NO WAR! Crisis in Ukraine

As we go to press, tensions are rising over the crisis in Ukraine. It is reported that 100,000 Russian troops have amassed near Ukraine’s border. The US media is portraying this as Russian aggression and are beating the drums of war. President Zelensky of Ukraine appears less concerned. He is telling his people not to panic, that Russian troops may be practicing normal maneuvers. He does not believe there will be an invasion of eastern Ukraine and basically told President Biden to calm down.

But President Biden is sending an additional 8,500 US troops to the region, weaponry to Ukraine, and Congress may rush through a $500 million grant for new weapons for Ukraine. Lurching toward a military conflict with Russia is insane. This could lead to a nuclear confrontation.

The core of the issue is the US push to have Ukraine join NATO - right on Russia’s border. Russia’s foreign minister, Sergei Ryabkov, declared, “We underscore that for us it’s absolutely mandatory to make sure that Ukraine never — never, ever — becomes a member of NATO.” Since the Warsaw Pact disbanded after the fall of the Soviet Union, the international peace movement has called for NATO to be dissolved, not expanded.

The anti-war movement is calling for negotiations and diplomacy. There will be demonstrations for a peaceful settlement. Below are two national statements that Peace Action of Wisconsin has signed on to and a statement from the Black Alliance for Peace.

- Julie Enslow, editor

Statement From Code Pink:

President Biden, we cannot risk a military confrontation between the United States and Russia, the world’s most heavily armed nuclear nations. We stand in support of diplomacy, negotiations and in opposition to sending more troops to Eastern Europe to provoke Russia into a regional or world war that would spell disaster.

We call for a moratorium on NATO expansion, a pull back of our troops and missiles on Russia’s borders and seek a negotiated solution to the current crisis. Ukraine’s people are divided and must decide their fate without US or NATO intervention. After the fall of the Soviet Union, we could have dissolved NATO to ensure peace, but instead added 11 more countries once Soviet republics or Warsaw Pact members to NATO, forging closer ties between Russia and China and continuing a Cold War that threatens to break out into a hot war. We ask you not to listen to those in Congress or your administration who would rush us into the next war. After a failed two-decade war and occupation in Afghanistan, we need to learn our lesson and choose peace, not militarism.

Statement from Roots Action:

Peace Action of Wisconsin joins with organizations representing millions of people in the United States, to call upon President Biden to end the US role in escalating the extremely dangerous tensions with Russia over Ukraine.
It is gravely irresponsible for the president to participate in brinkmanship between two nations that possess 90 percent of the world’s nuclear weapons. For the United States and Russia, the only sane course of action now is a commitment to genuine diplomacy with serious negotiations, not military escalation – which could easily spiral out of control to the point of pushing the world to the precipice of nuclear war.

While both sides are to blame for causing this crisis, its roots are entangled in the failure of the US government to live up to its promise made in 1990 by then-Secretary of State James Baker that NATO would expand not “one inch to the East.” Since 1999, NATO has expanded to include eleven more countries, including some that border Russia. Rather than dismissing out of hand the Russian government’s current insistence on a written guarantee that Ukraine will not become part of NATO, the U.S. government should propose a long-term moratorium on any NATO expansion. [A 20-year moratorium has been suggested as a compromise.]

The Manufactured Crisis in Ukraine
edited from The Black Alliance for Peace statement, Jan 12, 2022

The Black Alliance for Peace (BAP) concludes that the full responsibility for the dangerous crisis unfolding in Ukraine has its genesis in the illegal policies of the US/EU/NATO “Axis of Domination” beginning in 2014. As the corporate press presents a one-sided presentation of events in Ukraine as part of a massive propaganda effort to mobilize public opinion to support the reckless positions of the Biden administration, BAP believes that the public must be presented with a counternarrative of the chronology of events in Ukraine. BAP National Organizer, Ajamu Baraka, summarizes some of those events:

“During the latter part of 2013 until February 2014, the Obama/Biden administration gave material support and encouragement to anti-democratic right-wing elements in Ukraine to execute “regime change” against the democratically elected government of Victor Yanukovych. This plunged Ukraine into crisis because substantial sectors of Ukrainian society did not support the coup, especially sections of predominantly Russian speaking Ukrainian citizens in the Eastern portions of the nation. Those Ukrainian citizens rejected the legitimacy of the coup government and began to voice support for independence from the neo-Nazi government that took power. And what was the response from the illegal coup regime? It attacked their own citizens in the East.”

The conflict that ensued as a result of the invasion of Eastern Ukraine by the Ukrainian government with the full support of right-wing paramilitary forces like the neo-Nazi Azov battalions, did not succeed in forcing the republics that subsequently referred to themselves as the Donbas Peoples’ Republic to submit to the coup government. An agreement between Donbas and the coup government was arrived at that became known as the Minsk II agreement. Terms of the agreement included a commitment to a ceasefire along with relative autonomy for Donbas. The agreement avoided all-out war and provided some degree of “stability” until the Biden administration came to power.

Back in power, Biden and the Democrats, who have now become the party of war, begin to encourage Ukraine authorities to ignore the Minsk agreement and to forcefully take back control of Donbas. Even more dangerously, the US and some European powers began to indicate that Ukraine might be invited to become a member of NATO. That could allow NATO with its nuclear weapons to be positioned right on the borders of Russia with its nuclear arsenal.

BAP regards NATO as an illegitimate offensive force in the service of Western imperialism. Therefore, we call on all social forces committed to peace to join us in demanding that NATO be dismantled. In the meantime, and specifically on Ukraine, BAP is calling on the international Anti-war movement to demand that the US and NATO de-escalate the situation. Concretely this means demanding that:

1. All parties to the conflict adhere to the provisions reflected in the Minsk II agreement
2. And that the Ukrainian situation is taken up by the United Nations Security Council, the only body by international law tasked with the responsibility to address international threats to peace – not the arbitrary and illegal activities of the United States and its allies.
What are the Russian Demands?

- A promise not to further expand NATO.
- An end to NATO military activity in Eastern Europe.
- No intermediate short range missiles deployed by NATO or Russia.
- No military exercises in an agreed border zone.
- No country can deploy nukes outside their territory.
- Stop referring to each other as “enemies”.

Most people would find these to be perfectly reasonable steps to avoid war.

National Peace Action President Kevin Martin stated,

“Throwing a half-billion dollars in military aid at Ukraine will not resolve the conflict – on the contrary it could escalate it. As one Congressional aide put it, ‘This is how the space for nonmilitary options gets slowly closed off in Washington.’

It is time to escalate diplomacy, not military aid. Congress and the administration should heed the call by over 100 former US officials and leading area experts who called for a diplomacy-first approach instead of a foreign policy arsenal reduced mainly to reactions, sanctions, public shaming and congressional resolutions.”

Make those phone calls to Congressional offices - Diplomacy, Not War!!  DC Capitol switchboard: 202-224-3121.

Watch our email alerts for demonstrations and updates.

El Salvador Reopens Probe into 1989 Massacre of Jesuits by US-Trained Death Squad

On Jan 11, 2022, Democracy Now! reported:

“El Salvador’s Supreme Court has reopened a criminal investigation into the 1989 massacre of six Jesuit priests carried out by a US-trained death squad during the Salvadoran civil war. Their housekeeper and her daughter were also killed. Five of the priests were from Spain, and one was Salvadoran. There have been ongoing attempts to prosecute all of those involved in the massacre, since a 1993 amnesty law was declared unconstitutional in 2016. A Spanish court in 2020 sentenced former Salvadoran Colonel Inocente Orlando Montano to 133 years for the killings of the Spanish priests. He’s the only person linked to the massacre currently behind bars.”

The assassins of the Jesuit priests, Catholic nuns and thousands of other Latin American civilians were trained by the US Army at the School of the Americas (SOA) in repression tactics used against their own people. SOAW (School of the Americas Watch) was founded by Father Roy Bourgeois in 1990 after the killings in El Salvador. It has worked for years to close the SOA. Peace Action of Wisconsin formed an SOAW Committee and for over twenty years sent busloads of Wisconsin activists to hold vigils and demonstrate at the gates of Ft. Benning, GA, the home of the SOA. We were often joined by busloads of Marquette University students. The past few years the focus of the SOAW has shifted to the US/Mexican border and the inhumane and often violent treatment of refugees trying to cross into the United States.

New Socialist President of Honduras

We celebrate with the Peoples of Honduras as they welcome their first woman president, President Xiomara Castro, into office and officially put an end to the twelve-year rule of a narco regime that has plundered their country.

The historic election of President Castro, which saw the highest voter turnout in the country’s history, is testament to the steadfast organizing of grassroots social movements who came together in resistance to the 2009 U.S.-backed military coup. In spite of the violent political repression they faced, the willpower of the People to transform their conditions made possible the historic Jan. 27th Inauguration Day.
**Catholic Archbishop Calls for Nuclear Abolition**

The Catholic Archbishop in the heart of the nuclear weapons industry in America released a significant pastoral letter on January 11.

Archbishop John Wester of Santa Fe, New Mexico, has called for the abolition of nuclear weapons arsenals around the globe. The Archdiocese of Santa Fe includes Los Alamos and the Sandia nuclear weapons laboratories. The pastoral letter says, “To love our enemies means we have to begin the process of ending our preparations to kill them … and doing everything we can not to harm them, but to actively love them, including the people of Russia, China, Iran, North Korea, and others.”

Wester stated to reporters, “The Catholic Church has a long history of speaking out against nuclear weapons. Indeed, the Vatican was the first nation-state to sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. … The Archdiocese of Santa Fe has a special role to play in advocating for nuclear disarmament, given the Los Alamos and Sandia nuclear weapons laboratories and the nation’s largest repository of nuclear weapons at the Kirtland Air Force Base in Albuquerque.”

**We Banned the Bomb!**

**International One Year Observance of the UN Treaty on Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Milwaukee / Madison Actions**

On Sat. Jan. 22, Milwaukee and Madison joined anti-nuclear activists across the country and throughout the world to celebrate the first anniversary of the “No Nuke Treaty” going into effect. Demonstrations were organized by Wisconsin Physicians for Social Responsibility and Peace Action of Wisconsin.

As of Jan 22, 2021, everything to do with nuclear weapons is illegal! Fifty-eight countries have now ratified this treaty which bans the development, testing, production, manufacturing, possession, stockpiling, transfer, control, receipt, stationing, deployment, use or threat of use of nuclear weapons as well as assisting, encouraging or inducing anyone to engage in a prohibited activity.

Now we must insist that the US and other nuclear weapons powers ratify this UN treaty.

**Biden’s Disappointing Nuclear Posture Review**

President Joe Biden’s forthcoming Nuclear Posture Review is basically a repeat of the Trump Administration’s. Although Biden has a history of promoting nuclear arms control, he will only trim a few programs and adjust some rhetoric but keep in place most of Trump’s weapons and policies.

US nuclear weapons will still be on hair-trigger alert. A first use of nuclear weapons in a conflict will still be permitted and the sole authority to fire these weapons will remain with the president. America just had an unstable president with this power. Biden could act now to make sure a mad president could never threaten global destruction.

Biden wants to play it safe and not shake up the status quo. He has serious problems with constant attacks by Republicans, a low approval rating in the polls, and looming global conflicts. But his choice to “play it safe” is really just the opposite when it comes to national security. The money spent on new and updated nuclear weapons could be spent on the climate crisis, the pandemic and funding his Build Back Better agenda. And the current nuclear policies can put the world on the path to a nuclear holocaust.

However, fifty-six members of Congress have signed on to a letter to Biden opposing his nuclear stance and asking that he uses his power to seize what they call “a once-in-a-generation opportunity to ensure that US nuclear doctrine reflects your recognition that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought.” Wisconsin Senator Tammy Baldwin and Wisconsin Congresspersons Mark Pocan and Gwen Moore are signatories to the letter. Let’s thank them!

Sometimes “playing it safe” is a dangerous thing to do. **Source: Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists**
Where is the Outrage?
Death of American-Palestinian at Hands of Israeli Army

Mr. Omar Assad, a 78-year-old American-Palestinian from Milwaukee, was found dead on the side of the road in his home village of Jiljilya, north of Ramallah in the Israeli Occupied West Bank where he had returned to spend his final years. He had been driving from a visit with relatives to his home when he was stopped by Israeli soldiers, dragged from the car, questioned, handcuffed, gagged, blindfolded, beaten, and left to die.

Senator Tammy Baldwin and Representative Gwen Moore called for an investigation into his death by the US State Department. The Israeli military, in their own investigation, concluded that Mr. Assad’s death was a “grave and unfortunate event, resulting from a moral failure and poor decision-making on the part of the soldiers.” As a result, the battalion commander is to be reprimanded and two other commanders will be removed from their posts.

B’Tselem, an Israeli human rights group, stated, “The army’s announcement regarding the death of Omar Assad is adorned with empty words about ‘moral failure’ — concluding, as expected, with the faintest of rebukes. In fact, the fundamental moral failure is that of Israel’s senior echelons, leading a regime of Jewish supremacy, one in which the human life of Palestinians has no value.”

“We strongly support human rights and the rule of law as the foundation of United States foreign policy,” Baldwin and Moore wrote. “As a Palestinian American, Mr. Assad deserves the full protections afforded U.S. citizens living abroad and his family deserves answers.”

It is reported that the harassment, arrests, killings, house demolitions and forced confiscation of property and homes of Palestinians in the Occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem has become much worse in the past couple of years.

Palestinian Human Rights Groups Declared “Terrorists” by Israel

The Israeli Ministry of Defense issued a military order on October 19 declaring Defense for Children International - Palestine (DCIP) and five other Palestinian human rights organizations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory to be “terrorist organizations.”

DCIP is an independent, Palestinian child rights organization dedicated to defending and promoting the rights of children living in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. DCIP defends Palestinian children in the Israeli military courts and exposes grave violations against Palestinian children including abuse, arrest, imprisonment and torture at the hands of Israeli forces.

Over the past several years, Israeli, Palestinian, and international human rights and humanitarian organizations have faced an increasingly difficult operating environment in Israel and the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip.

How to Call the White House:
The Biden White House has very limited phone line hours. Call 1-855-572-9495 to be connected to the White House public comment line. Please note, you must call between the hours of 10am - 2pm CT, Tuesdays - Thursdays while the phone line is open.
PEACE CALENDAR
February/March 2022

Stand for Peace - Every Saturday from Noon to 1 pm.
Please wear masks. Flags and signs supplied by Peace Action
of WI. See ad for locations.

Stand for a Livable Climate - Protest the Funding of
Fossil Fuels - Every Friday 12 Noon to 1 pm, at Silver
Spring and Lydell, in front of Chase Bank. Chase is the
largest funder of fossil fuels on Earth. Organized by 350MKE
and endorsed by Peace Action of WI. Please wear masks.
Signs provided. Check 350 Milwaukee's website for updates.

Sat. Feb. 5, 12 noon     Stand for Peace, No War With
Russia!! Capitol Dr. and Teutonia.

Sat. Feb. 12, 12 noon    Special Stand for Peace - “Send
Love to People of Afghanistan” - Biden, unfreeze their
assets. Save them from economic collapse and starvation. KK
and Lincoln.

Mon. Feb. 14, 7pm      Special Zoom Presentation:
“International Relations and Militarism Today” with
Prof. Harry Targ, Professor Emeritus of Political Science
at Purdue University, member of Peace Action of Wisconsin
Steering Committee. See ad. Register at our website

Wed. Feb. 23, 7pm      End the Wars Coalition Meeting
on Zoom.

Mon. Feb. 28, 7pm      The Crisis in Ukraine. Speaker,
Bruce Gagnon, coordinator of Global Network Against
Nuclear Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space. On Zoom. To
register: go to our website at peaceactionwi.org. Sponsored by
Peace Action of Wisconsin.

Sat. Mar. 5, 12 noon     End US Complicity in Saudi
War on Yemen. Special Stand for Peace. People are
starving in Yemen. Corner of Brady and Farwell.

Sat. Mar. 12, 10am    International Women’s Day
Program on Zoom. “Justice for the Innocent Victims of
the July 16, 1945 Trinity Atomic Blast in New Mexico.”
Tina Cordova, Tularosa Basin Downwinders Consortium,
will discuss how communities in New Mexico are still
demanding justice and working towards a nuclear free world.
Sponsored by UN Association of Milwaukee. For Zoom link
go to our website at peaceactionwi.org.

Wed. Mar. 23, 7pm      Milwaukee End the Wars
Coalition Meeting on Zoom.

More updated information on local peace and justice events
can be found on our website, www.peaceactionwi.org and actors.

Thank You Volunteers
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The Mobilizer
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End Military Intervention, Transfer Military Spending
to Human Needs, Abolish Nuclear Weapons & Power.
Oppose Racism & Sexism, Protect the Environment.

Contact Us
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Afghan People Face Starvation - No Money to Buy Food

Starvation is facing the Afghan people this winter with a million children expected to die. People are actually selling their kidneys and selling their babies to get money to feed their families. This is totally preventable. Food is available but there is no money to buy it.

When the Taliban took over the country after the removal of US troops, the Biden administration froze the financial assets of Afghanistan that are held in US banks in order to facilitate exports, imports and other transactions. This strangled the Afghan banking system and economy, destroying jobs and income and leading to famine. The Biden administration refuses to unfreeze these assets. Afghan government workers, such as teachers, are not being paid. People cannot get their money out of the banks as there is no cash to distribute.

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres has warned that millions of Afghans are on the “verge of death,” urging the international community to fund the UN’s $5 billion humanitarian appeal, release Afghanistan’s frozen assets and jump-start its banking system to avert economic and social collapse.

Meeting with Congresswoman Gwen Moore

Over 20 Milwaukee peace activists met on a zoom call with Congresswoman Gwen Moore in early January to ask her to appeal to President Biden to release the Afghan funds. She had refused to sign onto a letter to President Biden asking that these funds be unfrozen. This letter was signed by 48 members of Congress including the head of the Progressive Caucus. Erik Sperling, director of Just Foreign Policy, and Shah Mehrabi, a board member of the Afghan Central Bank, explained the financial situation in depth and how a limited, monitored release of the money can be responsibly directed to the banks to avoid corruption by the Taliban government. Congresswoman Moore agreed to pursue this further with the US Treasury Department.

Our congresswoman also agreed to meet on a monthly basis with representatives of Peace Action of Wisconsin and allies in the peace movement to discuss foreign policy issues. This is an important step in our direct communications with her.
International Relations and Militarism Today
Mon. February 14, 6 - 7 pm CST

with - Harry Targ
Member of Peace Action of Wisconsin Steering Committee and Purdue Professor Emeritus of Political Science, Prof. Targ will initiate discussion of these critical issues. Targ, a long-time activist, is currently a Co-Chair of the Committees of Correspondence for Democracy and Socialism (CCDS), and blogs at www.heartlandradical.blogspot.com

Sponsored by Massachusetts Peace Action
(Go to our website, peaceactionwi.org, to register and get Zoom link.)

Another Look at the Crisis in Ukraine
Speaker, Bruce Gagnon
Coordinator of Global Network Against Nuclear Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space

A Peace Action WI Zoom Presentation

Monday, Feb. 28 at 7:00 pm
Register for Zoom contact at www.peaceactionwi.org