

As the old year passes and the new one begins, it's easy to become discouraged over the fact that the \$700 billion U.S. military spending bill allocates more money than ever before, enabling war and weapons to proliferate. But there are signs that all is not lost. Humanity continues to be vigilant, listening to our better angels. Polly Mann cites some examples here:

PM: Listening to Our Better Angels

by Polly Mann

No Non-human Combatants

Is there a group of human beings so evil that they don't deserve human rights? The International Red Cross [ICRC] does not think so. In an October 27 *New York Times* article, ICRC Deputy Director for Middle East Patrick Hamilton is quoted as saying that even ISIS members (known also as ISIL, IS, and Daesh) are entitled to human rights: "There are emotive, difficult issues but the law does provide a sober mechanism for dealing with all this."

If you look at the International Red Cross blog, you will see that the organization is highly concerned about "rhetoric that 'dehumanizes' and 'demonizes' the enemy or suggests that a particular adversary is 'outside the bounds of humanity' and can be treated 'as if humanitarian law doesn't apply.'" On the issue of foreign fighters and their families leaving Iraq and Syria, the ICRC director said: "Such language, which could appear to justify war crimes or illegal treatment of detainees, has become more common on all sides of the conflicts in Iraq and Syria." He went on to state that this situation "had gotten so common that the Red Cross felt it necessary to remind all combatants that international humanitarian law requires due process and humane treatment of detainees without exception." The ICRC addressed the United Nations General Assembly with the message.

To see that all are treated fairly and humanely, the Red Cross visited 44,000 detainees in Iraq in 2017. And, what of the hapless persons accused of guilt by association with suspects? The Red Cross is currently providing humanitarian assistance to 1,300 women and children from around 20 nationalities detained in Mosul as suspected relatives of ISIL fighters. The Red Cross is also setting up an office in northeastern Syria to work on such issues.

People from Nuclear Nations Protest Bombs

Beginning last March 26th, nuclear disarmament activists protested for 20 weeks against the presence of the 20 U.S. thermonuclear gravity bombs at the Luftwaffe's Büchel Air Base in Germany. In July, U.S. peace activists from seven states and Washington, D.C., joined an international coalition which included citizens from Russia, China, Britain, France, the Netherlands, and Germany, as well as Mexico (Mexico being the only one in this list not to host nuclear weapons). The U.S. is pursuing production of a new bomb core, the B61-12, to replace the 20 B61 that already exist. The new weapons are far more powerful than those unleashed on Japan in World War II. The Pentagon calls the planned program "modernization" in order to skirt the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty's prohibitions against new nuclear weapons.

But antinuclear activists will not give up and are planning another protest at Büchel in 2018.

Polly Mann is a co-founder of WAMM and frequent contributor to the WAMM Newsletter.

ACTION: Join the WAMM Campaign to Ban Nuclear Weapons! You can help by asking your friends, relatives, neighbors, book club, religious or community organization to sign a petition and then return it to the WAMM office so that we can deliver them to Minnesota congressional representatives. Petitions available from the WAMM office. Call 612-827-5364 or write to wamm@mtn.org, or (by U.S. mail): 4200 Cedar Avenue S., Suite 3, Minneapolis, MN 55407 to have one or more copies mailed to you.