

Tackling the ‘Impossible’: Ending Violence

By [Robert J. Burrowes](#)

Theme: [Police State & Civil Rights](#)

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Whenever, in ordinary circumstances, the subject of violence comes up, most people throw up their hands in horror and comment along the lines that it is ‘in our genes’, ‘nothing can be done about it’ or other words that reflect the powerlessness that most people feel around violence.

It is true that violence is virtually ubiquitous, has a near-infinite variety of manifestations and, at its most grotesque (as nuclear war or run-away climate catastrophe), even threatens human extinction in the near-term.

Nevertheless, anyone who pays attention to the subject of violence in any detail soon discovers that plenty of people are interested in tackling this problem, even if it is ‘impossible’. Moreover, of course, at least some people recognize that while we must tackle each manifestation of violence, understanding the cause of violence is imperative if we are to successfully tackle its many manifestations at their source. To do all of this effectively, however, is a team effort. And hopefully, one day, this team will include all of us.

In the meantime, let me start by telling you a little about some of the people who are already working to end violence by tackling one or more of its many manifestations. These individuals are part of a worldwide network set up to focus on ending violence – ‘The People’s Charter to Create a Nonviolent World’ – and they have signed a pledge to do so.

Concerned about US government threats to Iran and Venezuela, several Charter signatories were part of one or both recent peace delegations to Iran and Venezuela respectively. These delegations were designed to open more lines of communication and to demonstrate solidarity with those who do not submit to US hegemony.

The 28-member US peace delegation to Iran from 25 February to 6 March 2019 included long-term nonviolent activists **Margaret Flowers**, **Kevin Zeese** and **David Hartsough**. Unfortunately for David, author of [Waging Peace: Global Adventures of a Lifelong Activist](#) and director of [Peaceworkers](#), his trip didn’t go as planned. If you would like to read a compelling account of his time in Iran with some wonderful Iranians, while learning something about what it means to be on the wrong end of US sanctions, you will find it here: [‘An American Casualty of U.S. Economic Sanctions on Iran’](#). Glad you got the lifesaving medical treatment from our Iranian friends that you needed David, despite the sanctions! And it is a tragedy that Iran has recently suffered even more, as a result of the devastating floods that have hit the country, with the sanctions cruelly denying them vital emergency assistance. See [‘Stop the ongoing U.S. economic terrorism against Iran and help its people!’](#)



People gather at the Venezuelan embassy in Washington, DC to prevent takeover by the opposition.
(Source: Popular Resistance)

In relation to Venezuela, a 13-member peace and solidarity delegation from North America landed in Caracas, Venezuela on the weekend of 9-10 March 2019. The delegation included leaders of antiwar groups from the US and Canada and, once again, Kevin Zeese and Margaret Flowers of 'Popular Resistance' and ['Clearing the Fog' podcasts](#). You can read an account of this delegation's findings in Kevin and Margaret's highly informative report ['Venezuela: US Imperialism Is Based On Lies And Threats'](#).

Another initiative to support Venezuelans was outlined in the article ['A Nonviolent Strategy to Defeat a US Military Invasion of Venezuela'](#).

Traveling widely to witness and demonstrate solidarity with those on the receiving end of US military violence, another long-term nonviolent activist, Kathy Kelly, recently wrote an article pointing out that ['Every War Is a War against Children'](#) in which she evocatively documented examples of what this means for those children living in the war zones we call Yemen and Afghanistan. In an earlier article, Kathy questioned the morality of those corporations - such as Lockheed Martin, Boeing, General Dynamics and Raytheon - that profit from the killing their weapons inflict. See ['Can We Divest from Weapons Dealers?'](#)

Environmental journalist **Robert Hunziker** continues to fearlessly research and truthfully document the ongoing assaults that humans are inflicting on Earth's biosphere. In his most recent article ['The Blue Ocean Event and Collapsing Ecosystems'](#), Robert straightforwardly explains the content of a recent interview of Dr. Peter Wadhams, the world's leading Arctic scientist. Robert notes that

'Currently, the Arctic is heating up about 4 times faster than the rest of the planet... the temp difference between the Arctic and the tropics is dropping precipitously... thus, driving the jet streams less... creating meandering jet

streams... in turn, producing extreme weather events throughout the Northern Hemisphere, especially in mid-latitudes where most of the world's food is grown.'

Robert also notes that the study of ancient ice cores by a team from the British Antarctic Survey, University of Cambridge and University of Birmingham found 'major reductions in sea ice in the Arctic' which will crank up (via temperature amplification as a result of no Arctic sea ice) Greenland regional temperatures 'by 16°C in less than a decade' with horrific implications for life on Earth. Thank you, Robert, for reporting what the corporate media won't touch and even many activists find too terrifying to seriously contemplate.

In Chile, **Pía Figueroa** continues her heavy involvement in efforts to network those committed to peace and nonviolence and to develop media channels that report the truth. Pía reports that

['Pressenza International Press Agency'](#), which celebrated its tenth anniversary last November 'in more than 40 places of the world', continues to advance its contribution 'with a journalism focused on peace and nonviolence, to a world in which all human beings have a place and their rights are fully respected, in a framework of disarmed and demilitarized societies, capable of re-establishing the ecological balance through governments of real and participatory democracy.'

Since attending the Media Forum organized in the city of Chongqing, China, by CCTV+ and CGTN, in October last year, Pía has been busy organizing the upcoming Latin-American Humanist Forum in Santiago with the objective of 'Building Convergences', as its slogan points out. It will be held on 10-12 May with the participation of many grassroots and social organizations involved in more than twenty networks of nonviolent action and inspired by the European Humanist Forum that took place in Madrid, Spain, in May 2018.

Anwar A. Khan was born into 'a liberal Muslim family in Bangladesh'. As a 16-year-old college student, he participated in the 'Bangladesh Liberation War of 1971, which resulted in horrendous loss of life, genocide against Bangladesh's intelligentsia and systematic rapes.' This experience taught him the nature of the US establishment as he was 'on the battle field along with so many friends of mine and Indian soldiers to fight back the obnoxious nexus of the Pakistani military regime and the Whitehouse establishment' to create Bangladesh. Khan Bhai went on to complete a post-graduate education, before embarking on a 43-year (so far) business career, involving many different levels of corporate engagement and which took him to many countries of the world, including Venezuela in 2010 where he met both **Hugo Chavez** and **Nicolás Maduro**.

He also writes regularly in his spare time and recently wrote an article highlighting the adverse impact of the lack of infrastructure under which many impoverished countries suffer, given the way in which the global economy functions to exploit them. In the article, he describes an inferno that started on the night of 20 February 2019 in a building at Chawkbazar, a 300-year-old Dhaka neighbourhood, 'where chemicals for making deodorants and other household uses were illegally stored'. The fire 'quickly spread to four nearby buildings where many people were trapped. Hundreds of firefighters rushed to the scene but traffic jams in the narrow streets held them up. It took almost 12 hours to bring the fire under control....' The horrific inferno claimed about 100 lives and more were injured. For the full account, see ['After Nimtali, now Chawkbazar inferno hell, a crisis of humanity'](#).

Commenting on the current project that she is organizing with friends, **Lori Lightning** outlines the rationale behind 'Bear Bones Parenting':

'There's no course or exam to pass to become a parent, and most try to figure this out once a parent, and usually in an exhausted overwhelmed state. Bedtimes, meals, chores, and healthy open communication all become a task without a trusted framework in place.

'Based on 51 years of combined wisdom as educators, counselors, health practitioners, moms, step moms and foster moms, Bear Bones Parenting offers an intuitive formula to demystify the basics of parenting and a workbook with tools for reflection and wellness practices to take you actively through day to day living no matter where you are at in your life. You dedicate 15 minutes a day and in trade stop being overwhelmed. A "do it yourself" workbook filled with tools to turn life into what you envision for yourself and your family.

'Our cast of puppets help to inspire playful reflection on our children's temperaments and our own. Eventual creation of short videos will be easily accessible for busy parents and provide some examples of how things typically play out with temperaments and inspiration of the Bear way, which is curious, intuitive, firm and loving.

'We hope that BBP can help reduce parental stress and frustration so there is time to connect in joy and curiosity with our children and foster their independence.'

For more information, you can contact Lori at this email address: <[BearBonesParenting@gmail.com](mailto: BearBonesParenting@gmail.com)>

Professor Mazin Qumsiyeh is volunteer Director of [The Palestine Institute for Biodiversity and Sustainability \(PIBS\)](#) and the [Palestine Museum of Natural History \(PMNH\)](#) but he is also actively engaged in the Palestinian struggle for liberation from Israeli occupation. As he evocatively noted in a recent Easter reflection:

'This is the tenth Easter I celebrate after returning to Palestine in 2008. When we native Christian Palestinians have a few moments to meditate and reflect in this season, we reflect that some 2.5 billion human beings believe in a message that originated with a Palestinian baby born in a manger here and was crucified for being the first revolutionary Palestinian to push for caring for the sick and the poor.

'We reflect on the real message of Jesus, a message of love and coexistence. The harsh reality on the ground reminds us of our responsibility to shape a better future.

'We are hopeful because we take a long view of history. Some 150,000 years ago, humans migrated from Africa using Palestine as the passage way to Western Asia and then the rest of the world. 12,000 years ago, this area became the center of development for agriculture (the Fertile Crescent). This was where we humans first domesticated animals like goats and donkeys and plants like wheat, barley, chickpeas, and lentils. This transformation allowed our ancestors time to evolve what we now call "civilization". Hence, the first writings, the first music, and art, and the first thoughts of deities. From our Aramaic alphabet came the Latin, Arabic, Syriac, and Hebrew alphabets. Aramaic was the language of Jesus and much of our current Palestinian Arabic is still Aramaic words.'

Mazin continues to travel regularly, lecturing about initiatives of the museum but also about the political reality in Palestine. If you would like to volunteer to assist the museum's projects, or to donate money, books, natural history items or anything else that would be useful, you are welcome to contact Mazin and his colleagues at info@palestinature.org.

Finally, we are deeply saddened to report the passing of **Tom Shea**, a long-time stalwart in the struggle for a better world and one of the original team of individuals who launched '[The People's Charter to Create a Nonviolent World](#)' on 11 November 2011. We include below the testament of his great friend and fellow nonviolent activist, **Leonard Eiger**:

'For Tom Shea, Peace WAS the Way

'My dear friend and fellow Ground Zero member Tom Shea passed away peacefully in the early morning hours of April 3rd surrounded by his family.

'Earlier in his life Tom had been a Jesuit, a high school teacher, and had started an alternative high school and Jesuit Volunteer Corp: Midwest. He had also been involved in social justice issues on the national level with the Jesuits. Ground Zero member Bernie Meyer remembers Tom with great fondness, from being a student at St. Ignatius High School in Cleveland where Tom was teaching, to resisting together at Ground Zero many years later.

'Tom was 47 when he left Cleveland for Traverse City, Michigan in 1977. There he met his partner Darylène, and they were inseparable from then on. Together, they participated in the Nuclear Freeze movement, and were part of the Michigan Peace Team. They traveled to New York for the second Conference on Disarmament in 1982. They protested both the first Gulf War and the war in Iraq. They also engaged in war tax resistance.

'At Darylène's suggestion, they attended a course in conflict mediation in the early '80s at a time when there was little written on the subject. That experience led them to a course taught by Quakers at Swarthmore College in 1986. In 1990 Tom and Darylène founded the five-county Conflict Resolution Service in Northern Michigan and trained the first group of volunteer mediators. Their mission was to promote peace and civility in the community through the use of mediator guided dialogue. In the early days of the program, volunteers met in church basements and around kitchen tables to train, role play and share experiences. They would travel to the homes of people needing mediation, focusing on resolving family and neighborhood conflicts.

'Tom and Darylène moved to Snoqualmie, Washington in 2007 to spend more time with Darylène's children. Tom got involved in community issues and continued his war tax resistance work. You could find him every April 15th, in front of the local post office, offering tax resistance information.

'I was still leading a social justice ministry at the Snoqualmie United Methodist Church when one day Tom called the church office and asked who was doing social justice work in the area. We connected immediately due to common work and friends. Soon, Tom and I were making the pilgrimage together across the water to Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action, and the rest (as they say) is history.

'I have spent countless hours with Tom and Darylène, discussing world affairs and working together on strategies and tactics for our work with Ground Zero. Tom and Darylène have been inseparable as both life partners and co-conspirators for peace. Tom once said that Darylène is like a Jesuit herself: "Jesuits are taken as very scholarly people and she's very scholarly."

'In addition to working on media and communications for Ground Zero, and planning vigils and nonviolent direct actions at the Bangor Trident nuclear submarine base, Tom put himself on the line many times, often entering the roadway blocking traffic, both on the County and Federal sides, symbolically closing the base and risking arrest. Tom also created street theatre scripts that have been used during vigils at the submarine base to entertain and educate people.

'Robert Burrowes, who cofounded 'The People's Charter to Create a Nonviolent World', said that "Tom was one of the true legends in my life. A long-standing symbol of, and nonviolent fighter for, everything that could be in our world." When all is said and done, Tom's life can be summed up by A.J. Muste: "There is no way to peace. Peace is the way."

'We will be scattering some of Tom's ashes (per his wishes) at Ground Zero Center during our August Hiroshima-Nagasaki weekend of remembrance and action.

'I invite you to honor Tom's memory by supporting the work of the [National War Tax Resistance Coordinating Committee](#). There are many ways we can engage in war tax resistance in the context of a broad range of nonviolent strategies for social change.'

While diminished by the passing of Tom, the Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action continues 'to explore the meaning and practice of nonviolence from a perspective of deep spiritual reflection, providing a means for witnessing to and resisting all nuclear weapons, especially Trident. We seek to go to the root of violence and injustice in our world and experience the transforming power of love through nonviolent direct action.' You can read about their ongoing efforts on their website, [Ground Zero](#), which also features a '[Current Action Alert: Stop the "Low-Yield" Trident Warhead!](#)'

Each of the individuals mentioned above is part of the ongoing and steadily expanding effort to end the violence in our world. They refuse to accept that violence cannot be ended, and each has chosen to focus on working to end one or more manifestations of violence, according to their particular interests. If you would like to join these people, you are welcome to sign the online pledge of '[The People's Charter to Create a Nonviolent World](#)'.

If your own interest is campaigning on a peace, climate, environment or social justice issue, consider doing it strategically. See [Nonviolent Campaign Strategy](#).

If your focus is a defense or liberation struggle being undertaken by a national group, consider enhancing its strategic impact. See [Nonviolent Defense/Liberation Strategy](#).

If your preference is addressing the climate and environmental catastrophes systematically, consider participating in '[The Flame Tree Project to Save Life on Earth](#)'.

If you would like to tackle violence at its source, consider revising your parenting in accordance with '[My Promise to Children](#)'. If you want the evidence to understand why this is so crucial, see '[Why Violence?](#)' and '[Fearless Psychology and Fearful Psychology: Principles and Practice](#)'.

If you are aware enough to know that you are not dealing effectively with our deepening crisis, consider doing the personal healing necessary to do so. See '[Putting Feelings First](#)'.

It may be that ending human violence is impossible, as many believe. But there are a great number of people around the world who do not accept this and who are struggling, relentlessly, to end violence before it ends us. What about you?

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Featured image: Activists gather in front of the Venezuelan embassy in Washington, DC in March, 2019.

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