continuing to rattle the doors of local and statewide politicians on their responses to current events. Join us either with a donation or your presence at our board meetings. There's plenty of work to go around in keeping this world sane.

PeaceQuest 2021

PeaceQuest is a community-wide celebration in the Greater Lansing area held every September to celebrate the United Nations International Day of Peace, which was declared by the UN General Assembly with a resolution passed unanimously in 1981. PeaceQuest brings us ALL together for fun and interesting activities with friends, family, and community while focusing on ways we can promote peace, resolve conflicts, learn about other faiths and cultures, and encourage mutual understanding. Visit us at peacequestgreaterlansing.org to learn more. Is your organization interested in becoming part of PeaceQuest 2021? It's never too early or too late to plan to become a sponsor, offer an event, and more! Contact PeaceQuest at peacequestlansing@gmail.com.



Join us for
**Peace
Quest!**
SEPTEMBER 1-30

www.PeaceQuestGreaterLansing.org



Here are a few events already scheduled, check the website for more!

Create your own Peace Pallet!

Date: Tuesday, Sept. 14, 2021, 6pm-8pm

Location: Art Unlimited, 4692 Okemos Rd., Okemos – inside (following MDHHS health and safety recommendations)

Cost: \$25 per pallet; one person working on one pallet. (Class fee includes wooden pallet, paints, word stencils, and instructions.)

About: <https://artunlimitedgallery.net/pallet-painting>

Three designs to choose from. Select a limited number of words of your choice to stencil onto your Peace Pallet.

Option: Pick up materials to work on at home vs. coming to the class at the studio. Light refreshments provided by Host Okemos Community Church. Registration and non-refundable pre-payment required.

Deadline for registration: Wed. 9/8. Call Art Unlimited at 517-349-8278.

Website: www.artunlimitedgallery.net/

Sponsor: Okemos Community Church

Voices from Faith and Reason

Date: Saturday, Sept. 18, 2021

Location: TBA

Speakers: TBA

Cost: Free

Sponsor: Shalom Center for Justice and Peace

Violence De-Escalation Skills Training

Date: Sat-Sun, Sept. 18-19, 2021, 10 am – 2:30pm, with a break for lunch

Location: VIRTUAL

About: Experience the transforming power of nonviolence on the personal and societal level. Learn and practice concrete skills for effective communicating and active nonviolent peacemaking. Learn what YOU can do when you are a bystander to someone being threatened or harassed.

Cost: \$65 covers training, comprehensive manual, and hand-outs.

Registration: Click the link <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSftTReHRTUBK9r9LrNR4E6htH8pIgYiA4lB9XhhyQsrpEgXDg/viewform>

(YOU MUST PRE-REGISTER for this event, and you must attend BOTH days to complete this training.)

Sponsor: Meta Peace Team <https://www.metapeaceteam.org/>

Sermon on Peace, Pastor Rick Blunt, Okemos Community Church

Date: Sunday, Sept 19, 2021 at 10am

Location: 4734 Okemos Rd., Okemos.

Video recording available on YouTube at 7 pm, Mon. Sept. 20

Website: www.okemosocc.org Click on OCC Sunday Sermon Video Link

Calendar

Peace Education Center of Greater Lansing, GL-UNA, and Peace Action of Michigan present...

"Reckoning with Hiroshima, Nukes, and Climate" on Friday, August 6 @ 7:00 pm

To receive a Zoom invitation to this powerful event please send your email address to peaceactionfinance@gmail.com.

Folksinger Julie Beutel will open and close the event with Rev. Rich Peacock presenting a PowerPoint, "Reckoning with Hiroshima, Nuclear Nightmares, and Climate Emergencies."

Hiroshima and Nagasaki were 76 years ago...but now we live under Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD). The New York City Climate Clock shows we have only 7 years to rectify the climate emergencies caused by global heating. What are five keys to unlocking a safe, sustainable planet?

Regularly Scheduled Events:

Every Friday, noon to 1 p.m.: Peace Vigil in front of the State Capitol Bldg., Lansing

1st Thursdays: Peace Education Center Board Meeting, 7 p.m., at

University United Methodist Church, 1120 Harrison Road, East Lansing

1st Sundays: Islam 101, 2:30 p.m. [Islamic Center](#), 920 S. Harrison Rd., East Lansing

3rd Mondays: Greater Lansing Network Against War & Injustice (GLNAWI) planning meeting, 7 p.m., PEC office, University United Methodist Church, 1120 Harrison Road, East Lansing

1st & 3rd Tuesdays: Plant Justice, Grow Peace. 3:30-5:00 p.m., The Spirit of Peace Church of the Brethren's group is a faith-based study and action group for peace and justice now meeting via zoom. Contact Anne Seuss at whiteann@msu.edu to participate.

3rd Thursdays: Mid-Michigan Immigration Coalition (MMIC), 5:45-7:15 p.m. Unitarian Universalist Church of Greater Lansing, 5509 S. Pennsylvania, Lansing. For information contact Judy Olson at olsonj@msu.edu.

2nd Tuesdays: Civil Rights for Immigrants (CRI) Task Force, 5:30-7:00 p.m. Cristo Rey Church, 201 W. Miller, Lansing.

For information contact Oscar Castaneda at oscar@actionofgreaterlansing.org

Peace Education Center Annual Meeting

Sunday, September 26, 2021 from 4-6pm

University United Methodist Church

1120 S. Harrison, East Lansing, MI 48823

Photo credit: Jim Detjen



Alternative Holiday Sale 2021

PEC is excited to announce ...

the Alternative Holiday Sale is back for 2021!

The Alternative Holiday Sale offers the opportunity to meet and shop with others in the peace and justice community while supporting small businesses, nonprofit groups, and fair-trade cooperatives. There will be a variety of vendors, many offering locally unique creations as well as practical goods.

Photo credit:
Nate Jemison



PEC is also teaming with the Ten Pound Fiddle to bring live music to the event! The concert will feature singer-songwriter, storyteller, and cultural ambassador **Reggie Harris**. Learn more here: reggieharrismusic.com

So, calling all vendors! If you're interested in participating this year please contact us at peaceedcenter@gmail.com for more information and to reserve your spot. Space is limited, so we encourage you to sign up ASAP.

Friday, November 19, 5 pm - 9 pm

Saturday, November 20, 9 am - 5 pm

Edgewood United Church, 469 Hagadorn Road, East Lansing



Photo credits: Jim Detjen

Freedom Fest : Fourth of July Celebration to Help the Formerly Incarcerated

by Nelson Brown, John Masterson, and Nate Jemison



PC: Aaron Jeffries



PC: Aaron Jeffries



PC: Nate Jemison

On the July 4th weekend, Freedom Fest was held at The Fledge community center with an emphasis on helping people successfully reenter society after being released from jails or prisons. This event was sponsored by the group Power In Passion which is working to provide reentry support, including volunteers to help the formerly incarcerated meet conditions of parole and programs to assist in finding jobs. The Fest also featured community groups with booths, including the Peace Center; Punks With Lunch, an interesting self- styled “anarchist” group which provides food and other assistance to homeless people; and other vendors. There was entertainment, including women dancing in Middle Eastern style. (NB)

The Re-entry Resource Program winded down on Monday evening with a community discussion of the issues of the re-entry of incarcerated people into “normal” life that was very worth attending. Efren Parades Jr (PEC has previously reported on his Juvenile Life Without Parole case awaiting resentencing and release) spoke via teleconference call for 10 minutes at the 5 pm beginning of the program and it was much appreciated. The rest of the program gave me a good picture of the failure of the prison system at all aspects of what it preaches as rehabilitation, and the possibilities of a creative local movement to provide something that works. It still appears to be just forming. (JM)



PC: Nate Jemison



PC: Nelson Brown



PC: Aaron Jeffries

It also set me in a real and exciting arena of building human support for something that is needed, a support that does not depend on the politics of the Lansing area but evolves from people creating something. The Fledge is a surprisingly rich place to hang around. There’s a lot of stuff going on there in a community building sense. I think I would get older more slowly if I hung around the Fledge more often. (JM)



Power in Passion is a Total Reentry Solution. Our objective is to reduce the number of technical violations that parolees and probationers encounter therefore improving the success rate of returning citizens and eradicating the “revolving door” to jail and prison that probation and parole currently create. We do this through our app, advocacy, incentivizing positive behavior through gamification, an abundance of direct resources, and user accessibility.

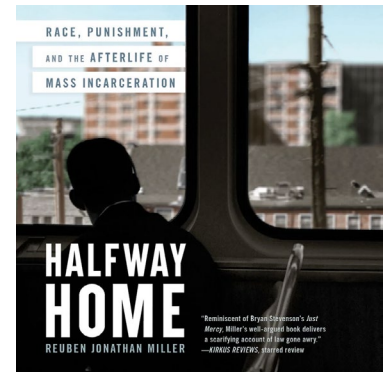


The Fledge, run by Jerry Norris, is a community center practicing radical inclusion. Located in an adapted former church in Lansing’s eastside neighborhood.

Praise for “Halfway Home: Race, Punishment, and the Afterlife of Mass Incarceration” by Reuben Jonathan Miller (Little, Brown and Company, 2021)

by Efrén Paredes, Jr.

Efrén Paredes, Jr. is a blogger, thought leader, social justice changemaker, and Michigan juvenile lifer who has been incarcerated 32 years. You can find links to his writings, TV news/radio/podcast interviews, and activism by visiting <http://fb.com/Free.Efren>.



“[T]his is how social death works: You become a nonperson, someone whose existence is superfluous. You’re invisible, hidden in some cage just outside the city or within it or perhaps hundreds of miles from home. The effects are all the same. You are a number among a bunch of other numbers. You might have a family. You might do great things in your community. You might help others, regularly. You might be a person of great faith. But you are dead to the world that matters to you most. The prison robs you of your importance.”

The above quote is from Reuben Jonathan Miller’s book titled “Halfway Home: Race, Punishment, and the Afterlife of Mass Incarceration.” Miller is a sociologist, criminologist, social worker, and University of Chicago professor.

“Halfway Home” is a searing indictment of the pernicious ways that mass incarceration destabilizes lives by disproportionately demonizing, marginalizing, and warehousing people of color and members of poor and underserved communities.

The book highlights how lawmakers have erected barriers that prevent the 600,000 returning citizens marked by incarceration who are released from prisons each year from succeeding through the creation of 48,000 laws, policies, and administrative sanctions.

Miller also critiques the plethora of interlocking problems that have resulted in America becoming the country that cages more citizens than any other on the planet. His rich, descriptive narrative allows the reader to explore the world of prison and its “afterlife” in a very moving way.

In the words of Pulitzer-Prize winning author Heather Ann Thompson, “As Miller shows so powerfully [in his book], the damage done by this system has been so insidious, and so comprehensive, that certain Americans are always, in effect, doing time.”

One of the qualities that makes this book so compelling is Miller’s proximity to the problem. His father and brother were incarcerated, and he was actively a part of his brother’s support network throughout his incarceration and release. He witnessed firsthand what families of incarcerated people experience during that time.

He also served as a Chaplain inside Chicago’s notorious Cook County Jail where he interacted with thousands of people in detention and was able to directly observe how they were treated by their jailers.

The imprint of incarceration on Miller’s life allows him to see and understand things other ethnographers often miss or overlook when they study the caging of citizens. He writes not only as a brilliant scholar, but also as a credible witness.

I’m critical of authors who write about the carceral system because too often they write through the gaze of a detached observer. As an advocate for incarcerated people and stakeholder in how we are portrayed, I’m not one to give a pass to authors who gaslight readers about the facts.

Too many writers seek to capitalize off the suffering and misery of the incarcerated experience. They frequently only review statistics and data points before arriving at conclusions and rarely engage with the subjects of their research.

Part of Miller’s fieldwork for his book included spending time interviewing incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people in jails, prisons, half-way houses, treatment programs, homeless shelters, and urban cities. He also interviewed local politicians, prison staff, reentry program staff, among others.

As someone who has been caged in Michigan prisons 32 years and intensely studied the carceral system experientially -- including reading books, scores of peer-reviewed journal articles, and research studies on the subject -- I can unequivocally state that Miller knows what he’s writing about.

Anyone interested in learning about the real struggles and lived experiences of currently and formerly incarcerated people and their families should read this book. It will open your eyes about things you didn’t know and change your perspectives about things you thought you already knew.

Newly Released Climate, Jobs and Justice Platform

On June 3, the Lansing Environmental Action Team (LEAT) released the following platform with four focus areas calling for regional action to combat climate change and overcome environmental injustice.



INGHAM COUNTY 2021: CLIMATE, JOBS, AND JUSTICE PLATFORM

Following Ingham County's adoption of resolutions 20-301 (declaring a climate emergency), 21-195 (reconstituting the Environmental Affairs Commission), and 21-210 (declaring a commitment to climate justice), we encourage Ingham County to adopt the platform below. As state and federal efforts ramp up to address the intertwined problems of climate change and social justice, Ingham County should align with state goals while being prepared to leverage funds and opportunities to meet this challenge.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ingham County will create a sustainability office to work with the Environmental Affairs Commission; it will conduct a greenhouse gas audit from both County-run facilities and operations and from all sources within the county by 2022.

Ingham County will commit to 1) net-zero greenhouse gas emissions from County facilities and operations by 2030, 2) reducing 2019 total greenhouse gas emissions from all sources within the County by 50% by 2030 and 3) achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions from all sources within the County by 2050. The County will work with other governments, utilities, businesses, and residents to achieve this goal. The County will work to replace all fossil fuels with renewable energy sources, and use energy conservation, demand response programs, and energy storage to meet energy demand.

The County will establish a climate resilience plan to counter the effects of climate change, including provision of affordable clean water, heat relief such as cooling centers during summer heat waves, and prevention of stormwater flooding.

The County will advocate for the adoption of revised building codes that focus on energy efficiency and renewable energy infrastructure. The County will encourage financing structures for residents who wish to retrofit existing housing stock to make them more energy efficient, including utilities offering on-bill financing.

The County will adopt a provision requiring energy audits as part of the home sale and rental inspection processes for all homes. Further, the County will investigate the possibility of adopting a home energy rating system for all homes in the County.

ECONOMIC JUSTICE & GREEN JOBS

The County's energy justice efforts will ensure that all citizens of the county benefit equally in the low-emission economy (environmentally and economically) and have the opportunity and resources available to them so that no worker or community is left behind as a result of these goals and policies.

The County will lead efforts to increase energy efficiency, distributed renewable energy, and home health/safety/weatherization programs in low-income neighborhoods.

The County will establish a plan to support the equitable development of green businesses, green jobs, and green job training. The sustainability office will consult with labor unions, advocates, low-income communities, and businesses to equitably manage the transition to net-zero greenhouse gases, and to develop policies to maximize the quality, quantity, and access to new low-carbon and green jobs, including retraining and transition strategies for workers in the fossil fuel economy. Additionally, the County will advocate for federal and/or Michigan civilian conservation corps programs and opportunities.

Further, Ingham County will work to ensure that past injustices (caused by red-lining and other inequitable policies) are ameliorated through work in the energy, building, and transportation sectors, focused on public health outcomes and the availability of green jobs. Ingham County will work with stakeholders to increase participation of low-income neighborhoods in energy efficiency, home weatherization, and energy transformation (renewable energy installation) programs.

Ingham County will advocate at the state level for policies that compel utilities, specifically Consumers Energy and Lansing Board of Water and Light (LBWL), to increase their investments in low-income neighborhoods. The sustainability office will seek concrete and measurable commitments from Consumers and LBWL, and will work with the Michigan Public Services Commission (MPSC) and LBWL to ensure low-income households benefit from energy policies.

INGHAM COUNTY 2021: CLIMATE, JOBS, AND JUSTICE PLATFORM (cont.)

WATER & FOOD SECURITY

Ingham County will coordinate the development of transparency from water utilities regarding water rates and assistance for low-income residents, throughout the County. The County will lead efforts to ban water shut-offs.

The County will promote access to healthy and sustainably grown food through support for regenerative farming, community and neighborhood gardens, and farmers' markets.

Ingham County will lead the work of all cities and townships within the Grand River and Red Cedar River watersheds both to separate storm water from sewer discharges and to reduce nonpoint source pollution in stormwater. The heaviest water users will be required to pay a fair rate for their usage. The utilities will be conscious of vulnerable constituencies and design their operation to minimize impacts on those users.

Ingham County will require government properties to avoid the planting of invasive non-native plants and encourage maximal use of native plants. The County will provide incentives to homeowners who use native plantings in green infrastructure projects, facilitating the development of urban wildlife corridors and maximizing tree canopy.

Ingham County will continue to press the State to pass a statewide sanitary code that would require regular inspections of septic systems, and equitable financing for low-income homeowners with needed repairs, replacements, or sewer hookups.

Ingham County will advocate for adequate funding to ensure inspection and cleanup of toxic sites. The County will work with the state to identify toxic sites and to clean up and redevelop brownfields, utilizing local firms wherever possible.

TRANSIT & TRANSPORTATION

Ingham County will work to expand and fully fund public transportation, bike trails, and other low-carbon mobility with a goal of providing everyone in the county affordable and equitable access to sustainable mobility options.

Ingham County will develop grant and incentive programs in conjunction with State policy, government agencies, and major private industrial, retail, and other businesses to help enable more shared use mobility.

Ingham County will work with other government agencies, private businesses, and key community institutions to develop a sufficient network of electric vehicle charging stations, especially, but not limited to, along major highway arteries in the county and at multi-family housing.

Myanmar's Authoritarian Downfall Leads to Imprisonment of Michigan Journalist

by Codie Drake

The November 2015 Myanmar elections provided a new light for Myanmar's historically Tatmadaw (Military) dominated government. A long [history of military](#) might entrenched the country's development. The National League of Democracy (NLD) would win substantial seats. Party leader, Aung San Suu Kyi would be seen as the face of this progression. The transition was a "[disciplined democracy](#)" with significant power continually held by the military, 25% of parliament seats reserved for the Military. A government quite far from democracy but providing tiny steps forward. Development takes time, the atmosphere was changing, it could be seen by the welcoming back of nonprofit organizations, once exiled, or the release of political prisoners. The country was moving forward, with several severe hiccups, and a pace, slow enough it could be taken for granted.

<https://www.cfr.org/background/myanmar-history-coup-military-rule-ethnic-conflict-rohingya>
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-33547036>

On November 8, 2020, Myanmar's elections took place. Aung San Suu Kyi's political party, the NLD, won [a large majority](#) of seats. At first glance, this was a benchmark development in its forming democracy. This would only be a façade. On February 1, 2021, a coup d'état took place within the Myanmar government. On that day, the Military arrested democratic leader Aung San Suu Kyi and other top military leaders. The years of the slow pace of change were then destroyed instantly. Leading up to the Coup the Myanmar Military would [echo suspiciously familiar rhetoric](#), similar to United States President Donald Trump, after his loss in the 2020 U.S. elections. The military echoed the same claims- fraud disrupted the Myanmar election. Poll monitoring organizations and the [Myanmar Poll monitoring authority](#) claimed fraud was not found within the election, but the military claimed otherwise.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-54899170>

<https://www.businessinsider.com/trump-gave-rhetorical-ammunition-to-myanmar-generals-prior-to-coup-2021-2>

<https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/election-fraud-01282021184631.html>

Myanmar's Authoritarian Downfall Leads to Imprisonment of Michigan Journalist (cont.)

It is obvious Trump did not cause the coup or have anything to do with the complex political dynamic in Myanmar, nor could he have stopped the Coup from potentially happening. These claims placed the U.S in a challenging international relations dynamic. In questioning the democratic process, a process traditionally prides itself on being honorable, he [tarnished its reputation](#), specifically [the election process](#). The U.S often has and will advocate for the greatness of democracy and its importance, so when a U.S president questions its reliability, they replace that confidence with hypocritical undertones and undermine democratic progressions and advocacy. In questioning the democratic process, it provided the Myanmar Military with a premise to fulfill the coup and take back power. The [rhetoric](#) also lowered the bar for political precedent within developing countries who “seek “to establish democracy, allowing unstable foundation for democracy to grow and abuse of power within governments who do not seek to fully establish the characteristics of a democratic government. Political power is a privilege and with this privilege comes responsibility, and consequences.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trumps-voter-fraud-claims-undermine-the-voting-system-and-his-presidency/2017/01/24/a71d58ee-e288-11e6-a453-19ec4b3d09ba_story.html

https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/journal-of-experimental-political-science/article/effects-of-unsubstantiated-claims-of-voter-fraud-on-confidence-in-elections/9B4CE6DF2F573955071948B9F649DF7A?utm_source=hootsuite&utm_medium=twitter&utm_campaign=XPS_Jun21

<https://www.businessinsider.com/trump-gave-rhetorical-ammunition-to-myanmar-generals-prior-to-coup-2021-2>

The consequence of the coup has led to pro-democracy protests and huge numbers of arrests. The country which once slugged slowly along the democratic trail has fallen apart, with a full authoritarian crackdown. As of July 2, 2021, Assistance Association for Political Prisoners reported, 5,173 people have been arrested and 888 killed. The consequence of this coup comes full circle with the arrest of American Citizen, and Michigander Danny Fenster.

Mr. Fenster, a 37-year-old editor at [Frontier Myanmar](#) was arrested due to his past work at [Myanmar Now](#), a free media outlet banned by the junta in March. Mr. Fenster was boarding a plane home to surprise his parents, in Huntington Woods Michigan, when he was arrested at the Rangoon International Airport. He was then transferred to Insein Prison in Rangoon. He was arbitrarily detained and has been charged under 505a of the Penal Code. The law, recently edited on February 14, 2021, looks to [diminish the descent](#) of the junta and broadens the space for the arrest of journalists and activists. Mr. Fenster faces up to a three-year sentence, a fine, or both. It is important to advocate for the [release of Danny Fenster](#), and peace within Myanmar. Nine [Michigan congressional](#) members addressed the Secretary of State with the concern of Danny Fenster, yet it is not enough.

<https://www.frontiermyanmar.net/en/>

<https://www.myanmar-now.org/en>

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/03/02/myanmar-post-coup-legal-changes-erode-human-rights>

<https://www.frontiermyanmar.net/en/frontier-reiterates-call-for-danny-fenster-release/>

[https://andylevin.house.gov/sites/andylevin.house.gov/files/052521 Letter to Sec Blinken on Danny Fenster FINAL.pdf](https://andylevin.house.gov/sites/andylevin.house.gov/files/052521%20Letter%20to%20Sec%20Blinken%20on%20Danny%20Fenster%20FINAL.pdf)

Below is a petition for the release of Danny Fenster urging President Biden to secure his release:

https://sign.moveon.org/petitions/president-biden-secure-american-journalist-danny-fenster-s-immediate-release-from-myanmar-1?source=rawlink&utm_source=rawlink&share=76417620-9b89-423b-8806-eedacc7ec057

It is important to advocate for the release of Danny Fenster, yet it is equally as important to understand and bring awareness to the full situation within Myanmar and advocate for its people. Political power comes with privilege, and those who misuse it transgress the platform for democratic progression. While the Myanmar government was slowly moving towards democratic values, progress was lost when the coup took place. It is the people of Myanmar who live with the consequences and restrictions of the Coup and need the world to advocate for their situation so peace and basic human rights can be implemented and upheld. It is important to advocate for political leaders who understand the consequences of their rhetoric on an international level and uphold the standards enshrined in a democratic atmosphere, while reassuring the values within the Universal Declaration of Human rights, which should be the foundation of U.S diplomacy.



BOYCOTT DIVEST AND SANCTION

by Marie Adele Grosso

BDS (Boycott Divest and Sanction) is a movement that encourages boycotting Israeli products- specifically those made in settlements. The movement is heavily based on the anti-apartheid efforts in South Africa.

This movement aims to protest the Israeli Occupation of Palestinian land by not purchasing products that support Israel. In the past 70 years, Israel has occupied land designated for Palestinians. In 1974, the two-state solution was formed and designated Israeli and Palestinian territory.



Since then the Israeli government has placed settlements within Palestinian territory. These settlements were declared war crimes by the United Nations on July 9, 2021, and were declared illegal under article 49 of the Geneva Conventions by the International Court of Justice in the past.

This is why BDS is an important movement. It provides an actionable step to resist the Israeli government for people every day.

Support H.R. 2590

by Chris Root

Focus action on Palestine on the Congress: Support H.R. 2590

On July 7, Israeli military forces demolished the Palestinian Bedouin community of Humsa al-Baqai'a in the Jordan Valley, displacing 65 people, including 35 children, and destroying the farming structures of this Bedouin community provided by the international community, according to the West Bank Protection Consortium. Demolitions have increased by 30 percent compared to the first six months of 2020.

A butcher shop was demolished on July 3 in the Silwan neighborhood in East Jerusalem, where other residents continue to be threatened with demolition of their residences to clear the land for a religious tourist park. And a number of Palestinian families in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood in East Jerusalem continue to live with the threat of expulsion from their homes.

Photo credits: <https://bdsmovement.net/>



Examples of common items that are supposed to be resisted by the movement include HP, Soda Stream, Sabra, and Pillsbury.

To find more information go to <https://bdsmovement.net/> or bdslst.org.



On July 9, Israeli forces attacked hundreds of Palestinians who were rallying against an illegal Jewish outpost in the West Bank town of Beita, near Nablus. In this single military action, more than 370 people were wounded, including 31 hit by live ammunition.

These are just a few examples of Israeli state attacks against Palestinians, as Palestinian activism has become more intensive – and more unified – in 2021.

Such acts that violate Palestinians' human rights are part of a pattern that Amnesty International has documented and condemned, including in a June 24 report: (Cont. on next page)

Support H.R. 2590 (cont.)

Israeli police have committed a catalogue of violations against Palestinians in Israel and occupied East Jerusalem, carrying out a discriminatory repressive campaign including sweeping mass arrests, using unlawful force against peaceful protesters, and subjecting detainees to torture and other ill-treatment, during and after the armed hostilities in Israel and Gaza, Amnesty International said today...

"The evidence gathered by Amnesty International paints a damning picture of discrimination and ruthless excessive force by Israeli police against Palestinians in Israel and in occupied East Jerusalem," said Saleh Higazi, Deputy Director for the Middle East and North Africa at Amnesty International.

The role of activists in the U.S.

International solidarity with the cause of Palestinians has also been increasing significantly in the United States, including by the Black Lives Matter movement, as well as elsewhere. This solidarity takes many forms. Many of us in the United States who were involved in the southern Africa solidarity movement remember being told by representatives of the liberation movement that the most important role we can play was to organize in our own country against our government's policies that are strengthening the white-ruled governments there.

We hear the same from many Palestinian activists – that we Americans have a unique responsibility to work to cut U.S. military aid to Israel and to stop the support of U.S.-based companies and organizations that support the Israeli government and illegal settlers.

Focus on Congress: Lobby for Support H.R. 2590

The U.S. government has promised the Israeli government \$3.8 billion *each year* in military aid and missile defense through 2028.

Representative Betty McCollum of Minnesota has introduced legislation in three sessions of Congress to require that U.S. military aid not be used in certain ways that violate human rights of Palestinian children. According to the AFSC, "Since 2000, more than 10,000 Palestinian children in the West Bank have been arrested and held in Israeli military detention, where their rights to protection and due process are systematically violated."

McCollum's bill is a modest proposal, really; the concept is already part of U.S. foreign policy, in theory. A law introduced by Senator Patrick Leahy prohibits U.S. military assistance to foreign security force units that violate human rights with impunity. But this provision has never been applied to Israel, the largest recipient of U.S. military aid over recent decades.

McCollum's latest bill, introduced on April 15, 2021, has been expanded in several ways. H.R. 2590 aims to ensure that U.S. taxpayer funds used by the Israeli government will not be used (1) to support the military detention of Palestinian children, (2) for the unlawful seizure, appropriation, and destruction of Palestinian property or forcible transfer of civilians in the occupied West Bank, or (3) for further annexation of Palestinian land in violation of international law. This bill also increases U.S. government accountability by requiring annual reports by the State Department and the Comptroller General about the status of detention of children, forced seizure of land or evictions, and annexation, as well as an "assessment of the manner and extent to which these funds have directly or indirectly supported illegal Israeli settlement activity in the occupied West Bank," among other things.

As of mid-June, 26 other House members have co-sponsored McCollum's bill. More than 140 U.S. human rights, religious, peace and other organizations support the bill and are urging more House members to become co-sponsors.

Rep. Elissa Slotkin of Michigan's 8th district has not yet done so, but nor has she refused. This year, J Street, the "pro-Israel, pro-peace" Jewish organization, is supporting H.R. 2590, and J Street endorsed Slotkin in her 2018 and 2020 campaigns.

The Peace Education Center Board decided in June to send a letter to Rep. Slotkin on this issue. PEC Co-chair Nelson Brown asked Slotkin to become a co-sponsor of H.R. 2590 because of "the growing recognition that there can never be peace between Israelis and Palestinians unless there is support for Palestinian human rights. (The PEC letter can be seen here: <https://tinyurl.com/trpmduy>).

More letters to Rep. Slotkin are needed. You can write to her at 1210 Longworth House Office Building, Washington, DC 20515 or send an email via her website. If you don't have time to write a message, you can send a prepared message to the AFSC website (<https://tinyurl.com/3xedaw>).

More information about H.R. 2590 is available at <https://www.dci-palestine.org> and https://nwtac.dci-palestine.org/resources_on_hr2590.

STATEMENT OF THE PEACE EDUCATION CENTER CALLING ON THE UNITED STATES TO ADOPT AN EVENHANDED APPROACH TO SUPPORT A SETTLEMENT OF THE CONFLICT BETWEEN ISRAELIS AND PALESTINIANS

As the world watches in horror as casualties and destruction mount daily in Israel, on the West Bank and in Gaza, the time has come for the United States government to confront the fundamental causes of the violence that have plagued Palestine since the creation of Israel in 1948 and since the occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in 1967. The current spate of violence between Palestinians and Israelis highlights the failure of Israel -- with the tacit and sometimes open approval of the United States -- to seriously negotiate with Palestinians by accepting their right to territorial integrity and national identity.

Under both Democratic and Republican leadership, the United States has turned a blind eye to Israel's suppression of Palestinian cries for justice, whether peaceful or violent, by supplying it with an endless array of military weapons; by acceding to domestic pressure to support Israel no matter whatever violent measures it commits against Palestinians; by supporting peace plans that give Israel everything and the Palestinians hardly even token relief; and, by shielding Israel from world pressure at international forums, like the United Nations.

Most recently, President Trump, under the biased orchestration of his son-in-law, Jared Kushner, ignored evenhandedness in his so-called peace plan by giving Israel what it wanted, including recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital, and by offering the Palestinians only some supposed economic aid in return. So far, President Biden, in response to Israel's disproportionate use of force, has just stated that Israel has a "right to defend itself" without recognizing the right of Palestinians to struggle for their human rights in the face of Israeli intransigence to negotiate a just peace settlement.

The root cause of the current violence in Palestine stands as the failure of the right-wing Israeli government to negotiate in good faith with Palestinians either for some level of territorial and national integrity or for their inclusion in a bi-national state. Instead, this government believes it can restrain them forever in the confines of the Gaza Strip or in isolated pockets on the West Bank by brute military force with their meek acceptance of their fate. But as events show, there will never be peace without a just political settlement.

While the Peace Education Center condemns the use of violence by either side to resolve their conflict, we cannot ignore some real-world facts. One is the great disparity of force that can be utilized by Israel and by the Palestinians. Israelis have advanced American aircraft and sophisticated drones that can inflict sudden death at any moment. They also have an army with modern weapons of ground war, including tanks, artillery, and skilled snipers who can openly shoot to maim or to kill at will.

And what do the Palestinians have in contrast? The most sophisticated weapon they can muster are hundreds of small, homemade rockets, most of which an advanced Israeli air defense can shoot down before landing. They can also muster some assault rifles and bomb making material. Otherwise, on the open streets, Palestinian protesters can throw rocks or use slingshots. Sometimes, a few Palestinians can crack under the pressure of occupation and carry out individual acts of violence. The disparity in inflicting injury becomes obvious when you compare the death toll of Israelis and of Palestinians arising from their conflict: between 2008 and 2020, the United Nations has documented 251 Israeli deaths and 5,590 Palestinian deaths. The disparity in injuries is even greater.

STATEMENT OF THE PEACE EDUCATION CENTER CALLING ON THE UNITED STATES TO ADOPT AN EVENHANDED APPROACH TO SUPPORT A SETTLEMENT OF THE CONFLICT BETWEEN ISRAELIS AND PALESTINIANS (cont.)

While the Peace Education Center understands that Hamas and Palestinian leaders on the West Bank have not always acted wisely, we still must look at the overall responsibility for the current crisis. Although we call for Palestinians to adopt non-violent tactics to counter Israeli oppression, we cannot ignore certain realities. After years of relatively non-violent protest have offered no relief -- especially when the United States backs Israeli actions at every crucial moment -- resort to violence may seem the only available path for justice. But non-violence can work only when your opponent has a moral core that can be activated by non-violent resistance. We call on the United States and Israel to offer the Palestinians a real non-violent path to justice by recognizing that Palestinians must be offered something substantial to establish their territorial integrity and national identity. Then calls for non-violent resistance can find fertile ground. We urge Hamas in leaders on the West Bank to be ready to suspend violence for good-faith negotiations even if their most ambitious goals do not look realistic in the short term.

WHAT MUST THE UNITED STATES AND ISRAEL DO NOW

As a first step, Israel must call for a ceasefire and, as an act of good faith, announce an immediate partial lifting of the Gaza blockade. The United States must adopt an evenhanded policy supporting a political solution to conflict. The most effective pressure that the United States can bring would be to withhold American military weapons from Israel and to use other points of leverage to immediately work for the following measures:

- Call on Israel to stop all forced displacement of Palestinian families in the Sheikh Jarrah section of East Jerusalem and in all of the occupied Palestinian territories;
- Call on Israel to suspend the construction of Israeli settlements on the occupied territories;
- Call on Israel to lift the economic blockade on Gaza;
- The United States should stop opposing measures proposed in international bodies, like the United Nations, that criticize or penalize Israel for its human rights violations;
- The United States should support the right of Americans who oppose Israeli policies and actions to implement Boycott Divestment Sanctions (BDS) measures;
- The United States should push Israel to enter into serious negotiations with the Palestinians with the expectation that a separate Palestinian entity or single bi-national state would emerge.

Adopted by the Board of the Peace Education Center of Greater Lansing on May 20, 2021.



BDS resistance movement protesting HewlettPackard.

Letter to Rep. Elissa Slotkin

Honorable Elissa Slotkin,

For fifty years the Peace Education Center of the Greater Area has advocated for peace and social justice at home and abroad. This has included such activity as opposing the Vietnam War, ending excessive military spending, supporting the United Nations and working to end to the apartheid government of South Africa. In that spirit, the Peace Education Center asks you to support and cosponsor H.B. 2590 recently introduced by your colleague Rep. Betty McCollum and 13 cosponsors under the title of the "Defending the Human Rights of Palestinian Children and Families Living Under Israeli Military Occupation Act."

Under this legislation, Israel would be prohibited from using U.S. taxpayer dollars in the Occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem for: the military detention, abuse, or ill-treatment of Palestinian children in Israeli military detention; to support the seizure and destruction of Palestinian property and homes in violation of international humanitarian law; or, to extend any assistance or support for Israel's unilateral annexation of Palestinian territory in violation of international humanitarian law.

Under Israel's prolonged military occupation, millions of Palestinians are denied their basic rights. Since 2000, more than 10,000 Palestinian children in the West Bank have been arrested and held in Israeli military detention, where their rights to protection and due process are systematically violated. And since 2006, at least 12,767 Palestinians, including 5,700 children, have lost their homes under Israeli policies that fuel forced displacement and home demolitions in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

As we request your support, we ask you to consider the words of your colleague when she announced the introduction of this legislation: "U.S. assistance intended for Israel's security must never be used to violate the human rights of Palestinian children, demolish the homes of Palestinian families, or to permanently annex Palestinian lands. Peace can only be achieved by respecting human rights, especially the rights of children, and this includes the U.S. taking responsibility for how taxpayer-funded aid is used by recipient countries, Israel included. Congress must stop ignoring the unjust and blatantly cruel mistreatment of Palestinian children and families living under Israeli military occupation."

As the recent conflict between the Israeli government and the Palestinians in Gaza showed, there is a growing consensus among a wide swath of Americans that the Palestinian people deserve justice, equality, human rights and the right of self-determination. Already this legislation has received support from an unprecedented number of human rights organizations, as well as from Christian, Jewish, and Muslim organizations. This broad support for this legislation shows a growing recognition that there can never be peace between Israelis and Palestinians unless there is support for Palestinian human rights.

The Peace Education Center appreciates your past concerns for human rights given different injustices around the world. We respectfully request that you continue this concern by supporting and co-sponsoring H.B. 2590.

Sincerely,
Nelson A. Brown, Jr.,
For the Board of the Peace Education Center

Contact your Representatives

Senator Debbie Stabenow

202-224 4822

Hart Senate Office Building, Suite 731,
Washington, DC 20510-2204

www.stabenow.senate.gov/?p=contact

Senator Gary Peters

202-224-6221

Hart Senate Office Building, Suite 724,
Washington, DC 20510

www.peters.senate.gov/content/contact-gary

Rep. John Moolenaar

202-225-3561

117 Cannon House Office Bldg
Washington, DC 20515

<https://moolenaar.house.gov/contact/email>

Representative Tim Walberg

202-225-6276

2266 Rayburn House Office Bldg, Washington,
DC 20515

<http://walberg.house.gov/contact/>

Rep. Elissa Slotkin

202-225-4872

1531 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

www.slotkin.house.gov

Hiroshima 2021

by Terry Link

As I write this, U.S. House and Senate committees are working on mark-ups of the military spending budget for 2022. While the sheer scale of military funds in President Biden's military budget (\$753 billion) is absurd from my perspective, it is not substantially different from his predecessors. This clearly demonstrates how the Military-Industrial-Congressional-Complex has a stranglehold on lawmakers (at least a likely majority). Candidates for office are wary of being labeled "soft on defense." Perhaps nowhere is this more concerning than the continued increases in spending on nuclear weapons. We are, and have been, well beyond overkill supplies of these menacing tools of destruction since we dropped the first one on the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki 76 years ago this week. We could easily engulf the entire planet in a fireball. Yet more are needed?

What minds honestly believe this is rational? Will ten, twenty, or a hundred more of these make our potential opponents less likely to attack us? Launching another arms race instead of reducing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is true insanity. Reducing conflict comes from building trust, not accelerating mistrust. The United States and other nuclear powers need to scale back their armaments and, as the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons has come into force, abolish these weapons. We should be putting way more effort into reducing conflicts and building bridges to fight the global challenges facing the entire human family – pandemics, climate change, poverty, hunger, access to clean water and the other Sustainable Development Goals agreed to by ALL UN member states.

\$72.6 billion. That's how much the nine nuclear-armed states spent on their nuclear weapons in 2020...

during the worst pandemic in a century and when the treaty banning nuclear weapons became law, according to a new ICAN report. It's an inflation-adjusted increase of \$1.4 billion from last year.

ICAN (@nuclearban) | June 6, 2021

Credit: nukewatch.org

Throwing more and more money at nuclear weapon manufacturing and deployment robs our coffers of needed funds to solve climate change, to respond to coming pandemics, to end world poverty. It steals the attention of scientists and engineers away from developing solutions to those same sustainable development goals. The \$43 billion for nuclear weapons in 2022 is five times the entire budget of the U.S. Center for Disease Control.

Image Credit: <https://nukewatch.org>



Which is more likely: China or Russia attacking the United States because we've added no nuclear weapons to our arsenal? Or the possibilities that we will see another pandemic in our lifetime, and that climate change-induced natural disasters of flooding, violent storms, fires and drought will devastate our economy and drastically change our lives? How long can we expect people living on the edge of destitution to remain calm and passive?

Real human security will not be achieved with more and more weapons; it can only be achieved when we meet the global goals agreed to by ALL nations in 2015. We have a decade left to try and meet those goals. Investments of money, time, human energy, and talent are indispensable for success. It will take a long-term commitment to build trust among people and nations and to redirect military spending toward building healthy and peaceful communities with no one left behind. While the United Nations is not all its founders hoped it would become, it, or something like it, must rise to facilitate and connect the human family on our fragile planetary home. The weapons of war destroy not only human lives and artifacts; they irreparably damage the ecosystems that enable life to flourish. The lives of plants and animals that enable us to live here are innocent victims of our overconsumption. Time is running short. Let us redirect our energies and resources to peace, not war. This is the only home we have.