

VOL.1 JULY 2021

ANNUAL REFLECTIONS

WORLD BEYOND WAR IRISH CHAPTER



WORLD **BEYOND** WAR.org
a global movement to end all wars

FOREWORD

*WRITTEN BY BARRY SWEENEY, CHAPTER
COORDINATOR*

A very warm welcome to World BEYOND War Ireland's first annual end of year reflections. This last year was a year of growth for our group. We began our activities in the early days of the COVID-19 lockdowns of 2020. The restrictions led us to adopting a decentralized online-based approach which enabled us to easily adapt to organizing amidst the pandemic. It was an intense year for us, as we worked on many issues, we are delighted to share our reflections on the year. We thank you for your passion for a better world and we look forward to connecting with all of you again after the summer. Wishing you a great break!

Happy reading!

BE THERE, BE CARING

WRITTEN BY BARRY SWEENEY,
CHAPTER MEMBER

With the end of our first year as an active Chapter for World BEYOND War, it is time to take a breath and reflect a little. It has been an engaging and stimulating experience for me, as well as being a very worthwhile one. We formed well as a group, working well together on a variety of pertinent issues. Many of our actions are catalogued here on this Sharing and Caring wall [World BEYOND War Ireland Notice Board](#) which I recommend you explore. This piece of writing though is not so much about what we did over the year, but about the richness of the experience.

Having started my involvement with WBW in 2016, my approach to activism could be summed up by the title of this piece – Be there, be caring. If you exist, people can see and find you. They can see you caring about issues they also care about, then they can be inspired to contact you. So for a few years I stood on my own as a World BEYOND War representative in Ireland, organising some little events, trying to network with and collaborate with the existing peace groups in Ireland. And bit by bit, some interested individuals contacted me, so by the summer of 2020 we were ready to have a kickoff meeting to start an actual Irish Chapter for World BEYOND War.



Barry Sweeney speaking at Shannon Airport in 2019

There was harmony in the group immediately. We wanted to do things. We wanted to work. And we have done so. For me, this year has been so satisfying. After a few years plodding away on my lonesome, I suddenly had a new richness and productiveness in my life that only a team could create. The variety of experience and knowledge in the group has not only allowed us to work on some important issues in creative ways, but also for me to grow as a person. I feel extremely lucky to be involved with these wonderful people. Each and every week I learn something, and I am so grateful for that.

We, as a group, are going to wind down our activities a bit now over the summer, as after all the housebound months we all need a bit of fresh air! But I wait with eagerness to be there, and be caring again after the summer.

AN GARDA COGAIDH?

WRITTEN BY CAROLINE HURLEY, CHAPTER MEMBER

Is it my skin again, the shape of my face, my hair?
Does my phenotype flash like a red rag, non-native?
Am I taking my life in my hands, going to post a letter?
What heuristics nudge those who work forces
to bypass the usual rights and liberties?

Is my agoraphobia not reasonable,
knowing Roxanne is keeping me in her cross-hairs
beside, below, above and around me, all the time?
What if my psychiatrist characterises me as radical quarry
to counter-terrorist officers at the 'Vulnerability Support Hub'?
Is it optional to see me as a person rather than a risky other?

Dare I ask about GDPR consent when anything I do or say
can be construed as suspicious by those of vicious virtue
who stand their ground and, with whimsy,
cite castle doctrine in totem's name?
In this deadly milieu, how can I stay safe?

What happened to the duty to retreat,
to control and restraint, to use of minimum force,
to U. N. protocols and European Conventions
codifying preservation of life?

What justified re-arming a third of our guardians of the peace,
who were not trusted to carry weapons
after An Garda Síochána was founded in 1920,
who accidentally discharge their fire-arms
in one of three incidents still, according to subpar records,
and whose own guns, ref. Castlerea fatally kill even them?

Seriously, what is the worst-case scenario, without guns?

What if I over-react, my brain scrambled by fear?
Is panic my death warrant, a lá Carthy or Nkencho?
Will the ASU, POU or ERU give me the benefit of the doubt,
make allowances, understand, be kind, and lull me?
Or, segueing into An Garda Cogaidh, triggering dread
in their Darth Vader kit, will they thunder after me en masse,
and, lately mentored by iron-clad Goliaths, mow me down
in that nonchalant Gaza Strip way?



Ireland's two police forces are taking part in an EU-funded project alongside Israel's "torture ministry." Liam McBurneyZUMA Press

WE ARE NOT LACKING IN KNOWLEDGE. 'WHAT IS MISSING IS THE COURAGE TO UNDERSTAND WHAT WE KNOW AND DRAW CONCLUSIONS' (SVEN LINDQVIST) .

WRITTEN BY EAMON RAFTER, CHAPTER MEMBER

It's us that's doing this, though we may let on we don't know. On reflection I realise that we actually know quite a lot. We know that the Israeli aircraft that bombed Gaza in May were F35s and that they are made by Lockheed Martin, one of the world's biggest arms manufacturers. We know that they cost \$80 million each and \$36,000 per hour in the air. We know that annual global military expenditure rose to nearly \$2 trillion during the pandemic, that it increased by 2.6% as global GDP shrank by 4.4%. We know that the U.S. spends 39% of this figure and the arms industry is fundamentally corrupt.

We know that the world is overarmed and peace is underfunded. We also know that Ireland is looking to get in on the act and reap some of the profits that arms manufacture can bring. Spirit and Thales have already been lured by U.K. Govt. contracts to operate in Northern Ireland. We know about plans for a European army, increased EU defence spending and that U.S. aircraft in Shannon makes a lie of our neutrality. We know that while Ireland condemns Israel at the same times it seeks investment from its security companies. So, we know that we in Ireland have a role to play in all this.

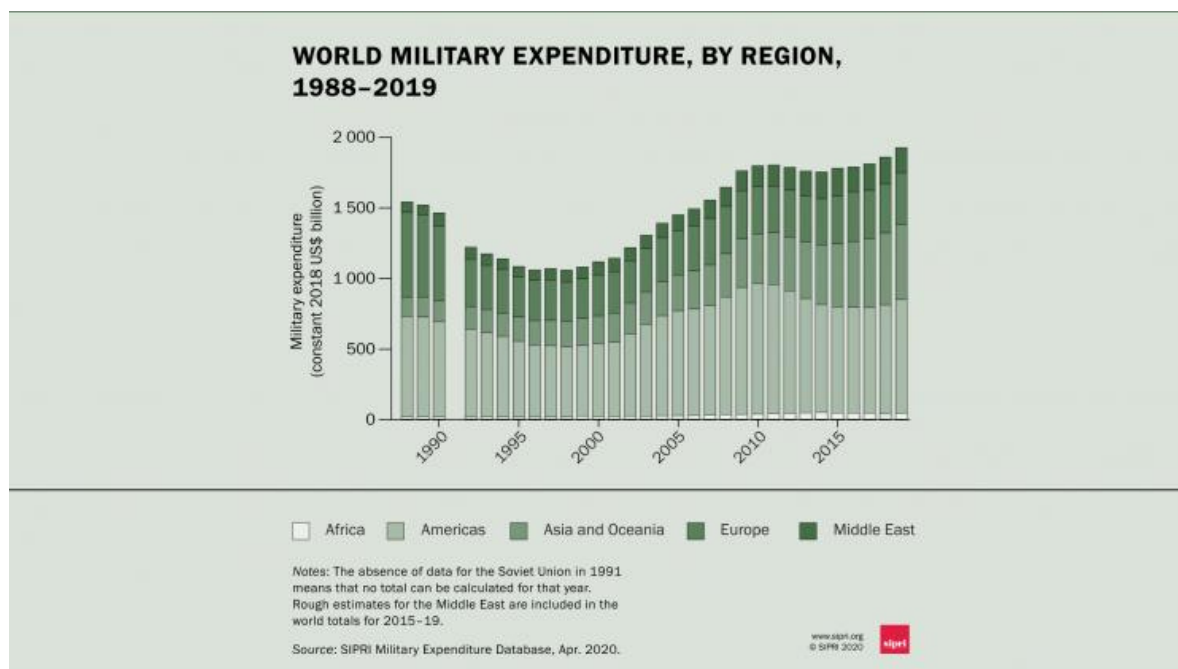
We also know that both war and the climate crisis are real threats and the global response has been increasingly militarised security to keep migrants out. We know that those who are most affected by war and climate crisis are seen as 'unpeople' whose lives are deemed worthless, expendable in the pursuit of power and commercial gain. Mark Curtis says 'They are the modern equivalent of the 'savages' of colonial days, who could be mown down'. We know that securitization won't solve the climate crisis, that militarised policing is increasing and that higher defence spending won't make us more secure. We know that militaries are one of the greatest contributors to climate crisis and this cannot continue.



The Black Shamrock is a symbol of mourning for those who died in Iraq & Afghan wars as a result of Irish collaboration through US military use of Shannon Airport'

So on reflection, it seems to me that we can either remain on this course with inevitable results in human misery and environmental disaster or begin to rethink security and build peace. Let's demand serious investment to combat global disease, poverty and hunger and create real security for everyone that meets all our human needs. Let's expose the myths of the arms trade and divest from military might and invest in people and our environment. Let's accept that the way we deal with conflict is not working and build non-violent resources to resolve it. Let's invest in peace that makes the world safer, healthier and more secure.

This is our call to action. So it's us that is doing this.



World military spending, by region, 1988-2020. Data and graphic: SIPRI <https://www.sipri.org/>

A word about education

I have worked as an educator in the field of peace pedagogy for many years and should mention peace education in this reflection. In 2019 I joined the International Institute on Peace Education (IIPE) <https://www.i-i-p-e.org/> event in Cyprus and became part of a global community of peace educators who feel education has a key role to play in ending war and building peace. When I speak here about 'what we know' I'm really talking about the information we have.

However, this is really not the same thing as knowledge. We do have an abundance of information, but this is often not at a level that leads to action. Knowledge can be about 'conscientization' which is central to who we are and how we act in the world. Peace education is important as it is about knowledge that leads to critical reflection and action. It allows us to move from being passive consumers of information to critical actors. This kind of learning is transformative and is an antidote to helplessness and despair. It builds hope through active engagement and breaks down the separation between knowing and doing. So, I believe that we need an education process that engages critically with information that is out there, looks hard at the facts of what's happening and is vital to create sustainable action for peace and justice in the world.

See also Global Campaign for Peace Education [peace-ed-campaign.org](https://www.peace-ed-campaign.org)

'AND THE ONLY REAL MYSTERY IS WHICH PART OF US – OUR HUMANITY OR OUR INHUMANITY WILL TRIUMPH IN THIS HUMAN SPECIES PERPETUAL GAME OF RUSSIAN ROULETTE WITH ITSELF.' VIET TRANH NYUGEN



The Broken Rifle - Symbol of war resistance since 1921

*Remember that there's never been a wall
that someone didn't build
or a border that was anything but abstract,
think about how there's never been a noose that no
one fashioned
and remember that on both ends
of all this infrastructure there are only humans;
it is us that's doing this*

Sarah Clancy

*Our government migrate bombs
but they don't call that migration.
Our government migrate drones
but they don't call that migration
Our government migrate bullets
but they don't call that migration
Our government migrate war
but they don't call that migration.*

Michael Rosen

FOUR WAR DOGS HUNGRY AND GREY

WRITTEN BY ED HORGAN, CHAPTER MEMBER

Veteran for peace to London bound
Through airport fence I looked and found
Four Hercules war planes on the runway
Four growling war dogs hungry and grey
Won't see London veterans today

Security scrutiny Aer Lingus check in
Closely watched, oh yes, its him
With boarding pass our flight we wait
On we walked through airside gate
One kept walking at increasing rate.

Military guard with guns at the ready
Waiting for orders, steady now steady
Airport police shout you can't go there
But here I am, I surely I can
To inspect these warplanes my dear man

Major alert flashing blue lights
Arrest and charge denied my flight
My day in court for prison or fine
Serious offence you crossed a red line
But war dogs breaching neutrality fine

Runway line long worn and jaded
No longer red with tyre marks faded
Boarding card gave authorised entry
No sentry to stop, no red line no fine
Case dismissed will serve no time

No red lines for wars of aggression
Torture, war crimes, assassination
One million children are now dead
For all of this no lines are red
War dogs feed as the blood is shed

Now new line painted bright-red
Next time over the fence instead
Three million soldiers pass this way
Three million people are dead they say
War dogs still hungry and grey

A little boy lay on his side
People wonder why he died
One million children killed by war
We helped their killing - do we care?
We helped to fuel the dogs of war



US military planes on the runway at Shannon Airport. For more information on the misuse of Shannon airport click here http://www.shannonwatch.org/files/docs/ShannonWatch_Book_2015.pdf

JOINING THE IRISH GROUP

WRITTEN BY UNA BROSAN, CHAPTER MEMBER

As one of the groups newest and youngest members I have been embracing my newfound role. Although I only joined at the same time as the group began to wind down for summer, I still find I am gaining immensely. In this little reflection piece, I want to try explaining in very few words how I moved from the existential question of why I should care and the dreaded feeling of there is nothing I can do to the genuinely wonderful feeling of I care, and I want change.

Living through a worldwide pandemic and at the same time watching Ireland's campaign for a position of the United Nations Security Council [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com) I was reminded of how lucky I am but also how proud I am to be Irish. The Irish campaign for the Security Council was very successful. As a result, I found myself tuned into the news watching and waiting to see what would happen and to see Ireland would be "a strong independent voice advocating fiercely for what we believe in."

Tuning into the news while being in isolation is awful. Watching as military coups, warnings of genocide and famine and learning of the protracted crisis and pockets of refugee camps that we share the planet with is heart-breaking. Feelings of disillusionment took over as I waited for the Security Council's response. That's "just the way the world is" people would tell me.



The speakers from the 'Conversations on Alternatives' webinar series

Along came an email from my lecturer about a "World BEYOND War webinar series," I was intrigued, sometimes it can be difficult to find reliable information but I had so many questions. So it began, first with Denis Halliday whose bold revelations made it clear to me that there is more to this than you see on the news. Next was Clare Daly whose enthusiasm to call out breaches to human rights whether people want to hear it or not was inspiring. Dave Donnellan spelled out war's environmental impact which I did not want to hear but needed to know. Suad Aldarra and Yaser Alashqaris' vivid experiences made for emotional but necessary viewing. Finally, Ed Horgan shed some important light on the realities of peace keeping. Each Wednesday night I watched the webinar series live, opening tabs for the various links shared and saving them for later. At times it felt like the series was made for me!

After over a month of Wednesday Webinars I signed up for the World BEYOND War email list. I couldn't believe the number of resources, book clubs and courses that this organisation committed to, day in and day out. I didn't know where to start. So, I reached out to Barry, and I began with the Irish chapter for a World BEYOND War. Monday evening meetings have filled the Wednesday Webinar gap. I have more links to save, I ask questions and now I am taking actions. The age range in the group has really been an advantage as I can learn about events which happened before my time from people so well versed in the area. I look forward to the coming year where I can understand more about the history of these conflicts, follow Ireland's role in the Security Council closely and learn about actions that we can take as individuals, groups and nations which contribute to groups vision to end war and establish a just and sustainable peace.

WEDNESDAY WEBINAR SERIES

WRITTEN BY EVA BEGGIATO, CHAPTER MEMBER

August will be a year for me as an active member of World BEYOND War Ireland, so it's time to reflect a little bit on this past year.

First of all, I immediately felt welcomed by the group thanks to the enthusiasm of the group and the passion that everyone has always put into making the world a safer place. I think that these active voluntary works are also a sign of love for all humanity and free help to all those people who, living in places of war, do not have the possibility or the means to show the world the true atrocities of war.

The thing that certainly gave me the most satisfaction within the Irish group was the series of 5 webinars held in January and February 2021 with the participation of wonderful guests who allowed us to have direct testimonies on the atrocities of the war and clarifications on some themes sometimes misunderstood or little discussed. These webinars were well received by the public with more than 100 people from different states and continents who had attended the conference and, above all, good feedback in the dialogue and discussion that was created after the conference itself.

The topics addressed were:

The first conversation concerned Ireland, the United Nations and the Security Council with Denis Halliday on January 13. The second examined the effect of money in politics with MEP Clare Daly on January 20. The third week examined the effects of militarism on the environment with Dave Donnellan on January 27th. The fourth had explored militarism and human displacement with Suad Aldarra and Yaser Alashqar on February 3. And the last was focused on reflecting on the assumption that the military are the most appropriate peacekeepers with Ed Horgan on February 10.

I really think this "Conversation About the Alternative" webinar series has been very successful and encouraged more people to take action and take more interest in the topics covered during the webinar.

Wednesday Webinar Series: A World BEYOND War? Conversations on Alternatives

Hosted by: The Irish Chapter of  [WORLD BEYOND WAR.org](https://www.worldbeyondwar.org)
a global movement to end all wars

January 13-Feb 10, 2021 @ 7pm GMT

**5-Part
Series!**

War: who wins and who loses? How is it waged and financed? How does it impact the civilian populations of the world? How does it contribute to human misery? What are its effects on the environment?

And why it doesn't have to be like this.

WE ARE WHAT WE DO!

WRITTEN BY BRYAN SHERIDAN, CHAPTER MEMBER

I think it was Socrates who said "A life unexamined is not worth living".

Perhaps there is a morsel of worth in life if the examination takes place in the late evening of life which is my situation.

I could continue to lean over the gate and talk to the cows and calves which has been quite therapeutic this last year.



A bit of activism is my rent for staying on the Planet

However as I recently heard a "A bit of activism is my rent for staying on the Planet". The challenge for me is what activism is the most effective in these times. As a survivor of the Holocaust said at the recent commemoration when he pleaded with the world by saying "DONT BE INDIFFERENT" With these thoughts in mind coupled with a visit to Palestine I am trying not to be indifferent. The webinars and weekly discussions were educational and motivational.

A few comments have been branded into my memory. When Denis Halliday said with great conviction "That us white European Christians are the most destructive species to have walked on the planet". Clare Daly outlined the appetite in the E.U. "For an ever-increasing military spending on weapons and security and for a European army and Ireland's eagerness to be good Europeans to enthusiastically go with the flow". This regardless of our neutrality and the use of Shannon by the US military to bring death and destruction to the Middle East.

The submission on the future of our Defence Forces and the probability that tax payer's money will be wasted on military hardware rather than being used to improve conditions for the personnel in pay and education. The refusal to recognise the ARMENIAN GENOCIDE and the legalistic reply from the Foreign Minister calls me to be more active. The gap between civil society and government action highlighted by the refugees motivates me to keep going. Finally, the realization that many of our third level institutions are now cooperating with arms companies in research. I cannot continue to be indifferent. Our politicians and media have to be dragged and persuaded to listen to the concerns for Human Rights not arms producers.

WHY THE EARTH NEEDS A WORLD BEYOND WAR.

WRITTEN BY MIRIAM RYAN, CHAPTER MEMBER

The very idea of inhabiting a World BEYOND War, drew me to this group.

What a joy it is to imagine and dwell on this concept of a world moved far beyond war.

This is possible, when people come together and use the power of Love.

When allowed, Love blossoms and grows and flourishes abundantly over the corrosive power of hatred and dominance.

A world that would be dragged out of the medieval concept of forever wars, with its colonialism, corruption, and profiteering from slaughter of the Innocents.

A world where propaganda would be rejected as an insult to language, and no longer accepted as an excuse for legalised murder in war.

A world where the power of love would be nurtured and grown, and would sweep over the medieval idea of vicious control over the lives of others, and so end it.

A world that would simply 'Give Peace a chance'.

Our world is weary of relentless war. Bob Dylan asks;

'How many deaths will it take 'til we know that too many people have died'?

How many people have to be dehumanised before we acknowledge the cruelty and barbarism of war?

How many boats overflowing with people fleeing war, have to capsize in the Mediterranean, before the milk of human kindness will be served?

How many Refugees set forth but end their courageous journeys, capsized into the darkness of the Mediterranean Sea and into the mouths of sharks.

A sea where the sound of a 'perpetual angelus' bell tolls out in anguish, at the multitudes of lives lost, as the Light Of Sanctuary was not offered to them.

How many soldiers have to be trained to blind and numb themselves into manufactured hatred of others, by their commanders?

Trained to dehumanise people whom they have never met or who never harmed them in any way, in order to kill and maim them.

How many soldiers have to be trained to fear and hate others, so as to serve in wars, to enrich mighty elites?

Where rape, the feudal weapon of war, is still widely used in war today, and one wonders where do all the rapists go when their war is over?

World BEYOND War rejects the concept of war, and all excuse and preparation for war. War has no place, whatsoever, in our 21st century world.

We are an island people in Ireland, a neutral 26 counties, yet we now have US military planes using our civilian airport at Shannon,

Like islands all over the world, Jeju a declared island of World Peace and the Pacific Islands, military bases have been imposed, by foreign rulers, while the local protesting populations are silenced by incarceration or death. Even the Galapagos Islands are not spared the domineering imperialistic threat of a military base. The Galapagos islands, where new species are still being discovered, and where Charles Darwin found inspiration for his theory of evolution, Is this how we have since evolved?

Are we living in an "An age that advances progressively backwards"? (T.S. Elliott).The industrial military complex sacrifices people, their land and sacred environment, and discards their languages and vibrant cultures,all to the tune of the 'Masters of war'?

Are war profiteers 'paving paradise' for military bases? Concreting over lives and homes, and desecrating the environment.

Our delicate beautiful world of interconnection, now groans and cries out for Love, for Mother Earth to be spared and all her children to be cherished.

War is no place for children, yet we do not even know the number of children brutalised in wars' ugly snare. The count is endless, yet they all had names, all had dreams, they all had a future, and families and treasured friends, until the vicious hand of war clutched them and strangled the life out of them. The delicate candle of their lives extinguished by wilful ignorance and greed, ignoring the divine right of our children to be just that, children. They have a right to grow up in fun loving environments of safety and not to have their dreams turned into nightmares. Yet war comes to their homes, their streets, their schools and playgrounds, their hospitals. How many arms dealers see children as worthy of grief?

How have we been duped and brain washed into believing that war is necessary, when we know in our hearts that Peace is the right environment for children.

Is it time to lament and grieve, connecting through our tears, when the stories we are told and the stories we tell ourselves are far too narrow?

The comfort of ignorance is too high a price to pay, in order to close our eyes to the reality that war desecrates and destroys our earth, and deprives children of breakfast for their bellies and clean water to drink. We know deep in our hearts that war, with its merchants of death, causes famine and dangerous destruction of essential biodiversity. What is at stake is an end to David Attenborough's portrayal of Life on Earth.

Could we trade living more simply to gain what is worth having; peaceful living in paradise, in solidarity with Mother Earth, ending the cycle of the misery of war, whether in occupied Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, and numerous other lands.

Bernadette Devlin/McAliskey states "To gain that which is worth having, it may be necessary to lose everything else". Or do we continue allowing 'war to merely change it's address' every few years?

Do we need all institutions to come together, and all Churches to honour 'inconvenient saints' like Daniel Berrigan, and to unlock Divinity from its contorted message of God as on the side of war, and open the world of Blessings and Peace to everybody? Let us dwell in meaningful peace, with environmental justice, rejecting all war. Let this be our legacy, a world beyond war.

It is possible.

Commemorating The Many Lost Lives of Refugees



Data Source: Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME)

THREE DEAD BIRDS

WRITTEN BY PAULINE GOGGIN, CHAPTER MEMBER

Being part of the Irish chapter of World BEYOND War in the last year, has been an experience of receiving for me. Receiving information and the experience of ordinary people who care about their world and seek to highlight the sources of war and destruction with all its horrific impact on families, communities and children; The devastation of environments the poisoning of agricultural land from the manufacture and sales of deadly weapons and the machinery of death which affects us all.

Listening to the dedicated activists and peace workers who have spoken to us during our webinars this last year; The challenges to our politicians about our government's position regarding our constitution of neutrality, daily ignored, in the permissions and licences granted to foreign military, significantly the USA, has been done through the efforts of writing and submitting letters to newspapers by long time campaigners for peace and justice within a community of support it has been possible to resist feelings of helplessness and to lend weight to actions taken as a group.

The recent highlighting of the increased militarisation of our police force flies in the face of a force that is named "Garda Síochána" (guardians of the peace) and is a source of ongoing concern for our society.

It is of great concern to me that so few people are aware of the vast military industrial complex or of the dangers posed to our own security by continuing to facilitate the transport of arms and military personal through Shannon airport.

Perhaps the reality of awareness is too overwhelming, my own witness of the enormous market of death at just two of the hundreds of Arms trade fairs held annually, was traumatising. For the people who are at the receiving end of these products, it means death, maiming and orphaned children, Parents helpless in the face of dying children, loss of homes and schools, hospitals and infra structures, all in the interest of ever hungry corporate greed.

I would like to offer a poem which came about from my observation of birds in my garden, whose flight paths were hampered by large glass windows, causing injury and death. When I read this to my daughter, she felt reminded of all the destructiveness and tragic loss of life in Syria other war torn countries and the vulnerable left without protection. It feels like a reflection of sorts.

One of the effects of being part of the Irish Chapter of World BEYOND War, is the many opportunities that I have had to open up conversations about the International Arms Trade. I like to think that our meetings and our actions all contribute to the wider conversations on peace and the threats to millions of people displaced by war and the degradation of land and habitats with devastating consequences to human and non human species contributing to our current climate crisis.

*Three birds dead
The bang on the window glass
herald of one
I thought
not three
Two I hoped were stunned
Possible to revive
One already stiff cold
Eyes glazed
Watching the light die
in two took time
Still warm the sparrow couple
Starting out busy
Chicks nearby
Alone
Waiting yellow beaks
Predators also listening
Three lain gently
in vegetable beds
One gone the next day
Removed
Erased from view
Two small bodies
Still visible, remain
Decomposing
Tomorrow maybe
None*



ENVIRONMENT AND THE MILITARY

WRITTEN BY CAROLINE HURLEY, CHAPTER MEMBER

Who Should Fix Climate Change?



PEACE HEROES

WRITTEN BY MEADHBH PARK, CHAPTER MEMBER

When I joined World BEYOND War I had trouble imagining how a goal as big as this could ever be achieved. Such an optimistic outlook was difficult for me, as it is for many people, as such a goal seems naive at best and ridiculous at worst. I couldn't imagine how just a small group of rish people could end war or make any type of difference. My pessimism was at times defeated by optimism as I would listen to the thoughts, ideas and recollections of the group members and for a few moments, I would indulge myself in the potential that maybe, just maybe, the tides could change. Tides that seemed more like tsunamis as the truth of war became increasingly revealed to me. During my time in the group, war became a part of my personal life as a very close friend became a victim of a war and a reminder that not all scars of war are visible, sometimes some of the worst scars of war are the ones we can't see.

War has historically been thought of as an arena where boys become men, where glory is found and heroism is discovered. It is played out on screens for entertainment and children imagine themselves as warriors, always playing the good guys. Combat deaths on screens are quick and clean, the hero is never maimed, never truly suffers and the story always ends when he comes home, to live a 'happily ever after'. But there is rarely a happily ever after for anyone after a war. Even for the best of us, peacekeepers, aid workers, civilians...the scars of death and destruction linger like a virus. The insurmountable task of bringing about an end to war can be an overwhelming thought but after a little while, something in me changed as I realised, war, this small but gigantic word, seemed so heavy in mind yet peace, the opposite, held little weight. As cliché as it sounds, I needed to be the one to give peace a chance. When we held our webinar series, I was so very proud of our group and I can say with confidence that each guest impacted everyone in our audience as they spoke so bravely and so honestly about their experiences of conflict. Heroism and bravery in war have always been tied but I think we should talk more about heroism and bravery in peace. The heroes of today are those we don't see in video games but they're who we need to see. I'm so honoured that I was a part of a project that brought some true heroes to the foreground and allowed them the space to be seen. Did we end war? No. But did we make a difference? I think we did.



WAR IN TIME OF COVID

WRITTEN BY PEADAR KING, CHAPTER MEMBER

The tedium of lockdown was briefly ameliorated every Monday evening at 17.00 hours GMT when I joined in conversation on the all-pervasive insidiousness of war with a small but disparate group of people; members of the fledging Irish Chapter of World BEYOND War. A coming together. A gathering. A place to think. And act. Who we were, what our background was, what we did in our personal and professional lives was of no consequence. What mattered was our shared concern at a world consumed by war. Not that such consummation is anything new. Dating back to antiquity, war, alas, has been part of human experience. A world of war. A world at war. But not an inevitable world.

The Monday gathering. The coming together of a small group of people who, along with countless individuals and groups of people across the world, believe that we are not doomed. We are not doomed to keep killing each other. That shared belief brought us together. A belief in our own agency.

It is easy to forget about war, particularly those of us who are not directly touched by war. And it is hard to imagine war, the fear it induces, the hurt and the pain, the displacement, the injured and the dying. And the dead. Monday evenings was a reminder of all of that. Not a disabling reminder, but an enabling reminder. And we need to be reminded. A reminder to act. All of us.

Perhaps it was that reminding that caused me to pick up a copy of Frank McGuinness's *Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching towards the Somme*, in one of the all too brief periods when bookshops were open during Covid. The Somme. All that killing. "I am staring at a sunlit picture of Hell," Siegfried Sassoon as the slaughter unfolded. "I believe that this war is being deliberately prolonged by those who have the power to end it," he later wrote.

Frank McGuinness conjures up the world Siegfried Sassoon lived. He too conjured up war's horror. Elder Piper's opening monologue: terse and telling.

Have you no conception of the horror...?

The scale of horror has no shape...

I have seen horror...

Evil is upon us.

And then that Ulster Protestant Biblical sense of foreboding before he breaks into song.

The temple of the Lord is darkness.

He has ransacked his dwelling.

The Protestant gods die.

'Fare thee well Enniskillen, fare thee well for a while, and when the war is over'...

The First World War. The war to end all wars. The war that was a prelude to the Second World War, that was a prelude to the Korean War that was a prelude to the Vietnam War that was a prelude to the manifold wars in Africa and Latin America. That was a prelude to the Iraq war that was a prelude to ... war.

And when the war is over ... when we human beings decide it is over. It is possible that at some distant date in the future that other human beings will look back at our time on this planet ... and wonder why. Why all the killing. All the suffering. All that pain and grief and death. All that horror. And why we didn't shout ... Stop. Why we didn't say ... Enough.

That is the invitation from A World BEYOND War.

COVID, for all its bleakness, all its disruption, all its grief and death too brought a small group of people together on Monday evenings at 5pm GMT. Not out of despondency. Not out of fatalism. But out of a belief in the importance of small voices. The power of small voices.

And for that, at least, I am grateful.



Scene from Frank McGuinness's 'Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching towards the Somme'

WHY HAS THE WORLD BEYOND WAR IRELAND CHAPTER BECOME ACTIVE PARTICIPANTS IN THE GLOBAL PEACE MOVEMENT AT THIS TIME?

We don't just meet for social gatherings of an altruistic nature. The need for global peace has never been more vital than in this third decade of the 21st century.

- Since the First Gulf War in 1991, up to one million children and several million adults have died across the wider Middle East from Libya to Afghanistan due to war related reasons
- War related Refugees: Latest UNHCR Global Trends report shows 82.4 million were forcibly displaced in 2020

The report shows that by the end of 2020 there were 20.7 million refugees under UNHCR mandate, 5.7 million Palestine refugees and 3.9 million Venezuelans displaced abroad. Another 48 million people were internally displaced (IDPs) within their own countries. A further 4.1 million were asylum-seekers.

- Economic Costs of wars and unnecessary militarism:

In 2020 almost Two Trillion Dollars \$2,000,000,000 was spent on arms expenditure according to SIPRI.

- Total global arms expenditure was \$1.981 trillion, an increase of 2.6% from 2019 in spite of GDP shrinking by 4.4% during 2020. U.S. spending was \$778 billion an increase of 4.4% from 2019. The additional costs of wars and unnecessary militarism adds many Trillions of dollars to these figures.

- Environmental Damage: War damages the environment, on which people and life depends, by being the industry leading the world in CO2 emissions and resource extraction to sustain, build, billet and train military forces with their equipment; by degrading ecosystems and landscapes, and poisoning land, water and air, especially during conflicts; and by sabotaging environmental programmes, causing injury, illness, grief, poverty, displacement, and the death of countless beings, if not of Earth itself soon. The Conflict and Environment Observatory <https://ceobs.org/how-does-war-damage-the-environment/>, lists some of the many ways that conflicts and militarism cause very serious damage to our planet's living environment.

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