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Where's Humanity with an Exploding National "Defense" Budget?

by Marie Braun

Women Against Military Madness, since its inception in 1982, has been calling for cutting the military budget and using the money to support human needs such as improved healthcare, peaceful job creation, fighting climate change, increasing aid to education, and alleviating poverty. However, despite the efforts of WAMM and many other groups, the U.S. military budget continues to grow by leaps and bounds. In 1982, it was \$180 billion; the Biden Administration's proposed total National Defense budget for 2022 is \$753 billion. This bloated budget, the vast majority of which goes to the military, is unconscionable given the serious internal problems faced

by our country.* [Biden's budget was released May 28, and, as of this moment, is currently in the hands of Congress, which will, unless there is a major shift, match or top Biden's.]

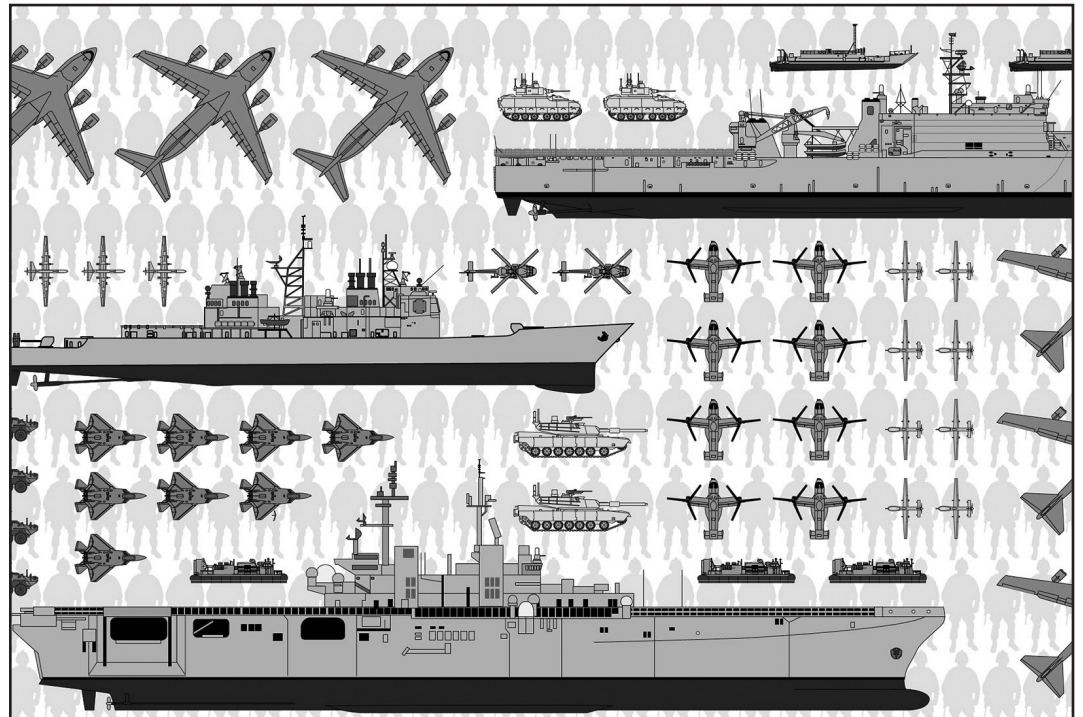
The devastating impact of the coronavirus pandemic and its economic fallout provide ample reason for our country to reconsider what truly constitutes national security. The massive U.S. arsenal and fighting force deployed worldwide are powerless against grave, nonmilitary threats to national security—from a raging pandemic to the fact that tens of millions of Americans struggle to pay for food, housing, and health care.

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*Kinderhunger, 1923
Käthe Kollwitz*

According to the Children's Defense Fund, due to cuts in funding, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), our nation's largest federal nutrition program, falls far short of meeting needs – and those needs have grown since the pandemic began.



Graphic: Congressional Budget Office

The statements and opinions reflected in this newsletter are the views of the author and not necessarily official positions of WAMM. We encourage a diversity of opinion to represent the range of perspectives that coexist under the banner of WAMM's mission statement.

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Women Against Military Madness is a nonviolent, feminist organization, founded in 1982, that works in solidarity with others to create a system of social equality, self-determination and justice through education, action and the empowerment of women. WAMM's purpose is to dismantle systems of militarism, economic exploitation and global oppression.

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We Aren't Fooled: War by Any Name Is Still War

Afghanistan: "Over the Horizon"

When it comes to inflicting miseries on innocent Afghan people, there's plenty of blame to be shared . . . Yet, unquestionably, the warring party in Afghanistan with the most sophisticated weapons and seemingly endless access to funds has been the United States. Funds were spent not to lift Afghans to a place of security from which they might have worked to moderate Taliban rule, but to further frustrate them, beating down their hopes of future participatory governance with twenty years of war and brutal impoverishment. The war has been a prelude to the United States' inevitable retreat and the return of a possibly more enraged and dysfunctional Taliban to rule over a shattered population.

The troop withdrawal negotiated by President Joe Biden and U.S. military officials is not a peace agreement. Rather, it signals the end of an occupation resulting from an unlawful invasion, and while troops are leaving, the Biden Administration is already laying plans for "over the horizon" drone surveillance, drone strikes, and "manned" aircraft strikes which could exacerbate and prolong the war.

— *Kathy Kelly, a longtime peace activist, has been in Afghanistan many times throughout the years. See her article, "Reckoning and Reparations in Afghanistan," The Progressive, July 15, 2021.*

Somalia: "Collective Defense"

The U.S. military was supposed to have pulled out of Somalia mid January of 2021, as announced by Trump. However, that doesn't mean leaving the country. The U.S. military is stationed in adjacent countries and can still bomb Somalia as they did on July 20 and again on July 23. According to online news site, *The Hill*, U.S. Africa Command General Stephen Townsend claimed his own authority to strike under "collective defense", meaning it's conducted with partners veiled by "operational security." The Pentagon claimed the bombing was done under the 9/11 Authorization for the Use of Military Force (AUMF) which gave the president the power to strike anywhere, anytime, ignoring the fact that the U.S. House of Representatives had recently voted to repeal the AUMF and that even the President wasn't informed of the action. So evidently a general can make decisions to bomb, independent of any branch of government.

Congresswoman Ilhan Omar of Minnesota questioned the idea of collective defense and asked that "strategy focus first and foremost on the security of the Somali people and the stability of the Somali state." — *Newsletter staff*



Afghan women and girls waiting for duvets to protect them from the cold. Photo: Dr. Hakim

Who Profits? Northrup Grumman Who Dies? The People of Gaza

In June and July, during a supposed cease-fire, Israel sent fighter jets screaming into the Gaza Strip to deliver several air strikes. Home to two million Palestinians suffering under a barbaric siege of land, sea, and air, Gaza was – and still is – reeling from the destruction wrought by Israel’s bombing campaign in May. The United Nations Relief Works Agency (UNRWA) said “the violence had been worse in intensity and terror than 2014.”

The following talk was delivered on May 27, by Sarah Martin of Women Against Military Madness, soon after Israel had bombed Gaza continuously for 11 days and nights in what was clearly a merciless asymmetrical attack on the besieged area. The talk was delivered at an anti-war rally in front of Northrup Grumman’s Armament Business Systems office in the Minneapolis suburb of Plymouth and was based on facts from an investigation of weapons manufacturers by the Friends Service Committee.

This merchant of death is the fifth largest military company in the world and the third largest in the U.S., and has had the blood of Gazans on its hands for years.

Human Rights Watch; Amnesty International; the prominent Israeli group, B’tselem; and UN Human Rights experts have denounced Israel’s attacks as human rights violations, collective punishment, and, at times, war crimes.

In fact, F-16 fighter jets, Apache helicopters, and other weapons systems containing parts manufactured by Northrup Grumman have been used repeatedly by Israel in its attacks that have resulted altogether in thousands of civilian casualties in Lebanon; the occupied Palestinian

West Bank; and the Gaza Strip, which Israel has held under siege for years.

These murderous attacks include those in Operation Cast Lead, which Israel conducted December 2008 into January 2009. 1,394 Palestinians were killed in attacks from F-16 fighter jets on civilian homes and refugee camps, and with missiles fired from Apache helicopters targeting civilians, civilian infrastructure, and clearly marked ambulances.

Northrup Grumman Sa’ar 5 missile ships used by the Israeli Navy in 2006 on Lebanon were deployed again in Operation Cast Lead to enforce the illegal naval blockade of the sea along the Gaza Strip. They were also used in the Israeli attack on the unarmed Free Gaza Flotilla in 2010, resulting in the killing of 10 humanitarian activists.

In 2014, using Grumman-made weapons, Israel conducted an assault on Gaza called Operation Protective Edge, in which more than 2,000 Palestinians were killed. F-16 fighter jets were repeatedly used in 2018 to conduct air strikes on Gaza, again resulting in many civilian deaths.

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W.A.M.M. Committees

Issues Committees:

- Book Club
- End Domestic Militarism
- End Military Madness Against the Earth
- End War
- Middle East
- St. Joan of Arc/W.A.M.M. Peacemakers
- Movies
- Solidarity Committee on the Americas
- Tackling Torture at the Top (T3)

Standing Committees:

- Coordinating
- Finance
- Fundraising
- Membership/Outreach
- Newsletter
- Personnel
- Program/New Issues
- Silent Auction
- Social Media

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*A young girl in Gaza after the bombing.
Photo: AP/Khalil*

Protecting Land and Water

Palestinian Unity

For the first time in many years, we see the Palestinian people united, from Jerusalem al-Quds, to Gaza, to the West Bank, and even more critically, to the Palestinian communities, towns and villages inside historic Palestine . . . [Palestinian youth] were born into a world of exile, destitution and apartheid, led to believe that they are inferior, of a lesser race. Their right to self-determination and every other right were postponed indefinitely. They grew up helplessly watching their homes being demolished, their land robbed and their parents humiliated. Finally, they are rising . . . The world can finally see, read and hear of Palestine's tragic reality and the need to bring this tragedy to an immediate end. None of this would be possible for the fact

that all Palestinians have legitimate reasons and are speaking in unison.

—*Ramzy Baroud, "Unity at Last: The Palestinian People Have Risen," Washington Report on Middle East Affairs, June/July 2021, Vol. XL, No. 4*

ACTION:

Vigil to End the Occupation of Palestine Every Friday, 4:00 to 5:00 p.m., Summit & Snelling Avenues, St. Paul. Sponsored by WAMM Middle East Committee

Resistance of Water Protectors

This August, courageous front-line water protectors persisted in interrupting Line 3 construction of the Enbridge oil pipeline in northern Minnesota, reporting a shut-down at the Shell and Clearwater Rivers:

"Another day, another drill shut down!" Law enforcement has brutally wounded water protectors, shooting them with tear gas and "rubber" bullets [projectiles containing potentially-lethal material], and arresting them as they defend their land; treaty rights; and bodies of water such as rivers, lakes, wild rice paddies, and the mighty Mississippi River. Individuals and organizations from throughout the state and far beyond stand in solidarity. Support also comes from numerous legal challenges. FFI: stopleveline3.org

ACTION:

Vigil in Solidarity with Water Protectors Every Monday, 5:00-6:00 p.m., outside the Governor's Mansion, 1006 Summit Ave., St. Paul. Sponsored by WAMM and Veterans for Peace.

Who Profits? Who Dies?

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No good comes from this company. But it is, of course, the unconditional and unequivocal political and military support of Israel by the U.S. government that makes this death and suffering possible – not to mention the \$3.8 billion per year of financial aid which the U.S. gives to Israel that is one of the biggest problems.

But there's a crack in this unwavering wall of complicity between the U.S. and Israel. During the latest 11-day bombing of Gaza, several members of the progressive caucus, including Minnesota Congresswomen Ilhan Omar and Betty McCollum, signed on to a House resolution, introduced by AOC, to block the sale of \$735 million arms to Israel. Bernie Sanders also introduced a resolution in the Senate.

They did this, of course, because of the pressure from Palestinian solidarity activists demonstrating in huge numbers all over the world, including 4,000 – mostly young, brown and black – here in Minneapolis, on Saturday, May 22.

Public opinion has been shifting over several years against Israel's atrocities and toward justice for Palestine. The Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement has contributed to this change. Northrup Grumman has been the target of many of these campaigns as students in several universities have successfully organized and proposed and passed resolutions calling for divestment from the company. The first was as far back as 2006 at the University of Michigan in Dearborn. Since then, they were joined by the University of Wisconsin-Madison,

Tufts Community Union, the College Council of the University of Chicago, the University of South Florida Student Senate, Oglethorpe University Student Senate, the University of California-Los Angeles, Wesleyan University's Student Senate, and the University of California-San Diego.

Now we join them in calling out Northrup Grumman for the war criminals they are.

ACTION:

What do we want? End U.S. aid to Israel (\$3.8 billion per year)! When do we want it? Now!

A Tale of Two Towers – and More

by Newsletter staff

Providing less than an hour of warning, on May 15, in an apparent attempt to silence the messengers, missiles fired by the Israeli Defense Force hit the al-Jalaa Tower, an 11-story building in Gaza in which the Associated Press and Al Jazeera had offices. Commanding less attention than the media hit was the fact that the tower was a multi-use building and many families lived there. Although the rationale provided for hitting the building was that it was harboring Hamas militants, members of the press said there was never any evidence of that.

The tower was one of several apartment buildings and many other residential buildings turned into rubble in the most recent deadly assault on Gaza by Israel that lasted from May 10 to May 21. The Gaza-based Palestinian Health Ministry reported 256 people killed, including 66 children, and 2,000 injured in the 11 days of air strikes. UN human rights experts said that “over 74,000

people have been forcibly displaced, most of them women and children.” They also reported that six hospitals, nine healthcare centers and a water desalination plant supplying 250,000 Palestinians with clean drinking water were destroyed.¹

U.S. President Biden spoke with Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu six times and reiterated that Israel has a right to defend itself, basically allowing the operation to continue² until a cease fire had finally been negotiated while Gazans, handicapped by a lack of electricity and supplies, suffered under an onslaught of bombs and searched frantically for loved ones and neighbors buried in the destruction.

The following month, on June 24, Champlain Towers South, a condominium building in Surfside, a suburb of Miami, Florida, collapsed in an unintentional tragedy due to structural failure. A team of Israeli military and first responders from Mexico rushed to the site to participate with rescue operations. Reuters News Service described their experience: “The Israelis come trained by war. The Mexicans by natural disaster.”³

Reuters News Service reported that Colonel Golan Vatch of the Israeli Defense Forces, with a branch that specializes in search and rescue operations, “had never seen a disaster zone like the one that crumbled a condo building in Surfside, Florida, in his more than 20 years of experience.”⁴ (tinyurl.com/43m4sfrk)

Apparently, he had not been to Gaza.

Neither had Biden, who flew to Florida to show his heartfelt empathy for the relatives of the Surfside victims.

Rescue workers with expertise are needed to perform noble services



The bombing of al Jalaa Tower, Gaza City.

and heads of state should reassure people when tragedies occur, but Gaza and Sunnyside stand in stark contrast.

Endnotes

- 1 “Ceasefire can’t hide scale of destruction in Gaza, UN warns, as rights experts call for ICC probe.” UN News. [tinyurl.com/fkzpk4s](https://www.un.org/news/story/id/45444)
- 2 Remarks by President Biden on the Middle East, White House Briefing Room. May 20, 2021. [tinyurl.com/vj9wma8c](https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-rooms/2021/05/20/president-biden-remarks-on-the-middle-east/)
- 3 “Israeli, Mexican rescuers bring distinct experience to Miami building collapse.” Daniel Trotter. Reuters June 27, 2021 [tinyurl.com/28b3zwme](https://www.reuters.com/article/miami-collapse-idUSKCN28B3ZWM)
- 4 “Israeli commander describes harrowing Florida condo rescue operation.” Reuters. May 29, 2021.



The collapsed Champlain Tower South, Surfside, Florida.

What Has Been Haunting the U.S. in Iraq? *by Sami Rasouli*

The Biden Administration has continued the U.S. bombings in the Middle East that were ordered for decades under the presidencies of the Bushes, Clinton, Obama, and Trump. Without congressional authorization, on February 25, U.S. fighter planes dropped seven 500-pound bombs on two locations in Syria. On June 27, the U.S. military dropped 500-pound and 2,000-pound munitions on facilities *inside* Iraq and Syria near the border of these two countries. Foreign and independent news sources report casualties of wounded and dead militia, and at least one civilian.

The rationale provided to the American public was that the bombings – violations of national sovereignty – were in retaliation for Iran’s alliance with Iraqi military units referred to as Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), seen as a threat to the 2,500 American troops stationed in Iraq. These Iraqi military forces had been sending small drones packed with explosives into the U.S. bases. In February, one foreign contractor was reported killed and nine Americans were wounded in the attacks.

U.S. soldiers have been placed in a very dangerous position where there is strong opposition to them.

The most recent spate of incidents has its origins back in January of 2020, when former President Trump sent a drone to assassinate the leaders of the Popular Mobilization Forces, the Iranian General Qasem Soleimani, and his colleague Iraqi General Abu Mahdi Al-Muhandis, at the Baghdad International Airport. In retaliation for those murders and the refusal of the U.S. to remove its troops from the country, after a resolution was passed by the Iraqi government, the PMF began targeting U.S. interests, military bases, and diplomatic institutions in Iraq.

An overarching concern of the U.S. has been how to eliminate the Popular Mobilization Forces, which had begun to grow stronger every day.

That’s because – taking the timeline back further to 2003 – the U.S. has tried to prevent Iraq from having its own strong, efficient armed forces. When the leadership of Saddam Hussein and the secular Arab Socialist Ba’ath Party was removed (the de-Ba’athification of Iraq), Paul Bremer was appointed the U.S. civil administrator, replacing the former Iraqi president. Bremer came with 100 orders, the first of which was the abandonment of the Iraqi army, which had been ranked the fourth most powerful in the world prior to the 2003 U.S. war on Iraq. The infrastructure of roads, bridges, power stations, water purification plants, and more than 3,500 factories producing goods for the Iraqi people was destroyed and closed. More than 25 American bases took complete control of Iraq’s airspace, water, and land, and Iraq was not able to rebuild itself. The so-called creative chaos, heralded by then Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in 2006, pervaded Iraq’s vital institutions and facilities. The only thing that functioned smoothly was Iraq’s formerly nationalized oil industry taken over by U.S., UK, and multinational corporations, which began pumping out exports to profit for themselves.

As for neighboring Syria, we found that the United States funded proxy terrorist groups with various names as opposition forces to fight, on behalf of the United States and its allies, against the Syrian government. The U.S. maintained more than 25 military bases to occupy Iraq while in 2014 allowing ISIS to penetrate Iraq’s borders from the Syrian side and travel to and occupy Mosul, the

second largest city in Iraq. PMFs filmed many videos of the U.S. and its Middle East proxy client-state, Israel, supporting and aiding these terrorists on the ground by dropping food and weapons from U.S. planes, as well as by treating injured ISIS fighters at medical facilities.

The official Iraqi army, trained by the U.S., carried out a poor defense of Mosul against ISIS. On the ground, the Iraqi army fought and fled, leaving remnants of ISIS and its weapons behind.

After the fall of Mosul, the Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Ali al-Sistani issued a fatwa ordering Iraqi youth to perform sufficient jihad to expel the remaining forces of ISIS from Iraq. And in record time, and in response to the call, hundreds of thousands of young people flocked to form the Popular Mobilization Forces for the purpose of supporting the official Iraqi army. The PMF fought fiercely against the remnants of ISIS, forcing them out.

The PMF became a ghost haunting unwanted elements in Iraq. This is especially true since the nation of Iran is behind them in strength, organization, and training. Iran and the PMF are allied in opposition to the U.S. policies towards Arabs and Muslims in the Middle East.

As the PMF grew strong, they were recognized as legitimate forces by Iraqi law. It was as if the once powerful Iraqi army, dissolved by Paul Bremer in 2003, had returned.

Iraq’s neighbor, Syria, continued to struggle. The terroristic mercenaries which had infiltrated Syria and were backed by the U.S. and its regional partners, the oil monarchies, fought against the official army of the Syrian government with the aim of

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Haunting in Iraq,

continued from page 6

weakening the Syrian state in a way that would cause it to collapse. However, the presence of the PMF in Syria reminded everyone that it has become difficult to weaken the Syrian government, as was the case in Iraq.

Hence, the U.S. and Israel have continued bombing the Popular Mobilization Forces wherever they were found in an attempt to keep the Middle East divided, separate, and weak. They want to prevent the rebirth of the movement which began in the 1950s to throw off the

colonial yoke and to unify the region, keeping its resources for its own people.

Unless something changes, military skirmishes will continue between Iraq, Iran, Syria, Lebanon, Hamas in Palestine on the one hand, and the U.S. and its allied client-partners on the other, and may develop into a devastating new war in the Middle East.

In order for peace to prevail for everyone in the Middle East region, we must continue to promote a culture of nonviolence and tolerance in our homes, schools, and societies until each of us becomes a true human being.

Sami Rasouli was born, raised, and educated primarily in Iraq. He lived in the U.S. for many years and returned to Iraq in 2005 to found the Muslim Peacemaker Teams in his city of origin, Najaf. Among other projects, he established the American Institute of Language in Najaf (which had no political affiliation, but in 2020 was blown up and destroyed, believed due to a misunderstanding about its name). Rasouli now resides in the U.S., where he plans to continue his people-to-people outreach and peace work through the American-Iraqi Initiative.

Where's Humanity?

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More and more groups are speaking out, including conservative groups. The Center for the International Policy's Sustainable Defense Task Force – a collection of former White House, congressional, and Pentagon budget officials, ex-military officers, and think tank experts – published a report detailing how the Defense Department could cut \$1.2 trillion in waste and inefficiency over the next decade. The Project on Government Oversight's Center for Defense Information posted a report recommending ways to cut the Pentagon's annual budget by \$199 billion without compromising national security or military capabilities. The Poor People's Campaign's wide-ranging "moral budget" went even further, demanding the Pentagon budget be cut in half. The National Priorities Project points out that "we could save as much as \$350 billion per year and achieve true security by ending wars, reducing our aggressive posture overseas, and reining in military contracts that drain the public coffers for private gain."

The U.S. currently maintains at least 800 bases outside its borders, with

troops stationed in 175 foreign nations at a cost of \$100 billion a year. Eliminating the Overseas Contingency Operations "slush fund," for Pentagon programs that have no connection to emergencies or contingencies, could save another \$174 billion [the OCO was eliminated in the House Appropriations Committee budget.]

The strategy of global military dominance is what drives the U.S. military budget and is the real reason military spending is so high. The vast bulk of military expenditures today have nothing to do with keeping us safe. And the advocates for war are a small minority – politicians, militarists, weapons makers, oil companies, and relatively small fanatical groups like al Qaeda.

A focus on responding to actual threats would allow big reductions in military spending. And cutting the oceans of money going to the military would also serve the purpose of slowing down the military-industrial complex and its penchant for causing wars.

Moving money from the military budget to meeting human needs will not be easy because of the many vested interests, especially weapons contractors and their powerful lobbies.

And there are military contracts in almost every state. Frequently when there is an opportunity to get rid of outdated equipment, the cry from states and local communities is "Jobs! We will lose jobs!" However, it has been known for decades that federal spending on domestic programs in healthcare, education, clean energy, and infrastructure creates more jobs, dollar for dollar, than military spending. In her 2019 study, Heidi Peltier of the Cost of War Project at Boston University's Watson Institute, found that \$1 billion in military spending creates approximately 11,200 jobs, compared with the jobs \$1 billion creates in other areas: 26,700 in education, 16,800 in clean energy, and 17,200 in healthcare.

Marie Braun is a longtime peace and justice activist, WAMM Board member, and chair of the End War Committee.

Endnote

* The total National Defense budget is \$753 billion, of which \$715 billion is for the Pentagon. The additional \$38 billion in the Defense budget includes some COVID and climate change assistance, but also nuclear weapons, which come under the Department of Energy, instead of the Pentagon.

Eye Witness: Syria during the 2021 Presidential Election

by Wyatt Miller

Driving into Syria in the middle of the night was intense. The lights and bustle of Lebanon gave way to darkness and stone-faced soldiers along an empty highway. Our luggage was searched at military checkpoints. It felt like entering the warzone we'd all read about. But then we saw lights appear in the darkness: streetlamps, illuminated public art displays, traffic, nightlife. Even at 3 o'clock in the morning, we could discern that Damascus, one

of the world's oldest cities and a longstanding hub of Arab culture and resistance to Western imperialism, was coming back to life after a decade of war.

I was part of the International Delegation to the 2021 Syrian Presidential Election. Organized by the U.S.-based Syria Solidarity Movement and Arab Americans 4 Syria, the delegation included activists from Palestine, South Africa, France,

Canada and the U.S. We spent a week in and around Damascus to witness the May 26 presidential election and see the conditions in which Syrians live.

As with much of Syria, the war had been over in Damascus for several years after the government restored control. In areas that were spared the fighting, like the Old City with its endless stalls of metalsmiths, woodworkers, soapmakers and other craftsmen, it looked much like it probably had for centuries. But in places like the Jobar neighborhood, the Yarmouk Palestinian refugee camp, and the eastern suburb of Douma, there was no avoiding the signs of war. Nearly every surface was covered in bullet holes. Stray dogs roamed in piles of rubble that stretched for miles.

Against that gruesome backdrop, we saw Syrians trying to return to their lives. Millions fled their homes in the early years of the war when so-called rebels took over their neighborhoods to use as bases to fight the government. Armed, funded and whitewashed by the U.S. and its allies, this patchwork of reactionary warlords and foreign mercenaries were more analogous to the Contras of Nicaragua than any authentic rebels. Years later, with control being restored to more and more areas, hundreds of thousands of Syrians have begun to rebuild their homes and businesses. We saw many surreal sights of otherwise damaged buildings with a quaint restored balcony here, a sleek new storefront there. People's resilience in those conditions was as inspiring as it was heartbreaking.



Voters at the polling place in the city of Douma, a suburb northeast of Damascus.

Photo: Wyatt Miller

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Eye Witness: Syria, *continued from page 8*

The worst feeling was knowing that reconstruction would be happening faster if it weren't for U.S. sanctions. A few months before our trip, UN human rights rapporteur Alena Douhan stated that U.S. sanctions were "impeding access to supplies needed to repair infrastructure damaged by the conflict" and "[running] roughshod over human rights, including the Syrian people's rights to housing, health, and an adequate standard of living and development." Many Syrians we spoke to believed that the most recent round of severe sanctions, imposed by Trump in 2019, are deliberately intended to discourage the return of refugees.

Necessities as basic as cooking oil now cost large portions of people's income. Many have had to find second and third jobs in the informal and black market economies. We saw dozens of people along the roadside selling jugs of gasoline, smuggled in from Lebanon—a sign of the ongoing illegal US occupation of Syria's eastern oil fields. Even though ISIS has largely been defeated, and invasion by Turkey has been stopped by a compromise between the Syrian government and Kurdish groups seeking greater autonomy, US troops have remained in eastern Syria following Trump's "keep the oil" policy. As for the election, what we saw of it was nothing like the "fake" election conjured up by corporate media. Posters of the different candidates lined the streets. Trade unions and youth organizations held large rallies. Long lines formed outside polling places—not only inside the country but also at Syrian consulates in Lebanon, where refugees braved xenophobic violence to cast a ballot. For the Syrians we spoke to, the



In the badly damaged Jobar neighborhood of Damascus, restorations like the charming balconies on a building (third from left) are an inspiring sign of Syrian resilience. Photo: Wyatt Miller

election meant more than just picking a president (Bashar al-Assad was re-elected in a landslide). They were proud that their country had retained its independence and reclaimed most of its territory from foreign-backed contras. Rumors abounded that Arab and European countries would soon reopen their embassies in Damascus. People's hopes were high that the election would bring stability after a decade of violence and uncertainty.

The U.S. is the main obstacle to peace in Syria. U.S. troops occupy Syria's east. U.S. sanctions devastate Syria's economy and preclude the return of many refugees, and U.S. think tanks lobby for renewed support for war, recently trying to rehabilitate an Al-Qaeda offshoot in Syria's north.

We in the U.S. must be firm in rejecting more U.S. intervention in Syria. Otherwise this war will continue, and even after half a million of its people have died, Syria could be in

for yet another round of violence, with no end in sight.

Wyatt Miller is a Youth Against Empire Committee member of the United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC) and a member of the Antiwar Committee, Minneapolis. In May 2021, he travelled with a delegation to Syria. His written work has appeared in CounterPunch, MintPress News, and the Orinoco Tribune.

PM: We're Number One in Weapons Sales

by Polly Mann

There's no question about it. The U.S. is the biggest seller of arms in the world. According to the gold standard source for weapons statistics, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI):

The five largest arms exporters in 2016–20 were the United States, Russia, France, Germany, and China. Together, they accounted for 76 percent of all exports of major arms in 2016–20.

In 2016–20 U.S. arms exports accounted for 37 percent of the global total and were 15 percent *higher* than in 2011–15. Russian arms exports *decreased* by 22 percent between 2011–15 and 2016–20.

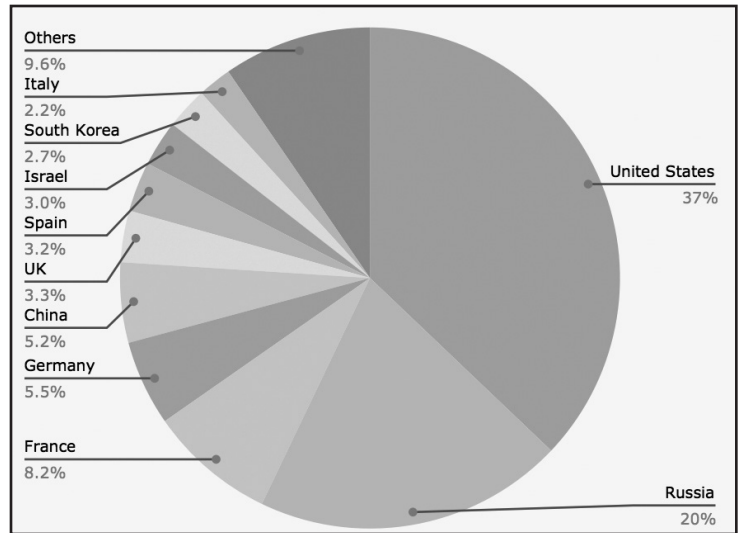
Between 2011–15 and 2016–20 arms exports by France and Germany increased by 44 and 21 percent, respectively, whereas those of China *decreased* by 7.8 percent.

The five largest arms importers in 2016–20, Saudi Arabia, India, Egypt, Australia, and China, together received 36 percent of all imports of major arms.

The main recipient region in 2016–20 was Asia and Oceania (accounting for 42 percent of global arms imports), followed by the Middle East (33 percent), Europe (12 percent), Africa (7.3 percent), and the Americas (5.4 percent).

Source: SIPRI Fact Sheet, March 2021: Trends in International Arms Transfers, 2020. [tinyurl.com/3r36aebd](https://www.tinyurl.com/3r36aebd) (Italics in article added by Women Against Military Madness Newsletter)

Polly Mann is a co-founder of Women Against Military Madness and frequent contributor to this newsletter.



Global share of major arms exports by 10 largest exporters, 2016-2020

Source: SIPRI Arms Transfers Database, March 2021

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City _____ State _____ Zip _____ (8/21)

Email _____ Add me to the WAMM email list

Contributions are tax deductible to the full extent of the law.

Make checks payable to WAMM, 4200 Cedar Avenue South, Suite 3, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55407

Sustaining Membership

(Ongoing contributions throughout the year)

\$ _____ Monthly \$ _____ Quarterly

(WAMM will send a coupon book, if by check)

WAMM Calendar

Please note that WAMM's provision of information on other groups' events is not meant to convey or endorse any action contrary to public policy that would be inconsistent with exempt purposes under Internal Revenue Code Section 501(c)(3), i.e., charitable purposes.

Ongoing Peace/ Justice Vigils

Vigil to End War

Every Wednesday, 5:00 to 6:00 p.m., Lake Street/Marshall Avenue Bridge. Signs available on St. Paul side. Brief circle up for announcements after the vigil on St. Paul side.
FFI: 612-827-5364.

Vigil to End the Occupation of Palestine

Every Friday, 4:00 to 5:00 p.m., corner of Summit Avenue and Snelling Avenue, St. Paul.
FFI: 612-827-5364.

Peace Vigil

Every Tuesday, 4:00 to 5:00 p.m. on the east side of the Franklin Avenue Bridge, Minneapolis. Sponsored by: Prospect Hill Neighbors for Peace.
FFI: 612-379-7398.

Grandmothers for Peace Vigil

Every Wednesday, 4:45 to 5:45 p.m. 50th Street and Halifax (1 block west of France), Edina.
FFI: Call Marian Wright 612-927-7607.

Stop Line 3 Vigil

Every Monday, 5:00 to 6:00 p.m., Governor's Mansion, 1006 Summit Ave, St. Paul. Sponsored by WAMM and Veterans for Peace-Chapter 27. Signs available or bring your own. FFI: 612-827-5364.

Immigrant Solidarity Vigils

Every Tuesday, 7:30 a.m.

NO to family separation, deportation. Gather at ICE entrance, closest to Ft. Snelling light rail station. Vigil on Minnehaha Ave., Minneapolis driveway entrance to ICE. FFI: Call Pepper at 612-701-6963.

Second Tuesday of every month, 7:30 a.m.

In solidarity with immigrants and refugees to achieve justice, stand up to oppression. Vigil outside Bishop Whipple Bldg., 1 Federal Drive, Ft. Snelling, St. Paul.
FFI: Facebook: Interfaith Coalition on Immigration

WAMM Committee Meetings

Board Meeting

Third Tuesday of every month via Zoom, 4:00 to 5:30 p.m.
FFI: 612-827-5364.

Book Club

Times/dates pending.
FFI: 612-827-5364.

End Domestic Militarism

Every other Monday via Zoom, 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
FFI: 612-827-5364.

End Military Madness Against the Earth

Time/dates pending.
FFI: 612-827-5364.

End War

First Monday of every month via Zoom, 6:30 p.m.
FFI: 612-827-5364.

Middle East

Second Monday of every month via Zoom, 10:00 a.m.
FFI: 612-827-5364.

St. Joan of Arc/ WAMM Peacemakers

Fourth Tuesday of every month via Zoom, 7:00 to 8:00 p.m.
FFI: Call Barbara 612-722-4444 or Bill 612-926-8459.

Solidarity Committee on the Americas (SCOTA)

Every Thursday via Zoom, 10:00 a.m. FFI: 612-827-5364.

Tackling Torture at the Top (T3)

Second Wednesday of every month via Zoom, 10:00 a.m.
FFI: 612-827-5364.

Ongoing Events

Grandmothers for Peace

First Wednesday of every month, 12:45 p.m. via Zoom. Justice issue programs for understanding our role in changing systems. FFI: 701-260-7566.

Middle East Peace Now

Usually second or third Saturday. Program 10:00 a.m. Location varies. FFI: Visit mepn.org.

WAMM Second Monday at the Movies

During the pandemic, we are no longer screening movies. However, the Movie Committee is posting links to important movies available on line. Check WAMM's Calendar and Facebook page for details.
FFI 612-827-5364.

Special Events

The Latest Israeli Assault on Gaza: interview with Dr. Mona El-Farra

Saturday, August 21, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Online event. Zoom and Facebook. Register at Calendar, womenagainstmilitarymadness.org.

Dr. Mona El-Farra, Director of Gaza Projects for the Middle East Children's Alliance, is a physician by profession and human rights and women's rights activist by practice in the occupied Gaza Strip. She is dedicated to developing community-based programs to improve health quality, link health services with cultural, recreation services. Sponsored by WAMM Middle East Committee.
FFI: 612-827-5364.

Car Caravan against the U.S. Blockade on Cuba

Saturday, August 28, 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. Details to come. Sponsored by WAMM Solidarity Committee on the Americas.
FFI: 612-827-5364.

Camp Ripley Peace Vigil

Sunday, September 19, 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., 15000 Highway 15 in Little Falls, MN. Vigil pro-peace message to counter the pro-war propaganda Camp Ripley spreads at its Open House Day, the biannual event when Camp Ripley invites the public to visit the base. Sponsored by Brainerd Area Coalition for Peace. FFI: 612-827-5364.

Stop Endless U.S. Wars

Saturday, October 9, 1:00 to 3:00 pm, Mayday Plaza, 301 Cedar Ave, Minneapolis. October 2021 will mark 20 years after the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, the start of the endless series of U.S. wars and interventions. Sponsored by Minnesota Peace Action Coalition. FFI: 612-827-5364.

Access Zoom events

through the Women Against Military Madness Calendar at womenagainstmilitarymadness.org and Women Against Military Madness Facebook. All events on CST zone.



4200 Cedar Avenue South, Suite 3
 Minneapolis, Minnesota 55407
 (612) 827-5364
 e-mail: wamm@usfamily.net
 WomenAgainstMilitaryMadness.org
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 PERMIT NO. 30308



Stop Line 3!

in solidarity with Water Protectors

every Monday, 5:00 to 6:00 p.m.
 outside the Governor's Mansion,
 1006 Summit Ave., St. Paul



All are welcome. Bring signs. Spread the word!

Sponsored by WAMM and Veterans for Peace-Chapter 27. FFI: Women Against Military Madness 612-827-5364