

Video: “The Criminalization of War”. Tun Mahathir Mohamad and the Voice of Our Children. “Criminalize War Clubs”

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[This video was produced in 2013.]

As the anti-War movement continues to lose ground in the West due to widespread public support for the illegal wars of the Obama administration, an innovative new approach emerges from SouthEast Asia: the creation of student-run organizations designed to energize youth around the concept of criminalizing war. Find out more about this idea in this week’s GRTV Backgrounder.

They say that big ideas start from humble beginnings. In the pantheon of ideas, perhaps there is none bigger than the quest to criminalize war. The concept itself is difficult for many to process at first. It does not mean to uphold some mere code of war conduct, making certain atrocities committed during times of war punishable as “war crimes,” as in the Geneva Convention. Instead, the concept of criminalizing war seeks to make warfare itself a crime, punishable as an offense no matter when or how it is waged or under what pretext.

For many in the anti-war movement in the Western world, completely demoralized by the utter abandonment of the movement by many on the pro-war left who are unwilling or unable to criticize Obama’s avid pro-war policies, the idea of criminalizing war will seem a pipe dream, no more realistic than the idea of stopping all violence in the world or making everyone a millionaire. This is precisely the problem. The long-time activists and campaigners have become so disillusioned that they no longer even try to implement the changes they would really like to see take place in the world. The weight of their

experiences has taught them to be grateful for small advances here and there, and to expect that big changes can never happen.

In stark contrast to the jaded views of older generations stands the idealism of youth, an idealism that the older generation, predictably enough, tends to dissuade by urging those youth to “grow up” and “face reality.” However, late last year the first seeds of a new anti-war movement were planted in Malaysia, a movement that seeks to shape the world in the image of that ideal society not by dissuading youthful idealism, but by fostering it.

The concept was unveiled at the [International Conference on War-Affected Children](#) which took place at the Putra World Trade Centre on November 22nd last year. Attended by dignitaries including former Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad and current PM Najib Razak, the event sought to draw attention to the plight of children in war-torn countries around the world.

The event also saw the launch of a new initiative by the Kuala Lumpur Foundation to Criminalize War. Called “Criminalise War Clubs,” the aim is to encourage the development of independent, student-run organizations around the idea of criminalizing war. The organization’s charter was formally signed by the Prime Minister and other dignitaries, and the first two chapters of what is planned to be a global phenomenon were started with a reading of the charter.

The charter calls for wars of aggression to be criminalized, for states and governments to protect children in armed conflicts, and for banning the participation of children in wars.

In an exclusive interview with Global Research TV, former Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad talked about the clubs, and what they hope to achieve.

The clubs are just one program spearheaded by the [Kuala Lumpur Foundation to Criminalise War](#), the non-governmental organization founded by Mahathir Mohamad in 2007. Its other initiatives include the [Kuala Lumpur War Crimes Commission](#), comprised of scholars, lawyers and high-ranking officials from around the world, and the Kuala Lumpur War Crimes Tribunal, which [successfully prosecuted](#) George Bush, Dick Cheney, and others last year for their participation in war crimes in the war on terror.

Last November I talked to G.S. Kumar, the Editor of Criminalise War, about Mahathir Mohamad’s vision, and the promise that initiatives like the Criminalise War Clubs offer.

There is, of course, no guarantee that initiatives like these will pay off in the future. Whether or not human civilization will ever be able to envision a way to resolve their differences without recourse to war is a question that has yet to be definitively answered. But if we do not continue to pose that question, then surely no answer will be possible. And given the stakes of the conflicts raging across the globe today, and the possibility of nuclear war, or war waged with even more advanced technologies, the need to answer this question has never been greater.

To be sure, there is a vast chasm between the world we currently live in and one in which war itself is outlawed. No one is pretending otherwise. But it is clear at this point that if that ideal is ever to be realized, it will not be presided over by the current generation of disillusioned cynics in the burnt-out wreckage of today’s demoralized anti-war movement, but by a generation yet untouched by that disillusionment.

If it is indeed true that big ideas have humble beginnings, then it would be harder to think of a bigger idea, or a more humble origin.

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