# Science for Peace

**February 24, 2023**

Dear Members,

The Board of Directors has just published a statement entitled "Ending the War in Ukraine". This statement is the result of lengthy and healthy debate within the Board. There were differences of opinions; however, the final document represents the preponderance of opinion of the Board. The statement is unusual in its attempt to unite

the two contrasting positions of progressive analysts of the war. I invite you to read the statement at https://www.scienceforpeace.org, or the link below, and to distribute it using your own networks.

Our Non-violent Resistance Working Group is organizing a series of three virtual meetings around the theme of: *Non-violence: The Tactics and Strategies of Winning Campaigns*. Each meeting will include the viewing of a short film on a famous campaign, followed by a focused discussion on the lessons to be learned, facilitated by a guest expert and a skilled facilitator. These are the subjects to be discussed, March 6th: *India, defying the Crown*; March 20th: *Nashville, we were warriors*; April 3rd: *Chile, Defeat of a dictator.* Please find the registration link below. You'll find more information on the Zoom registration page.

*Jorge Filmus*
*President, Science for Peace*

## Upcoming Events

**First Session: March 6, 2023, 7 PM ET**



**Non-violence: The Tactics and Strategies of Winning Campaigns**

Science for Peace

VOICE OF WOMEN
LA VOIX DES FEMMES

CANADIAN VOICE OF WOMEN FOR PEACE

Endorsements:

nonviolence international

peacealliancewinnipeg
FOR PEACE, JUSTICE & HUMAN RIGHTS

WILPF     CFPI
CANADIAN FOREIGN POLICY INSTITUTE

**Reserve your place! 3 Sessions to attend!**

**What lessons for effective action can we draw from these cases?**

**All meetings will start at 7pm ET**
Guest expert and facilitator following film

**Registration Link:**
**https://tinyurl.com/2s3smewb**

- **India: Defying the Crown March 6th**

- **Nashville: We Were Warriors March 20th**

- **Chile: Defeat of a Dictator April 3rd**

Register

## Recent Activities

## Science for Peace Statement on Ending the War in Ukraine

Science for Peace condemned the invasion of Ukraine by Russia last year as we have denounced all resort to force to settle political disputes around the world. Violence as a means of advancing state policy goals is simply unacceptable in the 21st century. We thus demand an immediate cessation of all hostilities and a return to negotiations to settle all issues related to the conflict.

**Continue Reading**

# Recent Articles



### *Judith Deutsch:*
### The Intertwined Food and Climate Emergency: Heeding Science

This is an astonishing world. Blame for current disasters cannot be offloaded to 'human nature'. All who take care of children know that children can learn to live within limits and that they can develop a realistic sense of time, that they can learn to forego some pleasures and wishes. From psychoanalytic work, I find that people can learn to be objective and to have a conscience.

**Read More**



### *Carley Dove-McFalls*: Minister Guilbeault, there is no Canadian "Climate Leadership" without Canceling the F-35 Fighter Jet

On Friday January 6th 2023 people gathered in front of Minister of the Environment Steven Guilbeault's office to speak out against the F-35 deal that was announced by the Canadian government. Although it may have been unclear why we were protesting at Guilbeault's office for a peace protest, there were many reasons for us to be there. As a climate justice activist fighting against fossil fuel infrastructure..

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# Focus on Members: John Duncan

## A Peace Odyssey from the Disastrous Afghanistan War to the War in Ukraine

During the fall of 2008, I started looking into the Afghanistan war. The U.S./NATO-led coalition was seven years into a war in which it had claimed victory a few months after September 11, 2001. I soon realised that official and mainstream discussions presumed the basic legitimacy of the war, resulting in a limited range of critical commentary, effectively enabling a growing disaster. Around Christmas, I wrote a Scrooge-inspired comment piece about the war for The Ottawa Citizen. The war was bad and getting worse, and Ottawa was concerned about losing popular support for Canada's role in it.

In interesting respects, official and mainstream discourse about the war was very different from the conversations I found myself having with members of the peace movement. An organisation like Science for Peace (S4P) is no cadre of yea-sayers, but rather a community of folks who speak freely and critically about major problems in the world. We need more such conversation.

In 2009, I participated in a George Ignatieff Peace Award event as a panelist addressing Canada's declining status as a peacekeeper. Canada had shelved its blue helmets to go after "detestable murderers and scumbags" in Afghanistan, according to Rick Hillier, former chief of the Canadian defence staff. I started teaching a course on the war, I got involved with Philosophers for Peace at U of T, and joined the Canadian Peace Research Association (CPRA), eventually serving as its Vice President and National Editor, out of which grew the volume Peace Issues in the 21st Century Global Context (2018). I started to meet S4P folks through these activities, and began to get involved, eventually presenting in the S4P colloquium series in 2014.

Since then, I have had challenging conversations with many of S4P's strong-minded members, sometimes agreeing, sometimes disagreeing. At least indirectly, those discussions informed my work on Afghanistan. One such interlocutor whose voice I shall miss was Chandler Davis, a long-time S4P member who passed away in 2022, and in whose memory I dedicate these reflections.

In 2010, I wrote a feature piece for This Magazine entitled "Death from above," in which I looked into the coalition's extensive use of airpower to support its troops, and the devastating consequences for both Afghans and the purported goals of the mission. The piece was republished by Tightrope Books in its annual Best Canadian Essays in English. At about the same time, U.S. President Barak Obama was pivoting the coalition's strategy from counter-terrorism (killing and capturing the Taliban) to counter-insurgency (supporting the population in order to win its support away from the Taliban), but the new strategy was more about politics and wishful thinking than about reality and effectiveness. I wrote a piece for The Globe and Mail arguing that counter-insurgency was not solving the mission's problems, and a piece for the Canadian Center for Policy Alternatives arguing that the war was a disastrous failure. About nine years in, there was no reasonable end in sight.

For its fall 2013 issue, Global Brief invited me to a "nose to nose" debate in print with Dan Fata, who had worked on the Afghanistan file as U.S. Assistant Secretary for European and NATO Affairs before moving into private sector consulting work. Against Fata's relatively rosy assessment, I argued that Afghanistan was an ongoing crisis.

By 2014, coalition forces in Afghanistan were significantly reduced, and the mission was pivoting again, this time away from counter-insurgency, toward training an immense Afghan National Security Force to defend the U.S./NATO-backed government in Kabul. However, hubris and mistakes continued to outpace genuine progress. In a feature article for Open Canada in 2016, I argued that comparable mistakes were made in

interventions in Afghanistan in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries from which nothing was learned.

In December 2019, The Washington Post published "The Afghanistan Papers," an excellent series of six feature articles based on its analysis of a trove of insider interviews about the war. Believing the interviews would be kept confidential, hundreds of officials provided frank assessments of the war. The Post sued for access to the interviews, and won. Anyone attempting to assess U.S.- or NATO-led conflict in the twenty-first century ought to read the series. It opens as follows: "A confidential trove of government documents obtained by *The Washington Post* reveals that senior U.S. officials failed to tell the truth about the war in Afghanistan throughout the 18-year campaign, making rosy pronouncements they knew to be false and hiding unmistakable evidence the war had become unwinnable." The evidence is overwhelming. In confidence, officials had been as damning as many of the war's greatest critics, but in public, they stayed on message, manufacturing consent in order to prolong a disastrous war.

In August 2021, the Taliban retook Afghanistan in a few weeks as the immense U.S/NATO-built Afghan National Security Forces melted away. What we took from the Taliban in 2001, it took back in 2021. Nothing accomplished. However, it was costly. As I wrote in a piece for *Canadian Dimension*, according to the Costs of War Project at Brown University, the war cost America USD$2.261 trillion, and, compared to the 2,981 lives lost on 9/11, about 240,000 lives (on all sides) were lost in the 20-year response. More than CDN$18 billion was squandered, with one hundred and fifty-nine Canadian troops and seven civilians among the dead. Together with the destruction of property, injuries, the displacement of persons, broken families and lives, and lost opportunities, the costs and losses are virtually unquantifiable.

War is the failure of our leaders to deal with disputes politically. Its effects are horrific. It is evil. Our obligation is to prevent it, de-escalate it, and stop it. Open and critical dialogue regarding all policies that lead to or maintain war is a necessity. We need to challenge the official and mainstream information environment that enables our Prime Ministers and Defense Ministers to smile with the hawks.

Six months after the Taliban retook Afghanistan, Russia invaded deep into Ukraine. I join with all those who condemn Russia for its illegal and immoral invasion, now one year old. At the same time, we must not forget the lessons learned from the disastrous Afghanistan war, which should not be difficult because there have been many similar lessons in the last seventy-five years, from Guatemala and Iran in the 1950s, to Venezuela more recently, not to mention the Pentagon Papers, Weapons of Mass Deception, and many others. Spin is an ever-present feature of information about conflict; there is always more going on than we know; there are always awful outcomes; and many suffer because of the policies enacted in our names.

In March 2022, I wrote a piece for The Conversation in which I argued that the U.S./NATO-led sphere had long gambled that it could pursue expansion toward post-Soviet Russia without consequences. It gambled that if there were consequences, they would not include a Russian invasion of Ukraine. And, it gambled that if Russia did invade Ukraine, the war could be contained within Ukraine. The first two gambles failed, leading to the disastrous war in Ukraine. The third is still in play.

The point is not to support Russia, not at all. Even if the other side is evil, it does not follow that our side is saintly. For twenty years until August 2021, our leaders "failed to tell the truth about the war in Afghanistan," "making rosy pronouncements they knew to be false," at the cost of nearly three trillion dollars and a quarter million lives. Few saints walk among them.

Many thoughtful folks who contribute to the peace movement understand that without robust criticism, truth becomes a casualty, and that when truth is compromised, so is democracy. Both the free critical environment in which truth thrives, and the democracy it enables, can be messy and uncomfortable, but all the alternatives are worse.

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