

Science for Peace

March 25, 2024

President's Column



Dear Members,

In this newsletter I want to bring your attention to three articles recently published in mainstream media. These articles deal with two issues that are highly relevant to the goals of Science for Peace: The abolition of nuclear weapons, and the reduction of militarism.

The first article was published on March 8 as a set of Opinion Pieces by the New York Times online. In the Introduction, the Opinion Editor states “The threat of nuclear war has dangled over humankind for much too long. We have survived so far through luck and brinkmanship. But the old, limited safeguards that kept the Cold War cold are long gone. Nuclear powers are getting more numerous and less cautious. We’ve condemned another generation to live on a planet that is one grave act of hubris or human error away from destruction without demanding any action from our leaders. That must change”.

The first Opinion Piece in the NYT article, by W.J.Hennigan, states: “If it seems alarmist to anticipate the horrifying aftermath of a nuclear attack, consider this: The United States and Ukraine governments have been planning for this scenario for at least two years. In the fall of 2022, a U.S. intelligence assessment put the odds at 50-50 that Russia would launch a nuclear strike to halt Ukrainian forces if they breached its defense of Crimea. Preparing for the worst, American officials rushed supplies to Europe. Ukraine has set up hundreds of radiation detectors around cities and power plants, along with more than 1,000 smaller hand-held monitors sent by the United States”. This Opinion Piece includes a very detailed description of what an explosion of a 10-kiloton modern nuclear bomb would look like, and it includes a time-line, very impressive graphics, and a recording of the sounds that would be produced by the explosion.

The opinion piece displays a description of the impact of the nuclear explosion on the people living nearby and on the local and global environment. There is also an interactive graphic showing the changes in the number of nuclear warheads in possession of the nuclear-armed countries from 1945 to 2023. Hennigan then discusses the potential use of “tactical” nuclear bombs, which are less powerful than city-destroying hydrogen bombs, and therefore considered more “usable”, and less likely to trigger a lethal response. It is estimated that Russia currently possesses about 2,000 of these bombs. Finally, the article presents a study that calculated the impact of a “limited nuclear war” using 100 Hiroshima-size bombs, which represents less than 1 percent of the global nuclear arsenal. The study concluded that “an estimated 27 million people could immediately die, and as many of 255 million may starve within two years”.

The second article, written by Andre Mayer was published online by the CBC on March 9. The article describes how the ultra-rich are preparing for a global war (presumably a nuclear one). It turns out that extremely wealthy people like Mark Zuckerberg, the CEO of Meta, are building fortified compounds that include bunkers with extra-thick concrete walls. The cost of Zuckerberg’s compound is estimated at \$100 million. The article quotes Brian Camden, the president of Hardened Structures, a Virginia-based company that builds multimillion dollar fortified homes and bomb shelters. Camden says “work has been steady for years, but that he has seen a major uptick in the last few months”. Another company from California told CBC news that applications for fortified houses are up over 2,000 percent year over year. Furthermore, the article says that the ultra-rich are not only buying fortified houses but also military-grade vehicles.

At the end the article quotes an essay published by the Guardian in 2022, where Douglas Rushkoff, a technology pundit, talks about meeting with ultra-wealthy people who wanted to pick his brain about how to prepare for “the event”. From the kind of questions he received in the meeting, Rushkoff concluded:” Their extreme wealth and privilege served only to make them obsessed with insulating themselves from the very real and present danger of war, climate change, rising sea levels, mass migrations, global pandemics, nativist panic and resource depletion. For them, the future of technology is about only one thing: escape from the rest of us”. The truth is, however, that this pathetic individualism displayed by the ultra-rich is useless. It is impossible to escape from global catastrophes. Their wealth could be better spent in stopping climate change and nuclear war.

The third article I want to refer to was published by The Guardian on February 13. It reports that, according to the International Institute of Strategic Studies, global defence spending increased by 9% to a record \$2.2tn during 2023. This record military spending has been fuelled by the wars in Ukraine and Gaza. The US remains by far the largest military spender, with a total budget of \$905.5bn in 2023, more than the next 15 countries combined.

Together, the three articles discussed above, portray a sad and alarming picture of the world. However, at Science for Peace we believe that if enough people fight together against this state of world affairs, this dangerous situation can be reversed. There are numerous examples in the past showing that this is possible.


On March 13th, Science for Peace hosted an excellent presentation by Jonatham Kuttab, a Palestinian Lawyer. The title of his talk was “Palestine: Is there a role for non-violent action? The video with Jonathan’s presentation can be found at our website, scienceforpeace.org.

Jorge Filmus
President
Science for Peace

Recent Events and Publications

SCIENCE FOR PEACE
PEACE AND CONFLICT LECTURES, WINTER 2024


DR. JONATHAN KUTTAB ON:
**PALESTINE:
IS THERE A
ROLE FOR
NON-VIOLENT
ACTION?**



**WEDNESDAY
MARCH 13
5:00-6:30 PM ET**

Location (Hybrid)
In-person at the Paul Cadario Conference Centre, University College at U of T, and on Zoom

Registration
In Person:
<http://tinyurl.com/mr3pfnsf>
Zoom:
<http://tinyurl.com/4b73ktht>



Jonathan Kuttab is an international human rights attorney and author who lives in East Jerusalem. He was the head of the legal committee that negotiated the Cairo Agreement of 1994 between Israel and the PLO.

He is the co-founder of several important organizations that are committed to human rights protection or non-violent action: the Palestinian human rights group Al-Haq, Sabeel in Jerusalem and North America, and Non-violence International, with its headquarters in Philadelphia. He is also President of Holy Land Trust. He is the author of *Beyond the Two-State Solution*.



The conflict in Ukraine two years later

It has been two years since Russian forces crossed the internationally recognized borders of Ukraine in what Vladimir Putin coined a “special military operation”. Science for Peace, while recognizing that the invasion was not unprovoked, none the less denounced the resort to violence by the Russian state as completely unacceptable.

[Continue reading](#)

Palestine: Is there a role for non-violent action?

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