

# Abolish Militarism and War: Towards a Shared Vision of a Demilitarized World

Presented at the International Conference against US/NATO Military Bases,  
16-18 Nov 2018, Dublin, Ireland

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Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

Global Research, November 20, 2018

[Transcend Media Service](#) 19 November  
2018

*Dear Friends,*

*It is good to be here with you all. I would like to thank the organizers for inviting me to address the conference. Firstly I thank you all for your work for peace. It is good that we will have an opportunity in the next few days to get to know each other and together discuss what kind of a world we want to live in? There will be many different perspectives on this and the way forward, but let us agree to respect each other and to engage in deep listening and conversation no matter how hard and where the dialogue might take us!*

Let us be encouraged by the fact that we have made an important first step when we agree to enter into dialogue, and when we agree that peace is both the means and the great achievable gift. It would be wonderful too no matter what area of social/political change we work in, if we can unite on a shared vision of a demilitarized world and find strength in agreeing we will not limit ourselves to civilizing and slowing down militarism, but demanding its total abolition.

Some people might argue that peace is not possible in such a highly militarized world. However, I believe that peace is both possible and urgent. It is achievable when we each become impassioned about peace and filled with an ethic that makes peace our objective and we each put into practice our moral sense of political/social responsibility to build peace and justice.

To build peace we are challenged to reject the bomb, the bullet, and all the techniques of violence. Unfortunately, we are constantly bombarded with the glorification of militarism and war; therefore building a culture of peace and nonviolence will not be an easy task. We are hearing about the building of a European army and we are asked to accept austerity and budget cuts to our health, education, etc. whilst increasing money to our own armies and also European military expansion.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization-NATO, which should have been disbanded when the Warsaw Pact was dissolved, continue to carry out wars and proxy wars in many countries pushing towards the borders of Russia and resurrecting a cold war between the East and West. I believe that NATO should be disbanded and should be made accountable and make restitutions to the millions of people in countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and many others it has illegally attacked, invaded, destroyed. We will never be allowed by our

governments, or our mainstream media, to hear many of the stories of the lives of so many civilians killed by US/NATO forces. NATO forces have targeted and assassinated individuals and entire families.

It is to all our shame in the International community, that their illegal criminal acts of horror and bloodletting which embodies the comeback of barbarism, is allowed to continue. NATO should be brought before the International Criminal Court for war crimes.

It would be all too easy to point fingers and play the blame game but unless we all take responsibility for the highly dangerous militarised situation with which we are faced in the world today, things will not get better.

Ireland with the militarization of its Foreign and Defence Policy has been unfaithful to the Irish peoples' wish for a Neutral State and worse by being complicit in accommodating illegal wars. Ireland's peace activists have been peacefully protesting US military use of Irish airports whereby over two and a half million armed US troops have passed through Shannon Airport on their way to and from the US-led Afghan and Iraq wars. I believe Ireland should refuse permission to any further stopover and refueling facilities being granted to aeroplanes ferrying troops or munitions to the wars and also withdraw Irish participation from all NATO and EU military operations overseas.

Ireland is deeply admired in many countries and has a proud record in helping developing countries. Their role as mediators and peace negotiators is well known. I would like to propose that Ireland disband their army and focus their finance and people on developing their great expertise in the science of peacemaking through a Government Dept. of Peace.

Recommitting to its tradition of neutrality and multilateralism, placing ethics, morality and justice as core values at the heart of its foreign policy would send out a clear message of Irish Government rejecting the road of militarism and war and choosing the road of peace and reconciliation, both locally and internationally.

For our survival through the UN we need to move to General and Complete Disarmament - including nuclear weapons. This is not an impossible dream. I commend the Irish Government in their work at UN to work for Nuclear Disarmament. I believe we can take hope from Pope Francis statement after pointing out the dangers of nuclear weapons when he says,

'The threat of their use, as well as their very possession, is to be firmly condemned.'

And the Pope quotes as an example the

'historic vote at the UN the majority of the members of the international community determined that nuclear weapons are not only immoral, but also must be considered an illegal means of warfare.'

It is to be hoped that UK, Israel, USA and other nuclear armed states will begin to dismantle their nuclear weapons and help turn back the hands of the doomsday clock. Up to the end of 1961 at the United Nations general and complete disarmament was the aim of all governments. In a joint Soviet-United states statement of 20 Sep 1961 they stated,

'The goal of negotiations is to achieve agreement on a program which will ensure that disarmament is general and complete and war is no longer an instrument for settling international problems'.

Let us unite our voices to call for an end to enmity and war, and for President Trump and President Putin to join together with all world leaders in a World Peace Conference to work for an agreed Programme of General and Complete Disarmament. Such courageous leadership towards dialogue and disarmament would give hope to humanity.

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