

Position Paper: Violent Military Action (War, Drone & Nuclear Strikes)

Introduction

FCLNY opposes war as part of a consistent life ethic that actively opposes all types of violence but particularly the state sanctioned lethal violence of war, abortion, assisted dying, capital punishment, and unethical scientific research on human beings. As author and consistent life ethic proponent Wendell Berry writes in "[The Failure of War](#)", "we cling to the hopeless paradox of making peace by making war." Governments and militaries dehumanize war's victims by referring to "targets", "collateral damage" and "acceptable losses" to change public perspective, gain support, and soften the blow. The cost of war extends beyond the loss of human life into financial, environmental, social, and political costs that are essentially immeasurable.

According to [Just War Theory](#), military force must discriminate between military personnel and civilians and must not cause so much harm as to outweigh the good. Most use of nuclear weapons fail to meet either of these requirements. Reduction of nuclear arsenals must be at the center of efforts to eliminate the violence of war. However, according to some government bodies and the Vatican, the globalization and technological sophistication of weapons violate this Just War principle, thereby making war unacceptable and the Just War theory obsolete.

Impact

The impact of war's violence is unknowable. At the time of this writing, there are nine [wars](#) raging across the world including in Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, and Libya. Fatalities range from 2,200 in 2019 in Libya to between 650,000-2.4 million since 2015 in Iraq, whereas the United States has had almost 7,000 casualties since 2000. In [2019](#), U.S. military spending was almost \$719 billion with projected expenditures nearing \$906 billion by [2030](#). This astounding cost detracts from much needed humanitarian services and social programs for the poor.

While the financial costs of war are staggering, the impact of war on women and children is more so. Throughout history, women have paid the high price of war through their bodies. [Exploited](#) through military brothels, sex camps, prostitution, trafficking and increased domestic violence during war time, women's wounds go unacknowledged. Meanwhile, hundreds of thousands of children as young as eight years old are forced through abduction to enter military life or coerced to do so by poverty, lack of opportunity or military conflict in their region. They are used as spies, sex slaves and suicide bombers and they suffer malnutrition, mental illness, and life-long physical injuries.

Women are [participating](#) in military conflict in unprecedented number. While organizations that support peaceful alternatives to conflict feel that women and other

minority identities are demeaned by participation in war, women make up 20% of those now serving in the U.S. Armed Forces. They are [subject](#) to shunning by their male counterparts and vulnerable to harsh field conditions that do not accommodate needs specific to females. According to a report by [ABC News](#), in 2019, there were 7,825 reports of sexual assault, primarily filed by women ages 17-24 and the Department of Defense acknowledges that, as in civilian life, sexual assault incidents are greatly unreported. Women worry that a report could damage their reputations and careers.

Solution

While the solution to violent military action may seem unattainable, there are measurable actions the countries of the world can take to reduce the likelihood of armed conflict, particularly those using nuclear weapons. National security policies must be developed to address inevitable conflict of national interests and “careful and intensive” diplomacy is necessary. FCLNY advocates the nuclear reduction and nonproliferation strategy suggested by Rehumanize International in its white paper, [“Toward the Abolition of Strategic Nuclear Weapons”](#). The strategy entails an initial 50% reduction in nuclear arsenals around the world to build mutual trust and later an additional reduction by 1/3 with a focus on those weapons with the greatest destructive capacities. Other strategies include lowering nuclear readiness to ease tensions felt by non-nuclear countries, revising nuclear doctrine and military law giving military personnel permission to refuse orders to deploy weapons against unauthorized locations such as city-centers. (FCLNY is grateful to Rehumanize International for the development and use of their white paper).

De-objectification of women and girls’ initiatives must become inherent in military training and a hands-off mandate must be incorporated in all nations’ rules of engagement. Strong international consequences should be implemented against military personnel who commit sexual assault or use children as part of their militaries.

Conclusion

The violence of war is immeasurable and its total impact unknowable. The euphemisms “targets”, “collateral damage” and “acceptable losses” cannot hide the price paid in human lives to wage war for the sake of creating peace. Women and children bear the harsh brunt of violence in war through sexual exploitation and voluntary or forced service. The solution to war must center on strong national security policy, diplomacy and the gradual but radical reduction of nuclear arms arsenals. De-objectification of women and girls’ bodies is necessary to protect them against sexual exploitation and strong consequences against sexual assault and child soldiers must be implemented as rules of engagement.

Did You Know?

According to a 2020 study funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York, 37 million people have been [displaced](#) during the post-9/11 Global War on Terror. Women and

children make up most war refugees and, in addition to loss of home, any existing financial stability and community, experience a critical loss of public health services including basic health care, immunizations and safety surveillance systems.

The consistency of US Senator Diane Feinstein is instructive. She both promoted a woman's right to abortion and also lead the advocacy efforts to give women the right to be combatants in war.

Resources

Berry, W (2001).The Failure of War, Yes, Solutions Journalism. Wendell Berry: The Failure of War - Yes! Magazine

Carnegie Corporation of New York (2020, Dec.), The True Cost of War: Displacement, Airstrike Death Tolls & the Political Camouflage of Military Contractors. The True Costs of War: Civilian Displacement, Airstrike Death Tolls, and the Political Camouflage of Military Contractors | Arab Region Transitions | Carnegie Corporation of New York

Dever, M. (2019, Mar.). With Historic Number of Women in Uniform, the Vet Community is About to Change. Military News, Military.com

Duffin, E. (2020). U.S. Military Spending 2019, Statista

Duffin, E. (2020).U.S. Defense Outlays and Forecasts 2030, Statista

Jones, J., Whitehead, J. and Murphy, A. Toward the Abolition of Strategic Nuclear Weapons. Rehumanize International, (rehumanizeintl.org)

Thompson, M. (2015, June). Measuring Wars Impact on Women. Time Magazine.

Torres, E. (2020, Aug.) Military Sexual Assault Victims say the System is Broken, ABC News. (go.com)

Uniteforsight. Women, Children, War and Health. Maternal and Child Health Certificate (uniteforsight.org)

World Population Review (2020). Countries Currently at War, (worldpopulationreview.com)