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A message to our Ploughshares community: COVID-19 update

COVID-19 is proving to be a great test as we try to adapt to a new reality, especially now that spring is here and summer is just around the corner. With self-isolation these days, whether working from home, schooling at home, losing or being laid off from a job, or just for safety, many people are facing some mental strain, anxiety, or stress. According to *Psychology Today*, keeping healthy means setting a rock solid foundation in place for basic health needs. The four pillars that support this foundation and help with emotion regulation are 1) sleep hygiene, 2) nutrition, 3) physical activity, and 4) social support. These pillars address our basic needs and are a good starting point for coping strategies. Many are also using this time to pursue a hobby or something they've always wanted to learn, such as meditation to relax. Just stepping outside to enjoy the sunshine also helps lift one's spirit. However you are coping, we send our heartfelt thoughts and best wishes to you.

As we reported last month, most of our upcoming events are on hold for now, until we hear more from all levels of government about when social distancing will end. Based on the City of Calgary's recent announcement extending the cancellation of all public events to August 31, 2020, we are saddened to announce the **cancellation** of our annual **Floating Lantern Peace Ceremony**, which was scheduled for Saturday, August 8 at Olympic Plaza. This annual event signifies our desire for a peaceful society and a world free from violence, especially the ultimate threat of nuclear weapons. Although this year's ceremony is cancelled, please take the time to read an essay on page 5 from Gen Matsuzaka, a grade 9 student in Calgary. For the past six years, Gen has attended the Floating Lantern Peace Ceremony and reflects on the significance of the lives lost during the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

If you need to reach us, please email us at office@ploughsharescalgary.ca or call the church at 403 283 3301 and leave a message for us.

We will only be able to return calls with an Alberta area code.

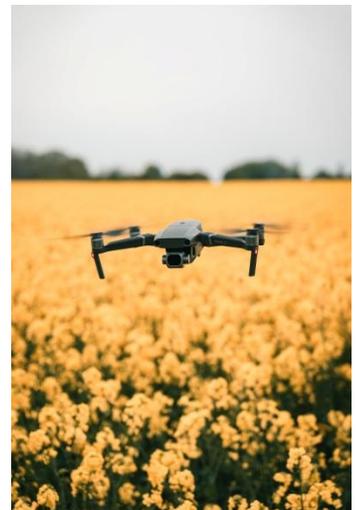


- ❖ On April 6, 2020, former Senator **Doug Roche** wrote an opinion piece for *The Hill Times*, supporting U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' appeal to warring parties around the world to lay down their weapons in support of the bigger battle against COVID-19. Roche argued that Guterres' appeal "opened the door to a new understanding of what constitutes human security." He noted that Guterres' plea is a wake-up call to governments everywhere that war does not solve problems, that the immense amounts spent on military weapons divert money desperately needed for health supplies, and that a bloated militarism is defenceless against a global pandemic such as COVID-19. Roche criticized Canada's plans to increase defence spending to \$32 billion by 2027, and noted that COVID-19 ignores strategic weapons systems. Instead, Roche proposed that it would be far more advantageous to "cut Canada's defense spending by 10 per cent and put an extra \$2 billion to \$3 billion into the UN's Sustainable Development Goals," a 17 point program which works to improve maternal health, water systems, and sustainable agriculture. This is the type of thinking and planning that will beat back the threat of COVID-19, Roche said, and would help change political thinking to a culture of peace rather than a culture of war.
- ❖ **Mikhail Gorbachev: When the pandemic is over, the world must come together.** In this April 15, 2020, article in *Time*, Nobel Prize laureate and last leader of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev, writes that COVID-19 has shown us how fragile our world is and the danger it faces of easily sliding into chaos. With issues such as global warming, migration crises, degradation of our forests and oceans, and diseases and pandemics, Gorbachev argues that rather than national governments making decisions alone, the whole world community needs to work together on these issues. To accomplish this, Gorbachev says that the world needs to rethink the whole concept of "security" into one that "demilitarizes world affairs, international politics, and political thinking." Gorbachev asks, "Is it not clear by now that wars and the arms race cannot solve today's global problems? War is a sign of defeat, a failure of politics." As soon as the coronavirus situation is stabilized, Gorbachev calls on world leaders to convene a special session of the U.N. General Assembly to revise the entire global agenda. He specifically challenges them to cut military spending by 10-15 per cent as the first, preliminary step towards a new consciousness for the future of civilization. See [article](#).
- ❖ **Do not be afraid...all will be well.** In this April 13, 2020, reflection, Nobel Peace Laureate Mairead Maguire writes that, if anything, this virus should remind us of our global connection as brothers and sisters and—if we are to survive and thrive—of our need for each other. Her hope is that this experience will raise our awareness that we are all interconnected and interdependent, which is key to our environmental and human survival. On the other hand, Maguire laments the build-up of military forces and the increased isolation and destruction caused by the disregard of some leaders and countries for international treaties such as the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty, Climate Change Agreements, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. She argues that government policies that hamper the ability of their own and other countries to deal with coronavirus need to immediately change. For example, the U.S. could lift sanctions placed on Iran, North Korea, Cuba, and all 54

countries where these sanctions bring death and destruction to citizens, leaving their governments with no money for medicine and food or to help them cope with the coronavirus. Macguire points out that, for too long, governments have wasted taxpayers' money to build military complexes. Consequently, she maintains that our civil societies must begin questioning where our tax money is going and that people of all countries must unite to demand better governance, transparency, and accountability from our political leaders and international organizations. For too long, she says, we the people have been divided; instead, we need to unite and create a better, stronger human society that sees neighbours not as threats but as brothers and sisters. See [article](#).

- ❖ An April 23, 2020, article in *The Star* by Branka Marijan with contributor Cesar Jaramillo (executive director of the national Project Ploughshares organization in Waterloo, Ont.) entitled **“Human Rights must be safeguarded while fighting coronavirus”** argues that governments' use of technology raises issues of misuse and abuse. Due to COVID-19, at least 30 countries are using technological solutions, including phone locations, to monitor the spread of the virus. In response, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and more than 100 other organizations have called upon governments to respect human rights when using digital surveillance technologies. More than 300 Canadian groups also support guiding principles to ensure that the Canadian government respects human rights when using tracking and surveillance measures in response to COVID-19.

Across the globe right now, enforcing authorities such as the local police or municipal authorities are using drones to monitor people's movement and break up social gatherings that could pose a risk to society. Recently, [mobihealthnews](#) (a digital health publication) also reported the launch of a new service by Health Catalyst, a U.S. provider of data and analytics technology and services to healthcare organizations. This new COVID-19 response tool includes a patient and staff tracker and public health surveillance. Of the new service, a company spokesperson said, “Our growing suite of COVID-19 Solutions capabilities includes identifying the location of patients who have tested positive for COVID-19 as well as other patient, clinician and staff interactions and exposures to allow for infectious disease surveillance and automated monitoring for ‘hot-spots’ using local geo-mapping and more.” Another of the many COVID-19 tools mentioned in [mobihealthnews](#) was the Kingdom of Bahrain's COVID-19 program that relies on GPS-tracking electronic bracelets and a coronavirus tracing app. This system alerts the Bahrain government when an infected person leaves isolation, and its Ministry of Health officials may randomly ask self-isolating individuals to respond with a photo that clearly shows their face and bracelet.



Marijan and Jaramillo reason that for any technological initiatives, governments must provide complete information on their scope, duration, safeguards, and specific objectives in order to maintain public trust and support. The public also needs to know whether anyone is being monitored without their knowledge and if such measures are voluntary or mandatory. With many technologies being developed by private actors, they note the critical importance of putting strong safeguards in place to ensure that access to collected data is limited to those agencies that need it for public health purposes. See [article](#).

Canada lifts Khashoggi-inspired ban on military exports to Saudi Arabia

By Kathleen McWilliams



As the world fights COVID-19, we ask if Global Affairs Canada (GAC) realizes its contradictory [statement](#) of April 10, 2020, supporting the UN Secretary General’s appeal for an immediate global ceasefire due to COVID-19. GAC stated, “Now is the time to put armed conflict on lockdown, to protect the most vulnerable and to focus our efforts together in the fight against this virus.” Yet, the day before, GAS announced lifting of a moratorium on permits for arms exports to Saudi Arabia—the country that leads a coalition of nine countries in the conflict engulfing Yemen. The moratorium was issued after the brutal assassination of Jamal Khashoggi, a Saudi journalist. A UN special rapporteur stated that Khashoggi was “the victim of a deliberate, premediated execution, an extrajudicial killing for which the state of Saudi Arabia is responsible.” During the moratorium, arms sales did not stop, only the issuance of arms-exports permits to Saudi Arabia.

Ottawa has argued it can continue arms sales to Saudi Arabia because there is no decisive evidence that Canadian-made military equipment has been misused, yet misuse has been reported. In one incident in October 2019, *Radio Canada International* posted [images](#) of what appear to be Canadian-made light armoured vehicles that Houthi rebels captured or destroyed during fighting in the borderlands between Saudi Arabia and Yemen. University of Montreal law professor Daniel Turp has argued that “arms sales to Saudi Arabia are inconsistent with Canada’s legal obligations under the UN Arms Trade Treaty, especially given the evidence of their use by Saudi forces in Yemen.”

The people of Yemen are currently living through a terrible humanitarian crisis with nearly 80 per cent of the population—more than 24 million people— requiring some form of humanitarian assistance and protection. Calling the Yemen situation “the world’s worst humanitarian crisis,” the UN reported that as of November 2018, 6,872 civilians had been killed and 10,768 wounded, the majority by Saudi Arabia-led coalition airstrikes. Millions have also been displaced by the fighting. On March 26, 2020, the [UN World Food Programme](#) advised that 10 million Yemenis are one step away from famine. The arrival of the COVID-19 virus threatens to provoke even more suffering for Yemen. Consequently, Ottawa’s words in its April 10 statement calling for a global ceasefire to protect the most vulnerable populations seem somewhat insincere.

For more information, see [Briefing to the UN Security Council Special Envoy for Yemen](#) and [In the midst of our COVID-19 crisis. Canada lifted its moratorium on arms exports to Saudi Arabia.](#)

War and peace

By Gen Matsuzaka (9th grade, FFCA, Calgary)



“Victory by armed force is the defeat of humanity”.

-Daisaku Ideka, president, Soka Gakkai International (a world-wide Buddhist movement)

This winter, I visited the Maruki Gallery in Japan that displays Maruki's "Hiroshima Panels," a 15 piece drawing of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki drawn over 32 years, along with several other works depicting the tragic history of humanity. When I first entered the museum, I was unable to move, shocked in front of a horrifying drawing. I stared at human beings in a form that I could not imagine: people covered in blood, people with severely burned skin, people with missing limbs and heads. The most striking of these was the "Mother and Child." It was a picture of a mother, desperately clutching her baby while she was engulfed in flames. I was frightened when I saw this drawing. This drawing showed how ruthless the atomic bomb and war can be. I cursed the stupidity of humans, using atomic bombs and bringing about wars. How? For what reason? For what reason do we have to kill other humans? What right does a person have to take others' lives? I was convinced that war destroys all, especially by nuclear weapons. I vowed to eradicate war from the future.

"Imagine there's no countries, It isn't hard to do, Nothing to kill or die for" were part of the lyrics from *Imagine*, by John Lennon. I feel compassion from these lyrics because I don't think there would be any wars without the concept of a country in the first place. I don't think we would need to fight for land and resources if we didn't have countries. But the truth is that this is just a dream far from reality. The most important thing for all human beings is to understand each other and accept each other in order to eliminate conflict from this world. Think how happy we can be if we can respect each other rather than fighting about differences. But to make this true, it will take incredible time and effort to make this possible. But it is not impossible. To make this dream come true, not only the governments but every person living today must share and spread happiness amongst each other.

So what can I do? I feel very powerless in front of this enormous goal of world peace. What can I accomplish in my tiny world? I haven't come up with the answer yet. But one thing I know for sure is that the eradication of nuclear weapons and war is not going to just suddenly happen one day. I'm convinced that the people of the world need to unite and cooperate with the same mind to end this strife. And now, I think it is important to help each other by giving peace and happiness to those around us. There is no perfect human being in this world. Each person has their strengths and weaknesses, and we live by helping each other.

Through thinking about war and peace, I realized that I was born as the one and only person in this world having the unique mission that is only mine. Honouring all those who have passed away because of wars, in particular by nuclear weapons, I promise to live my life to the fullest.

Ploughshares Calgary Society board member Sally Hodges writes about Gen: Gen Matsuzaka is one of the reasons that Ploughshares Calgary exists. His poignant essay above would never have been written without Ploughshares Calgary's passion for peace education for children (which stretches back 38 years). For six years, Gen has attended Ploughshares' annual Floating Lantern Peace Ceremony, where hundreds of beautiful lanterns float gently on the waters of Olympic Plaza. These lanterns honour the lives of those lost or injured in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and symbolize that nuclear weapons must be abolished. His experiences with our event led Gen to be open to the terrible facts he discovered in the Maruki Gallery, Japan. Ploughshares Calgary is very proud of Gen's commitment. Alongside Gen in this peace education experience are two children each year who are designated child diplomats. Each has a mayor—of Nagasaki or Hiroshima—from whom they request a decree to share with Calgarians at the Lantern event and to show solidarity with Japan. Ploughshares offers children this opportunity every year as children need role models and to hear that there are many adults and children across Canada who work for the abolition of nuclear weapons.

We are very grateful for your loyal moral and financial support over the years that has allowed us to continue working for and educating about peace. Please consider donating for 2020 soon if you haven't already done so. If you have already sent in your donation for 2020, we thank you.

Please make your cheque payable to Ploughshares Calgary Society.

If you write the cheque to the name of Project Ploughshares, the bank WILL NOT honour it for us, so please write it to "Ploughshares Calgary Society."

Yes, I am interested in supporting the peace work of the Ploughshares Calgary Society.
I'd like to make a donation in the following amount:

\$10 _____ \$25 _____ \$50 _____ \$100 _____ \$250 _____ or an amount of _____

or a monthly donation of _____ or I am interested in volunteering _____

Name: _____

Phone #: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Prov _____ Postal Code _____ Email: _____

Payment Options

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Make cheques payable to **Ploughshares Calgary Society** or go to www.ploughsharescalgary.ca to make your payment via PayPal. Please mail completed form with donation to the Ploughshares Calgary Society, 2919 - 8 Ave. N.W., Calgary, AB, T2N 1C8.

Please note that we are unable to provide tax receipts at this time.



Ploughshares Calgary Society
2919 - 8th Avenue N.W.
Calgary, AB
T2N 1C8

Email: office@ploughsharescalgary.ca
Web: <http://ploughsharescalgary.ca>