

Moving beyond a world dominated by militarism and war is not difficult; it only requires a creative change in thinking and behaviour starting with a positive vision of how we would like the world to be.

Where you can get more information and resources

There is a web page with information about Women say NO to War at www.converge.org.nz/pma/8mar06.htm - the page includes a link to the international 'Women's Call for Peace: An Urgent Appeal' which you can sign on-line. The 'Women's Call for Peace' begins:

"We, the women of the United States, Iraq and women worldwide, have had enough of the senseless war in Iraq and the cruel attacks on civilians around the world. We've buried too many of our loved ones. We've seen too many lives crippled forever by physical and mental wounds. We've watched in horror as our precious resources are poured into war while our families' basic needs of food, shelter, education and health care go unmet. We've had enough of living in constant fear of violence and seeing the growing cancer of hatred and intolerance seep into our homes and communities. This is not the world we want for ourselves or our children. With fire in our bellies and love in our hearts, we women are rising up - across borders - to unite and demand an end to the bloodshed and the destruction."

For information about the 'war on terrorism', the latest excuse to justify increased military spending, and suggestions of better ways to reduce the risk of terrorism, see the 'September 11: the day the world changed?' leaflet at www.converge.org.nz/pma/worldchange.pdf

Information about NZ weapons related production and exports is available on the No WARP! web page at www.converge.org.nz/pma/nowarp.htm

This leaflet is part of 'Saying NO to militarism and war', a joint project of Peace Movement Aotearoa and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) Aotearoa section. Information about WILPF is available at www.converge.org.nz/pma/wilpf or PO Box 2054, Wellington.

For information about Peace Movement Aotearoa, the national networking peace organisation, about No WARP! and about the 'Saying NO to militarism and war' project, see the contact details below.



Peace Movement Aotearoa, PO Box 9314, Wellington.
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Women



Say NO to War

This year, on International Women's Day, 8 March, women around the world again joined together to say YES to peace and NO to war, part of the longstanding and ongoing tradition of women coming together across national and other artificial boundaries to demand an end to militarism and war.

There are many good reasons to oppose militarism and war, and this leaflet provides a summary of some of them.

Militarism is the policy of maintaining a strong military organisation in aggressive preparedness for war and comes from the belief that violence is an acceptable way to resolve conflict. It is an extraordinarily harmful and dominant ideology; a way of thinking with unacceptable and unsustainable human and environmental costs - all the time, not just in times of war.

Every day, on average, twenty nine thousand children under the age of five die from mainly preventable causes, including lack of access to adequate food, clean water and basic medicines.

This is one of the prices paid, or 'collateral damage' as some like to call it, for maintaining combat forces in a perpetual state of readiness around the world.

The most visible cost of militarism is the vast amount of public funding that goes into maintaining combat ready armed forces - every dollar of military spending is a dollar taken away from socially useful expenditure.

Global military expenditure in 2005, the most recent figure available, was more than **one thousand, one hundred and eighteen billion US dollars** - on average, more than \$3 billion (US) every day.

- global spending on official development assistance was \$106.5 billion (US), around 9.5% of global military expenditure;
- to provide clean water for 2.6 billion people and save an estimated 4,000 lives each day would cost just \$7 billion (US) - less than three days of global military expenditure;
- less than twenty five days of global military expenditure is all it would take each year to meet the additional cost of providing access to adequate food, clean water, safe sewers, basic health care, reproductive health care for women, and basic education for everyone around the world.

NZ government military expenditure this year is just over **\$2 billion** (NZ), on average more than \$5.5 million every day.

- one in five children here lives in a family with an income below the poverty line;
- official NZ development assistance this year is around 17% of the level of military expenditure.

Unfortunately, the obscene level of military spending is not the only cost of militarism and war. In war, the other costs are obvious: physical and psychological injury, loss of life and human potential, destruction and toxic pollution of the environment, and the lethal legacy of weapons - such as landmines, cluster bombs, unexploded munitions and shells, and depleted uranium ammunition - which go on killing for years after a war has ended.

In peacetime, military forces consume vast amounts of non-renewable resources - both fuel, and metals which are used to make weapons and

machines for the sole purpose of blowing them up. Scientific knowledge and other human resources are wasted on researching and developing new ways to kill and maim. The physical environment is destroyed by military training, and by toxic wastes from weapons production and the operation of military equipment and machinery.

Every stage of the production of nuclear weapons causes sickness and death as well as radioactive contamination of the environment: from uranium mining, re-processing of radioactive materials, manufacturing of the nuclear warheads, to the ultimate insanity - nuclear bomb testing. Most uranium mining and all nuclear weapons testing has taken place on land stolen from indigenous peoples - their homelands and food gathering areas have been turned into radioactive wastelands.

The establishment of military bases always results in an increase in the overall level of violence, prostitution, social dislocation and the distortion of local economies in whichever society it occurs.

Militarism, the way of thinking that 'might is right', actively prevents the exploration of peaceful means of resolving conflict. The resources put into peaceful resolution of conflict are a miniscule fraction of those put into armed forces around the world.

Military preparedness does not enhance human security in any way, instead it endangers us all

Women are disproportionately harmed by militarism and war. In war, women are raped and forced into sexual slavery as a deliberate tactic; and 'domestic' violence increases dramatically in and around war zones. United Nations agencies suggest that around 80% of all refugees are women, and their children, fleeing from armed conflict.

In peacetime, women are disproportionately affected by the loss of social services as resources are diverted into armed forces, and by the increase in violence around military bases and training exercises.