

# AN INTERSECTIONAL GUIDE TO DISARMAMENT

*a guide for learning, engagement, and action in  
disarmament*

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The content of this guide is compiled through research and learning from activists, NGOs, UN organizations, and individuals working for the cause of disarmament in their own communities. Thank you to all for your hard work in advocating for a safer, more equitable, and more peaceful world.

# NOTES

The views expressed in this guide are the sole responsibility of the individual author. Facts and figures are cited throughout the guide, and the original source can be found in the Notes portion of the guide.

All photographs, artwork, and artistic expressions in this guide are included with credit to the original artists.

The author has learned from and listened to the opinions and experiences of marginalized groups during the creation of this guide and is grateful for their intellectual and emotional labour in sharing their stories and identities. The aim of this guide is not to co-opt their experiences nor own the narrative, but rather to amplify their work.

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kirsten Mosey is a settler-Canadian working and living on the traditional territory of the Neutral, Anishinaabeg and Haudenosaunee peoples. Kirsten is a Youth Champion for Disarmament with the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs, and is completing her studies at the University of Waterloo, ON, Canada.

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# INTRODUCTION

Welcome to *An Intersectional Guide to Disarmament*! Disarmament is deeply connected to other systems of peace and development. Similarly, the phenomenon of arms proliferation is embedded into patriarchy, heteronormativity, wealth inequality, ableism, racism, and more. The goal of this guide is to analyze the specific connections between social movements and disarmament.

The idea for this guide was formulated after a year of training with the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs through the Youth Champions for Disarmament program. The program frequently discussed how disarmament efforts need to work alongside vulnerable peoples, addressing the root causes of conflict and armed violence. Disarmament experts are well aware that the removal of weapons is just one piece of the puzzle; confronting the reasons for conflict is another. The Youth Champions for Disarmament program also developed and encouraged tactics to increase awareness and activism for disarmament, especially among young people.

Beginning this program during the first few months of the COVID-19 pandemic was a challenge. There were so many pressing issues going on in the world, and it was easy to assume that non-proliferation and disarmament efforts were not top priority. It became increasingly clear, however, that conflict is compounded by issues of inequality and inequity. Many of our discussions focused on how to engage with people on those pressing issues and make clear the connections to disarmament.

Over months of researching and learning from experts, the idea was formed to create a document that could provide an overview of disarmament's relevance to the most pressing social causes of our time. The word *intersectional* was chosen to characterize the nature of the connections being made in the guide. First coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, intersectionality refers to the multiple identities individuals hold and how they inform a relationship to society and structural systems.<sup>1</sup> Here, intersectionality is used to assess how identities held by different groups and communities inform their relationship to weapons and arms proliferation. In turn, the guide seeks to reaffirm those identities and encourage greater thinking and understanding about how to approach disarmament with respect to the differing communities affected.

The list of topics is far from exhaustive, and is deeply informed by the work done by members of those communities. Their decades-long fight to be included in the disarmament discourse is noted, and the aim of this guide is to further amplify their indispensable knowledge and labour.

The guide is intended to be read at one's own pace. Feel free to pick a topic out of order and fully engage with it before moving on to the other pages. You are encouraged to use the guide as it serves you, paying close attention to the action items at the end of each section.

You are also encouraged to keep an open mind and assess the information free from bias or preconceived notions. If discomfort arises, sit with it and assess how you can work on these issues from the inside out. Disarmament is not a one-size-fits-all field of study, nor should it be. Taking the time to understand and appreciate the nuance of the many issues discussed in this guide is top priority.

Thank you for engaging with these topics. Please follow along with the many organizations and individuals mentioned who are doing the work of peace and sustainability. Enjoy!

# DISARMAMENT &

# WOMEN AND GENDER

Women are a vital part of the peace building and conflict prevention process. Outdated gender stereotypes have typically relegated women to the emotional and practical work of peace, but it is increasingly clear that women must be included in disarmament, arms control, and sustainable planning processes.

## PROLIFERATION AS MASCULINITY



Missile launchers, Poland, credit: PX Media/Shutterstock.com

Arms proliferation is inherently masculine. This begins with the fact that men are historically the majority decision makers for military and foreign policy decisions, to the technical expertise that is designed to exclude newcomers, to the increasingly misogynistic language of domination and the phallic shape of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs).<sup>1</sup>

WMDs are designed to decimate, to show the might of a nation and strike fear into its enemies. As feminist scholars have pointed out, the language of domination is gendered in the world of nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons penetrate, destroy in a mushroom cloud, and leave craters that are affectionately assigned women's names. In contrast, non-nuclear weapon states are ascribed a form of "virginity", as they belong to the less powerful club of nations.<sup>2</sup>

In a world where arms proliferation is masculine, to disarm is apparently feminine. To the nuclear weapon aficionados, the assumption that they would willingly give up their weapons is emasculating.<sup>3</sup> The language of sexualized violence and masculinity as the ideal seeks to remove women from the decision-making rooms, and further entrenches the stereotypes that women are not cut out for work involving weapons.

Women need to be involved in the decision-making process from the beginning. Whether that is in weapons production or proliferation, or disarmament, any space that intentionally disregards the perspectives of women is lacking.

# EFFECTS OF WEAPONS ON WOMEN

Women are more likely to be victims of violence involving weapons, whether through direct or indirect effects. Directly, women are disproportionately represented as victims of intimate partner violence and sexual violence. The presence of weapons during these acts of violence greatly increases the risk of death.<sup>4</sup>

Women are also more likely to suffer the adverse effects of WMDs and the chemical agents often used in conflict. The rate of miscarriages and birth defects is far higher for women exposed to conflict, and can be detrimental for entire generations of women.<sup>5</sup>



WILPF March to Ban the Bomb, NYC, NY, 2017, credit: David Field and Eric Espino

Women and children experience the indirect adverse effects of armed violence too. Women and children represent the majority of displaced peoples.<sup>6</sup> They also face barriers to care as a result of armed violence, such as access to hospitals, food insecurity, and support systems for abusive relationships. There is a documented increase in mental health distress among women in conflict zones, and rape and sexual violence are well documented war crimes that occur alongside most conflicts.<sup>7</sup> As combatants are still more likely to be men, women are also left with rebuilding after the conflict. They may have lost family members or spouses and take on not only a household role of sole caregiver, but a community one as well.

## WOMEN, PEACE & SECURITY

The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda came out of UNSC Resolution 1325 in 2000 and the subsequent WPS resolutions.<sup>8</sup> The agenda's focus is on creating meaningful participation and inclusion of women in the peace process.<sup>9</sup> Experts believe that the agenda has not yet adequately accommodated for gender and arms control and disarmament efforts.<sup>10</sup>

The WPS agenda currently uses gender in a binary sense, without acknowledging that gender is a social construct and fluid. This contributes to ideas that cisgender women are the only women affected by conflict, and leaves out an entire area of study about the effects of armed violence on transgender women, non-binary individuals, and other gender identities.<sup>11</sup>

Secondly, the agenda could be strengthened by making the connections to disarmament clear, and encouraging women to be involved in not only peace processes, but arms control as well.

# WOMEN IN DISARMAMENT

Gender mainstreaming in disarmament means to focus on the role of women at every step of the process. There are dozens of women-led disarmament groups across the world making a difference. One of the most notable organizations is Reaching Critical Will, a disarmament focused arm of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF). WILPF has been operating since 1915, and has continued to make an impact through their focus on women as individuals with distinct agency.

As the disarmament landscape grows, women need to be continually represented in cybersecurity, arms control in space, lethal autonomous weapons, and more. With the role of emerging technology, the intersection between STEM and disarmament grows stronger. Supporting more women and girls in STEM will help remove barriers to entry in the more technologically heavy features of disarmament.

**“WOMEN ALONE DO NOT HOLD THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR PEACE, BUT THEY HOLD THE RIGHT TO BE PART OF THE DECISIONS LEADING TO PEACE.”<sup>12</sup>**

- Izumi Nakamitsu, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs

## GET INVOLVED & FURTHER LEARNING

### LEARN:

Women have roles to play in disarmament other than just being peacemakers. Listening to women's ideas and perspectives not only about how to disarm, but also how to prevent conflict in the first place, will aid in creating lasting and sustainable peace.

### UNLEARN:

Gender stereotypes and the gender binary are constructed ideas that are based on culture, location, and more. Challenge your ideas about who women are and what women can do.

### READ:

- Beyond Consultations Tool by Women for Women International
- "Connecting the Dots: Arms control, disarmament, and the Women, Peace and Security agenda" by Henri Myrntinen

### ENGAGE:

- Search your country's WPS National Action Plan to see how they are implementing the agenda
- Stay up to date with groups like Reaching Critical Will, WILPF, and local women's disarmament organizations

# DISARMAMENT &

# LGBTQ+ INCLUSION

LGBTQ+ individuals deserve to express their sexual and gender identities without fear of violence or retribution. Ensuring LGBTQ+ people are involved in crafting treaties, resolutions, and policies will aid in codifying LGBTQ+ protections into law.



Queer activists joining Earth Day marches to rally against nuclear weapons, Queens, NY, 2021, credit: Donna Aceto

## GENDER STEREOTYPES

Cultural and societal militarism encourages a traditional, violent masculinity that is emulated by militarized role models such as action heroes, soldiers, and more.<sup>1</sup> This standard of violence that is acceptable and even expected of men in culturally militarized societies is harmful to both the men that fit into this mold and those who do not. Those who fit into the traditional male role may not constantly identify with it, but can get stuck “performing” gender through a binary lens due to social expectations.<sup>2</sup> This discourages men from exploring their gender and sexual identity.

Those who step outside of the gender binary are more likely to experience violence at the hands of men in culturally militarized spaces. Men who express gender identities that are different than their biological sex can be especially at risk of violence from their cisgender male counterparts who are taught to respond to situations with violence.



# EFFECTS OF WEAPONS

LGBTQ+ individuals are at a higher risk of injury or death from armed conflict and armed violence.<sup>3</sup> There are documented cases of honour killings and extortion against individuals who express a gender or sexual identity outside of a heterosexual, cisgender binary. LGBTQ+ individuals often experience less protection from their families, communities, and support systems during times of conflict.<sup>4</sup> This is made more complicated in regions in the world where homosexuality and transgender expressions are illegal.

In those cases, International Humanitarian Law (IHL) is clear that national laws do not give permission to the state or military to detain or harm individuals due to their sexual or gender identity. Unfortunately, many states ignore these laws and continue to detain and prosecute individuals simply for their sexual or gender identity. LGBTQ+ individuals may also be detained for other offences which states and militaries often seek out in order to continue their detention.<sup>5</sup> Within detention facilities, LGBTQ+ people face significant abuses and lack accommodations.

## TREATIES AND RESOLUTIONS

Activists have long called for the inclusion of LGBTQ+ individuals in the treaties, laws, and resolutions that cover peace and security. The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda is one such resolution that should be expanded to explicitly identify the effects of armed violence on LGBTQ+ individuals.<sup>6</sup> The narrow conception of gender leaves LGBTQ+ people out of the conversation and continues the presumption that their inclusion is not mandated nor necessary.

Additionally, the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) requires states to prohibit sales of weapons to states that will use them to commit crimes against civilians. The ATT does not, however, explicitly mention LGBTQ+ individuals and the likelihood of harms against them during armed conflict.<sup>7</sup> Expanding the ATT to include specific provisions for LGBTQ+ individuals would prohibit states from selling weapons to states that criminalize homosexuality and have a history of detaining LGBTQ+ individuals on the basis of sexual or gender identity.

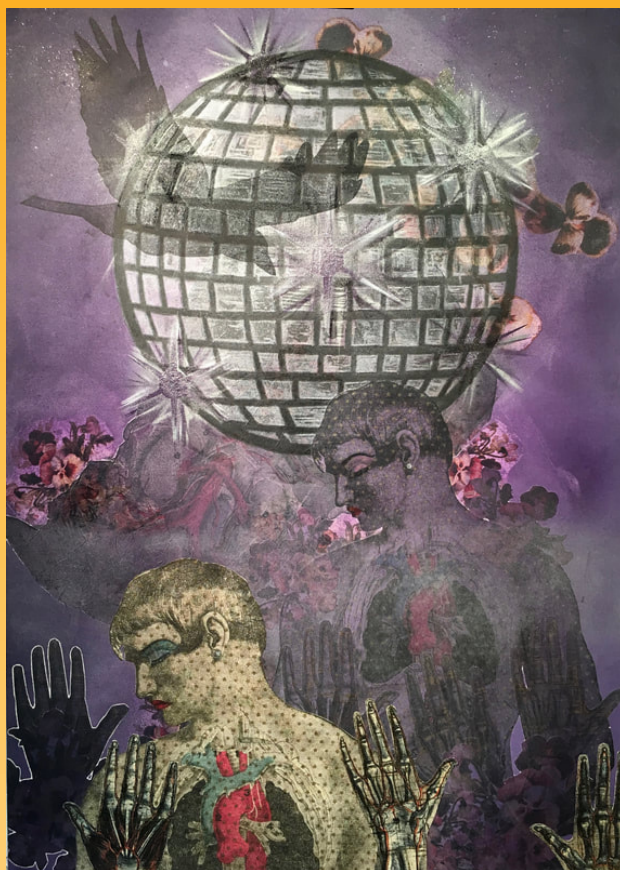
Lastly, LGBTQ+ people must be specifically included in Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) processes. Most DDR processes do not currently accommodate for LGBTQ+ individuals and tend to operate around heterosexual and cisgender norms. Including LGBTQ+ individuals in DDR plans and design would help provide a safe space for transitioning combatants back into society.<sup>8</sup> Involving LGBTQ+ people in the design of DDR processes allows for a greater understanding of the needs and perspectives of LGBTQ+ individuals in post-conflict zones.

# LGBTQ+ ACTIVISM

Fighting for inclusion is important, but activists also recognize that many of the disarmament and peace and security spaces simply were not set up for LGBTQ+ individuals.<sup>9</sup> This is why many activists seek to start their own organizations that prioritize diverse perspectives and intentionally mandate protections for LGBTQ+ people.

LGBTQ+ individuals have been incredibly active in humanitarian disarmament efforts, often at the expense of their privacy and security. LGBTQ+ activists have been notably involved in promoting the TPNW in local cities, challenging the concepts of nuclear deterrence and encouraging their states to sign the Treaty.

LGBTQ+ activists have also been very vocal about gun violence against LGBTQ+ individuals. Marches and protests were held to raise awareness about the connection between gun violence and homophobia, while also calling for stricter gun laws in the U.S., following the deadly Pulse nightclub shooting which killed 49 people in 2016.



A painting from John Gutoskey's series *PULSE Nightclub: 49 Elegies*, which paid tribute to the 49 lives lost in 2016 in Orlando, credit: John Gutoskey

## GET INVOLVED & FURTHER LEARNING

### LEARN:

Listen to LGBTQ+ individuals about what protections they need to be able to express themselves and explore their identities safe from armed violence. Learn about the ways in which gender norms can cause real violence and harm to LGBTQ+ communities.

### UNLEARN:

Confront queerphobic mentalities in yourself and your communities through focusing on inclusive pronouns, non-gendered activities, and breaking down gender stereotypes that you may hold.

### READ:

- *Banning the Bomb, Smashing the Patriarchy* by Ray Acheson
- "A feminist approach for addressing excessive military spending" by Ray Acheson and Madeleine Rees, WILPF

### ENGAGE:

- Connect with local LGBTQ+ activist groups to learn more about what protections are needed to ensure safe, equal, and full participation in the community
- Write to your local government representative to share your support for adding LGBTQ+ persons to National Action Plans under the WPS agenda

# DISARMAMENT &

# EMERGING TECHNOLOGY

Emerging technologies are the future of healthcare, education, socialization, and more. But the dual-use nature of tech poses challenges for disarmament and security efforts. The international community must work to establish comprehensive regulations and standards to prevent technology from being further weaponized.



An example killer robot, London, England, 2013, credit: Oli Scarff /Getty Images

## KILLER ROBOTS AND DRONES

One of the main concerns with emerging technologies being weaponized is the potential for weapons to become autonomous. Pop culture has explored this content heavily. From *The Terminator* to *Black Mirror*, the effects of autonomous weapons are just as terrifying as they appear on screen.

Autonomous weapons that can kill humans are considered Lethal Autonomous Weapons (LAWs). The

distinguishing features of LAWs are the absence of human decision making at any point in the process, and the lethal capabilities of their weapons systems. This is where experts are concerned – when humanity signs over decisions of life and death to a machine that cannot be equipped with human reasoning and judgment, the potential risk multiplies.<sup>1</sup>

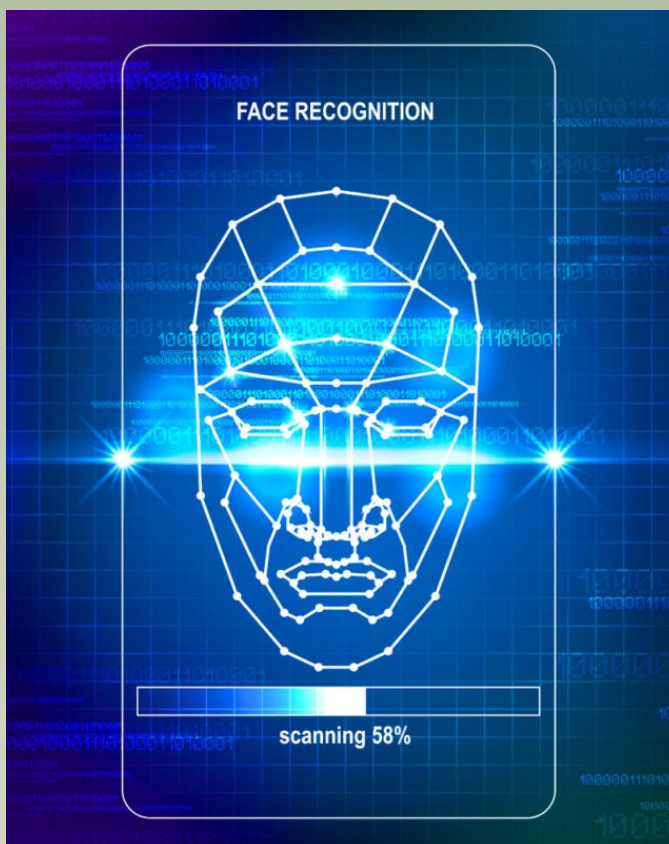
Drone technology, a system of remotely piloted un-crewed aircrafts armed with surveillance and weapons capabilities, has revolutionized warfare. The removal of human contact with the target and the lessening degrees of empathy have researchers concerned about the psychological impacts to drone operators and victims alike. While drone technology already exists, it is not too late to apply these same concerns to LAWs and legislate their use before they are in circulation.

The leading organization working against LAWs is the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots. The Campaign is especially concerned about the dangers of LAWs for marginalized groups.

# AI AND PRIVACY IMPLICATIONS FOR WARFARE

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has permeated the everyday lives of citizens through technology such as predictive texting, Siri, targeted marketing, and more. The benefits of AI for commercial uses are huge, but the concerns about its militarization are dominating disarmament spaces. The fact that AI is used commercially represents the complicated nature of this issue, and how unregulated companies such as Clearview AI or Facebook can become involved in human rights abuses.

Clearview AI has recently come under fire for its practices of data scraping – that is, taking pictures, videos, and information from social media sites without users' knowledge and selling it to third parties.<sup>2</sup> In Canada, this data was used by the RCMP to inform its facial recognition technology. Facial recognition, another commonality of many smartphones and smart technologies employed across the world, has massive implications for over-policed and marginalized communities. In the case of the RCMP's facial recognition technology, Canadians were concerned about the potential for racial profiling and surveillance of Black and Indigenous communities.<sup>3</sup> Facial recognition can improve tracking capabilities, which for commercial uses may be fine, yet can make it increasingly difficult for citizens to remain anonymous.



A graphic depicting facial recognition technology, credit: Fractal Pictures/Shutterstock.com

The importance of remaining anonymous is not simply a choice or preference, but can be a matter of life or death. Firstly, facial recognition shows a racial bias, in that it is much more capable at identifying the exact identity of a white man, but struggles to match Black and Brown faces more. This can lead to misidentifying targets and over-policing said populations.<sup>4</sup> Facial recognition technology has already been used in China to target and track Uyghurs, the Muslim minority in northern China. Through this technology, Uyghurs have been rounded up into “re-education camps” and continually persecuted on the basis of race and religion.<sup>5</sup>

There are very real concerns that authoritarian governments and police states will be, or already are, using facial recognition and AI to target and trace persecuted populations unto their harm or imprisonment.

# PROFESSIONALS FOR DISARMAMENT

Disarmament experts and researchers often express frustration at the fact that technology has developed so much quicker than policy to regulate it. The scientists and developers of such technology have expressed similar qualms. Technology, like other fields of science, is multi-use. This allows certain technologies to be developed for a specific purpose, and then used for another. This tension has led to some of the world's leading science and technology firms joining together to call for a ban of autonomous weapons.<sup>6</sup> Many of the same firms drafted and joined a pledge to never manufacture or use LAWS.<sup>7</sup>

There is a growing sense among researchers and experts about the need for dual systems of enforcement to ensure that national and international regulations are stronger for technology companies, and that the companies themselves have internal systems of review that promote ethical and peaceful decisions.<sup>8</sup> These internal systems may include employing social scientists and ethical boards to review national policies and current events to assess where technologies could be misused by authoritarian governments. Experts also suggest tech companies be required to share more information with consumers about how their data may be used.<sup>9</sup>

The Tech 4 Good movement encapsulates the role of tech companies in the changing landscape of technological weapons proliferation by encouraging greater accountability for tech leaders. They also encourage knowledge sharing with policy experts to ensure that regulations and laws can catch up with innovation.<sup>10</sup>

## GET INVOLVED & FURTHER LEARNING

### LEARN:

Take the time to investigate how your data is being used through social media, smartphones, and consumer habits. Learn about the role that tech companies play in weapons proliferation and warfare, and how marginalized groups may be affected by the companies you monetarily support.

### UNLEARN:

Challenge the ideals of capitalism that allow the market to remain unchecked and unregulated. Confront any misconceptions you may have about the spreading of disinformation and misinformation, and how it affects democratic systems and marginalized peoples.

### READ:

- The Campaign to Stop Killer Robots Campaigner's Kit
- United Nations Institute on Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) on Lethal Autonomous Weapons

### ENGAGE:

- Keep up with the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots' latest information and ways to get involved
- Write to your local government representative and express your support for a lethal autonomous weapons ban and increased regulations for tech companies involved in data scraping and facial recognition/AI technologies

# DISARMAMENT &

# CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change is currently one of the greatest threats to the planet and all of humanity. The global military machine contributes to climate change far more than any individual nation. Disarmament is key to cutting military greenhouse gas emissions and preventing further climate fallout from potential nuclear detonation.

## MILITARY EMISSIONS

Global military operations account for some of the highest greenhouse gas emissions levels each year. The Pentagon, which is responsible for all U.S. military operations, has higher emissions than entire countries in Europe.<sup>4</sup> Ironically, one of the major aims of the U.S. military is to protect oil, which is a non-renewable energy source. The very act of protecting oil overseas for energy usage contributes to the need for more oil to deploy such protections.<sup>5</sup> Conflict zones not only contribute to global emissions but are also more likely to occur in regions that are especially vulnerable to climate change. As conflict continues, emissions grow and contribute to climate change, which then contributes to political and social tensions. The more tensions between a nation ravaged by climate change, the more likely they are to fall into conflict once again.<sup>6</sup> The only way to stop this cycle is to reduce conflicts and the need for military emissions.

**\$1981 BILLION**<sup>1</sup>

spent on the global arms trade in 2020

**56 MILLION**<sup>2</sup>

metric tons were emitted by the U.S. Department of Defense in 2018

**\$300 B - \$50 T**<sup>3</sup>

needed to end climate change in the next two decades

## DIVESTMENT

Military budgets and the global arms trade spent nearly \$2 trillion in 2020, in the midst of a global pandemic and temporary global ceasefire.<sup>7</sup> Meanwhile, experts estimate that it will cost between \$300 billion and \$50 trillion to end climate change within the next two decades.<sup>8</sup> Divesting weapons spending and investing in global climate action efforts would not only contribute to the cost of fighting climate change, but would also effectively cut the emissions of all militaries and reduce the threat of conflict for those facing natural disasters and climate-related incidents.

# NUCLEAR WAR AND NUCLEAR ENERGY

Nuclear war, if it occurred today, would be catastrophic. Not only are the 14,000 nuclear weapons in circulation far more powerful than the bombs dropped at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but the environmental effects of nuclear war could send us into a nuclear winter, to the detriment of humanity.<sup>9</sup>



The aftermath of the Hiroshima bombing in 1945, credit: Rolls Press / Popperfoto / Getty

In contrast, the real and potential benefits of nuclear energy as clean energy that could dramatically reduce reliance on fossil fuels and non-renewable energy sources, are deeply tied to the successes of nuclear disarmament. At present, there are governing bodies that track peaceful uses of nuclear energy and ensure accountability for those producing it. Yet the widespread use of nuclear energy has not been accomplished as it would take a much larger network of accountability and tracking to ensure no bad actors were using nuclear energy production to develop nuclear weapons.<sup>10</sup>

There is also a potential for nuclear disarmament to feed directly into nuclear energy production. One of the logistical challenges of nuclear disarmament that current treaties have yet to address is the actual decommissioning of the weapons and disposal of nuclear waste. Yet expert opinion is that, if supervised properly, there is a potential for nuclear weapons waste to be repurposed into nuclear energy materials.<sup>11</sup> In this way, nuclear weapons can make a huge difference in the global fight against climate change.



A dismantled nuclear bomber, Ukraine, 2006, credit: Gleb Gerenich, Reuters

# CLIMATE DISASTERS DELAYING DISARMAMENT EFFORTS



Landmine clearance following a flood in Bosnia, credit: Jasmin Brutus/Handicap International

Climate change can also make peace and DDR efforts more difficult. The inability to access certain regions because of mudslides, avalanches, fires, floods, and more can deeply impact humanitarian efforts to respond to war and conflict. It can also impact the delivery of food and medical supplies that civilians desperately need.<sup>12</sup>

DDR efforts such as minefield clearance can become increasingly difficult with the threat of climate change.<sup>13</sup> Minefield clearance relies heavily on mapping the locations of mines, and heavy rainfall and landslides can move mines from their mapped location. This creates a significant amount of work for those

engaged in demining, and threatens the safety of the operations.

It is increasingly important to centre climate change in discussions around rebuilding in post-conflict zones. Using local knowledge of the climate and drawing from shared scientific plans on how to create an eco-friendly city should be priorities for post-conflict zones to ensure sustainable reconstruction.

## GET INVOLVED & FURTHER LEARNING

### LEARN:

The scientific community has been ringing the bells of climate disaster for many decades, and have created detailed plans and guidelines on how to combat climate change. Listening to their years of research is vital to moving forward. Learning from the people on the ground who are affected by both climate change and conflict will allow for more experienced perspectives to be integrated into better conflict and climate change planning.

### UNLEARN:

Challenge the supremacy of ideas such as military proliferation and nuclear deterrence, knowing that their divestment would make a huge difference for peace and ending climate change.

### READ:

- Empowerment and Advocacy Toolkit from Reversing the Trend
- "Why United Nations peace operations cannot ignore climate change" by SIPRI
- "Climate disarmament: how nonviolence can resist the militarisation of the climate crisis" by Daniele Taurino

### ENGAGE:

- Write to your local government representative to express your support for the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) as a necessary step for climate action
- Connect with local climate action leaders to get involved in your community



## DISARMAMENT &

# INDIGENOUS PROSPERITY

Colonialism has driven hundreds of years of exploration and destruction at the expense of Indigenous bodies and land. Indigenous peoples have borne the brunt of nuclear testing in the Marshall Islands, uranium mining and nuclear waste disposal in uranium-rich regions, and the environmental effects of nuclear runoff. Indigenous peoples continue to be disproportionately impacted by nuclear weapons.



Nuclear test on Bikini Atoll, Marshall Islands, 1946, credit: AAP/AP

## NUCLEAR TESTS IN THE PACIFIC

Over the course of three decades, dozens of nuclear tests were carried out in the Pacific by the French, British, and U.S. militaries.<sup>1</sup> These bombs were more powerful than the ones dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, devastating island ecology, and wreaking havoc on inhabitants. Due to the secrecy of nuclear testing, inhabitants of nearby islands were often within a dangerous proximity to the explosion, causing painful and fatal bodily harm. The effects of nuclear testing continue to this day, ranging from birth defects caused by radiation in generations two to three times removed from initial exposure, to regions such as the Kwajalein Atoll still being used for U.S. ballistic missile testing.<sup>2</sup>



Bruce Power Generating Station, Tiverton, ON, credit: Bruce Power

## URANIUM STORES

Uranium, an essential component to the production of nuclear energy and weapons, is mined and extracted from the land in what is referred to as *nuclear colonialism*.<sup>3</sup> Nuclear colonialism highlights the fact that over 70% of the world's uranium is located on Indigenous land and Indigenous communities suffer from the ongoing extraction of uranium

and subsequent dumping of nuclear waste.<sup>4</sup>

## NUCLEARISM AND PATRIARCHY

Nuclear capabilities, whether for energy or weaponry, are already being used to power new technologies and innovations that will become increasingly important in the future. Marked by the Cold War arms race to modernity, opposition to nuclear development is subsequently disregarded as anti-progress.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, nuclear weaponry and technology is inherently masculine, from its phallic imagery to its emphasis on power and destruction. Indigenous resistance based in concerns about the environment and reproductive health are often feminized, demeaning Indigenous knowledge and respect for life.<sup>6</sup>

## REFLECTIONS ON THE LEGACY OF NUCLEAR TESTING

Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner is a Marshallese poet and activist who has spent years focusing on the fallout from the nuclear tests in the Marshall Islands. Jetnil-Kijiner blogs about the experience and shares reflections in the book, *Iep Jāltok: Poems From a Marshallese Daughter*.



BRAVO test crater on Bikini Atoll, Marshall Islands, credit: Dan Lin

Jetnil-Kijiner travelled to the Marshall Islands to film and reflect on the legacy of nuclear explosions on the Marshallese. While there, she recorded part three of the Dome Series, entitled, "Anointed". The poem weaves the sadness and anger felt by Indigenous peoples in the Marshall Islands as a response to the nuclear testing they endured. An excerpt of the poem is shared on the next page.

I am looking for more stories. I look and I look.

There must be more to this than incinerated trees, a cracked dome, a rising sea, a leaking nuclear waste with no fence, there must be more than a concrete shell that houses death.

Here is a legend of a shell. Anointed with power. Letao used this shell to turn himself into kindling for the first fire. He gave this fire to a small boy. The boy almost burned his entire village to the ground. Licks of fire leapt from strands of coconut leaves from skin and bone and while the boy cried Letao laughed and laughed.

Here is a story of a people on fire – we pretend it is not burning all of us.

Here is a story of the ways we've been tricked, of the lies we've been told:

*It's not radioactive anymore*

*Your illnesses are normal*

*You're fine.*

*You're fine.*

My belly is a crater empty of stories and answers only questions, hard as concrete.

Who gave them this power?

Who anointed them with the power to burn?

- Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner, *Anointed*<sup>7</sup>

## GET INVOLVED & FURTHER LEARNING

### LEARN:

Listening to Indigenous stories and wisdom will not only honour their experiences, but will also provide a key perspective on disarmament for the sake of the environment and vulnerable peoples.

### UNLEARN:

Challenge the anti-Indigenous rhetoric, as it is advantageous to the military-industrial complex and contributes to "decolonization" efforts that focus more on false promises rather than land-back.

### READ:

- UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)
- *Iep Jāltok: Poems From a Marshallese Daughter* by Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner

### ENGAGE:

- Join/amplify efforts of Indigenous groups in uranium-rich regions about their rejection of nuclear plants and nuclear waste disposal on their land
- Learn about the Indigenous land you may work or live on and get involved in land-back efforts through financial or other support

# DISARMAMENT &

# FORCED MIGRATION

Forced migrants, refugees, and Internally Displaced Peoples (IDPs) are deeply affected by conflict. Armed conflict also contributes to other drivers of displacement as conflict-affected communities experience new vulnerabilities to the effects of climate change, COVID-19, and global recessions.

**7.5 MILLION**<sup>1</sup>

people were newly internally displaced due to armed conflict in 2020

**26.4 MILLION**<sup>2</sup>

people were refugees by the end of 2020

**82.4 MILLION**<sup>3</sup>

people were forcibly displaced by the end of 2020



Lifejacket Graveyard, Lesvos, Greece, 2016, credit: Jaaziel Ozuna

## PROXIMITY TO CONFLICT

Proximity to conflict is a major driver of forced displacement. Among the fears of persecution, indiscriminate fighting, and navigating a changing political landscape, armed conflict also contributes to the destruction of a functioning state.

The use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas (EWIPA) has contributed greatly to the destruction of necessary infrastructure and resource systems. For example, schools, hospitals, roadways, and the economic heart of a city are often directly or indirectly targeted by explosive weapons. Even in cases where critical infrastructure is intact, access to clean water, sanitization tools, and supply chain deliveries may be hindered. In such cases, individuals may need to flee their homes in order to have access to these critical functions.



The remnants of a building in Yemen, credit: Xinhua News Agency/Getty Images

## WEAPONS DIVESTMENT AND AID

One of the troubling features of the current forced migration crisis as a result of armed conflict is the role of the international community. Conflicts such as Yemen's devastating war have been exacerbated by the international arms trade and humanitarian failures. Facing one of the worst humanitarian crises of the 21st Century, Yemen has been the

recipient of hundreds of millions of dollars in aid yearly. The same nations arming the conflict are among the top donors.<sup>4</sup> Rather than halting arms exports or divest funds from weapons proliferation, the international community allows for Yemen to continually face unimaginable levels of strife. Their failures have caused more than 4.2 million Yemenis to flee their homes and relocate both within and outside the country, while millions more face food insecurity and are in need of humanitarian assistance.<sup>5</sup> No amount of aid dollars can make as big a difference as halting arms exports to the parties to the conflict would.

## ADDITIONAL CAUSES OF DISPLACEMENT

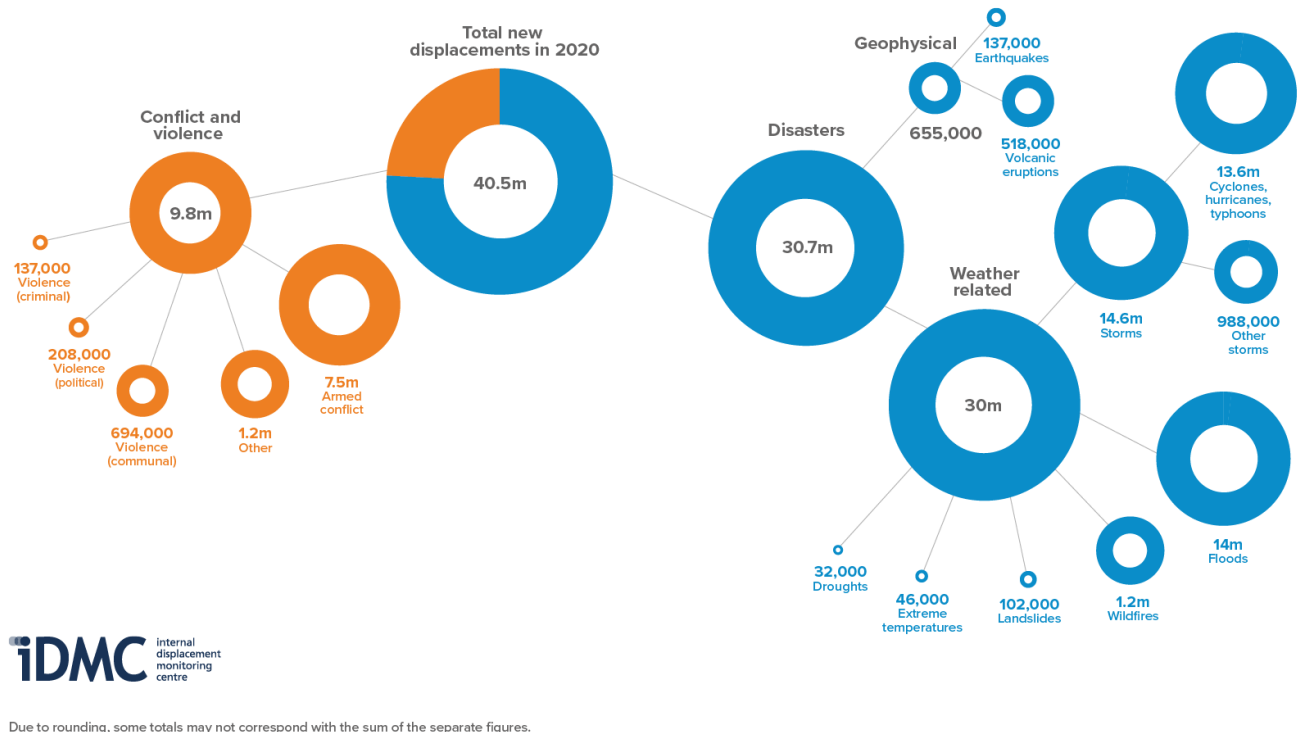
Trends from the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) indicate that disasters are contributing to greater numbers of people fleeing home. As climate change continues to ravage the planet, the number of disastrous weather and climate related instances will increase. In 2020, IDMC reported 30.7 million internally displaced people fled their homes as a result of a disaster.<sup>6</sup>

While this may appear to have nothing to do with arms proliferation and armed conflict, there are a number of ways that forced displacement as a result of climate disaster is an indirect result of armed conflict. The countries that are already experiencing the most adverse effects of climate change are primarily located in the Global South, where histories of imperialism and colonialism have intersected and created prolonged instability.<sup>7</sup> Climate change and natural disasters are of course indiscriminate, but poor infrastructure and lack of access to resources for lower classes and/or minorities are a direct result of political and economic discrimination in urban planning.<sup>8</sup>

In conflict and post-conflict zones, infrastructure is far more vulnerable to destruction as it may have been damaged or fell into disuse. Furthermore, persecution and warring factions in a region may make it impossible for certain populations to move out of harm's way in advance of a natural disaster, or to make their way to safety during a natural disaster.

As we see more people forced to flee home due to climate change, we must also ask how we can continue to justify the amount of money spent on weapons when those funds could be divested to prevention of and response to climate disasters.

## New displacements in 2020: breakdown for conflict and disasters



Infographic detailing the different causes for internal displacement in 2020, credit: IDMC

## GET INVOLVED & FURTHER LEARNING

### LEARN:

Refugees and forced migrants are very vocal and active in many different spheres of influence. Many have chosen to share their experiences with the hope that it will help lawmakers and civil society better understand what they are going through and create better policy to respond to the needs of migrants and prevent further cycles of displacement. Listening to and learning from refugees will further aid these efforts.

### UNLEARN:

Challenge your own biases about refugees and forced migrants. Confront rhetoric that ignores the role of colonialism, neocolonialism, and military imperialism in analyses of the root causes of displacement.

### READ:

- UNHCR Flagship Reports, Forced Displacement in 2020
- International Organization for Migration (IOM) World Migration Report 2020
- Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) Global Report on Displacement 2021

### ENGAGE:

- Get in contact with your local government representative to share your support for open borders for refugees in COVID-19 recovery
- Discuss the role of disarmament in refugee and forced migrant protections with your friends and family, or on social media

# DISARMAMENT &

# DISABILITY RIGHTS

Armed conflict has the potential to harm and injure civilians and combatants alike, at times causing life-long disabilities. Reaffirming the person-hood of disabled peoples, disarmament efforts must focus on ensuring full and equal participation of disabled peoples.

## VULNERABILITY TO CONFLICTS AND ABUSES

Persons with disabilities are more vulnerable to conflict and its direct effects on society. The direct effects may include the dissolution of support systems, explosive weapons destroying accessible buildings, or the inability to safely access necessary medical or support services in a crisis.<sup>1</sup> Disabled peoples are also more vulnerable to rights abuses, and this is especially true during times of war.

Disabled children are especially vulnerable. Child soldier recruiters target children who are already disadvantaged, and disabled children in conflict zones are frequently excluded from full inclusion in the community.<sup>2</sup> Disabled child soldiers face major barriers in reintegrating into society through Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration (DDR) processes in the post-conflict period.<sup>3</sup> Former child soldiers must overcome significant stigma and can often feel unwelcome in DDR processes as they reckon with their past actions. Persons with disabilities are already stigmatized in society, and the double identity as a disabled former child soldier can be especially difficult to overcome.

## DDR PROCESSES

DDR processes are integral to transitioning combatants back into citizens.<sup>4</sup> As intrastate conflicts have grown increasingly violent and protracted, DDR processes play an even larger role as there may be thousands of ex-combatants from warring factions working to reintegrate into the same society. The incredible importance of DDR processes is contrasted with the fact that DDR processes often fail to include marginalized groups that may not fall into the cisgender male, heterosexual, able-bodied soldier stereotype.



United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo engaged in DDR processes, credit: UN Photo

DDR processes frequently fail to account for disabled peoples in their programming.<sup>5</sup> This occurs for many reasons. Firstly, disabled peoples are not typically included in conversations about DDR implementation. Without disabled peoples sharing their perspectives and experiences and integrating their needs into the design, the DDR services will not be as effective or inclusive. Consequently, DDR processes do not account for accommodations to ensure full and equal participation by ex-combatants with disabilities.<sup>6</sup> Lastly, the nature of being a disabled ex-combatant can be stigmatized, especially in regions where the hyper-masculine, able-bodied soldier stereotype is perpetuated. Studies in post-conflict zones such as Colombia found that disabled ex-combatants were unwilling to identify as disabled and thus did not seek out accommodations or community.<sup>7</sup> As seen with child soldiers, ex-combatants face barriers to reintegration as a result of their actions during the conflict, and disabled ex-combatants even more so.

Failing to account for disabled peoples in the DDR design and implementation in post-conflict zones not only hinders access and support for ex-combatants with disabilities, but it also leads to a lack of inclusion in the post-conflict rebuilding and furthers the enforced invisibility of disabled peoples.

## NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US

"Nothing About Us Without Us" became popularized in the 1980s by the Disability Rights Movement (DRM) as a rallying cry to stop the use of disabled bodies and experiences without consent.<sup>8</sup> DRM activists have long advocated for the full and equal participation of disabled peoples across society, focusing on the social model of disability that reframes the discussion away from the disability and towards the inaccessible system.<sup>9</sup> The social model of disability can be applied to disarmament and conflict zones. When discussing the harms of war, it is important to focus on the act committed rather than the disability that results from it.



Agent Orange sprayed by a U.S. military helicopter, credit: Brian K. Grigsby, Department of Defense/The National Archives

## AGENT ORANGE

Disabled peoples have frequently been used as "evidence" of the harms of war. This was especially true in the aftermath of Agent Orange use in Vietnam. American soldiers' reproductive capabilities were altered by the chemicals.<sup>10</sup> Many soldiers voiced their concerns about the effects of Agent Orange after their children were born with disabilities. American families brought lawsuits against the government seeking compensation for their children's disabilities, citing them as caused by the war.



Families used their disabled children to generate publicity about the effects of Agent Orange, and in doing so perpetuated harmful ideas about their children's capabilities, and subsequently the capabilities of disabled peoples. It is now clear that the lawsuits depended on the children affected by Agent Orange to be viewed as "irrevocably harmed" and thus there were political and financial motivations to continue their portrayal as victims.<sup>11</sup>

## DISABLED ACTIVISTS FOR DISARMAMENT

Disabled peoples are activists and do not need able-bodied people to speak for them. Prominent disabled activists have worked alongside and in the UN and formed non-profits to raise awareness about the effects of armed violence. Many have been integral in drafting treaties and policies that have banned specific types of weapons and explosives, and are leading the charge for full and equal inclusion of persons with disabilities in post-conflict zones.



Margaret Arach Orech (right) receiving the EU Human Rights Defender Award 2018, credit: Royal Norwegian Embassy in Kampala (Facebook)

Margaret Arach Orech is the Founding Director of the Uganda Landmines Survivor's Association, an Ambassador for the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), and recipient of the Joan B. Kroc Institute's Women PeaceMaker award in 2014.<sup>12</sup> Orech has worked to support people living with disabilities in Uganda and across the world. She continues to be integral in sharing the ICBL message and championing the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

## GET INVOLVED & FURTHER LEARNING

### LEARN:

Seeking out and listening to disabled peoples' stories, experiences, and perspectives is an act of recognizing and affirming their full autonomy and visibility. It is especially important to listen to perspectives on what is needed in society to ensure disabled peoples' full and equal participation in non-conflict, conflict, and post-conflict zones.

### UNLEARN:

Challenge ableist thinking and institutions that portray disabled peoples as victims, or voiceless and passive observers. Examine your own bias in who you perceive to be disabled, and what disabled peoples are deserving of and capable of doing with consent and autonomy.

### READ:

- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)
- UNSC 2475 Protection of Persons with Disabilities in Conflict

### ENGAGE:

- Connect with organizations that work in conflict and post-conflict zones to learn more about their inclusion of disabled peoples
- Encourage local organizations to prioritize accessibility when planning campaigns

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The background is a light blue gradient with several overlapping, wavy shapes in a darker blue color. These shapes are positioned at the bottom of the page, creating a sense of depth and movement. The overall aesthetic is clean and modern.

**MOSEY, 2021**