

Let's End the Insanity of Colossal Military Spending During a Global Health Emergency

Imagine what could be achieved if just a portion of the money spent on military expenditures were pooled into a global fund, and redirected towards ending hunger and massively investing in public health systems.

By [Sonja Scherndl](#) and [Adam Parsons](#)
Global Research, April 01, 2021

Theme: [Global Economy](#), [Militarization and WMD](#)

All Global Research articles **can be read in 51 languages by activating the “Translate Website”** drop down menu on the top banner of our home page (Desktop version).

If nations had a referendum, asking the public if they want their taxes to go to military weapons that are more efficient in killing than the ones we currently have, or if they would prefer the money to be invested in medical care, social services, education and other critical public needs, what would the response be?

Probably the majority of people would not have to think long and hard, since for many life has become an endless struggle. Even in wealthy countries, the most basic social rights can no longer be taken for granted. Social services are increasingly being turned into commodities, and instead of helping ordinary people they must serve shareholders by providing a healthy profit margin.

The United States is a prime example, where seeing a dentist or any medical doctor is only possible if one has health insurance. Around [46 million Americans](#) cannot afford to pay for quality healthcare—and that is in the richest country of the world.

In less developed nations, a large proportion of people find it hard to access even the most basic resources to ensure a healthy and dignified life. One in nine of the world's population go hungry. And the Covid-19 pandemic has only exacerbated this crisis of poverty amid plenty, with the number of people facing acute hunger [more than doubling](#).

There are now 240 million people requiring emergency humanitarian assistance, while [over 34 million people](#) are already on the brink of starvation.

But the United Nations' funding appeals are [far from being met](#), condemning thousands to unnecessary deaths from hunger this year. With aid funding falling as humanitarian needs rise, aid agencies are being forced to cut back on life-saving services.

Does it make any sense for our governments to spend billions on defence while fragile health systems are being overwhelmed, and the world is facing its worst humanitarian crisis in generations?

Outrageously misplaced priorities

Global military spending continued to reach record levels in 2020, rising almost 4 percent in real terms to [US\\$1.83 trillion](#), even despite the severe economic contractions caused by the pandemic. The United States spends two-fifths of the world's total, more than the next ten countries combined, and still cannot afford to prevent 50 million of its own citizens suffering from food insecurity. Most shamefully, the United Kingdom is [massively boosting its arms budget](#)—the largest rise in almost 70 years, including a vast increase to its nuclear weapons stockpile—while cutting aid to the world's poorest by 30 percent.

Consider what a fraction of military budgets could achieve if that public money was diverted to real human needs, instead of sustaining the corrupt and profitable industry of war:

- Meeting Goals 1 and 2 of the Sustainable Development Goals— 'End poverty in all its forms everywhere' and 'Zero hunger'—would barely exceed **3 percent** of global annual military spending, according to the UN's [Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs](#).
- With the U.S. military budget of \$750 billion in 2020, it could **feed the world's hungry** and still spend twice as much on its military than China, writes peace activist [Medea Benjamin of CODEPINK](#).
- The annual nuclear weapon budget worldwide is **1,000 percent**—or 10 times—the combined budget of both the UN and the World Health Organisation (WHO), according to the [Global Campaign on Military Spending](#).
- Just **0.04 percent** of global military spending would have funded the WHO's initial Covid-19 Solidarity Response Fund, according to Tipping Point North South in its [Transform Defence report](#).
- It would cost only **0.7 percent** of global military spending (an estimated \$141.2 billion) to vaccinate all the world's 7.8 billion inhabitants against Covid-19, according to figures from [Oxfam International](#).

These opportunity costs highlight our outrageously misplaced priorities during an unprecedented global health emergency. The coronavirus pandemic has exposed just how ill-prepared we are to deal with real threats to our societies, and how our 'national security' involves a lot more than armies, tanks and bombs. This crisis cannot be addressed by weapons of mass destruction or personnel prepared for war, but only through properly funded healthcare and other public services that protect our collective human security.

It's time to reallocate bloated defence budgets to basic economic and social needs, as long enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human rights. [Article 25](#) points the way forward, underscoring the necessity of guaranteeing adequate food, shelter, healthcare and social security for all.

There is an imperative need for global cooperation to support all nations in recovering and rebuilding from the pandemic. The United Nations and its frontline agencies are critically placed to avert a growing 'hunger pandemic', and yet are struggling to receive even minimal funding from governments.

Imagine what could be achieved if just a portion of the money spent on military expenditures were pooled into a global fund, and redirected towards ending hunger and massively investing in public health systems, especially in the most impoverished and war-

torn regions.

The common sense of funding 'peace and development, not arms!' has long been proclaimed by campaigners, church groups and engaged citizens the world over. But it will never happen unless countless people in every country unify around such an obvious cause, and together press our public representatives to prioritise human life over pointless wars.

In the words of [arms trade campaigner Andrew Feinstein](#):

"Perhaps this is an opportunity. Let's embrace our global humanity, which is how we're going to get through this crisis. Let's put aside our obsession with enemies, with conflict. This is an opportunity for peace. This is an opportunity to promote our common humanity."

*

Note to readers: please click the share buttons above or below. Forward this article to your email lists. Crosspost on your blog site, internet forums. etc.

This article was originally published on [Share the World's Resources](#)

[Sonja Scherndl](#) is the campaigns coordinator at Share The World's Resources (STWR), a civil society organisation based in London, UK, with consultative status at the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

[Adam Parsons](#) is STWR's editor.

Featured image is from Share the World's Resources

The original source of this article is Global Research
Copyright © [Sonja Scherndl](#) and [Adam Parsons](#), Global Research, 2021

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: **[Sonja Scherndl](#)**
and **[Adam Parsons](#)**

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca
www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca