

Take ideas from the RS network, then take action

MAW is a member of Rethinking Security - <https://rethinkingsecurity.org.uk> - a network of activists, organisations and academics working together for human and planetary security based on justice, co-operation and sustainability. RS has launched an Alternative Security Review (ASR) <https://rethinkingsecurity.org.uk/find-out-more/alternative-security-review/> at political, academic and civil society levels to understand the real security concerns of people living in the UK and to create an alternative security strategy designed to meet their needs.

MAW Vice-President Diana Francis is a member of the RS Council. She lives in Bath and formed a local RS group with fellow peace activists. They have been busy in the local area and provide a model for outreach by MAW members.

She says: "Starting at a time of heavy Covid restrictions, we began by designing a survey, which we have sent, and keep sending, to various groups for circulation.

"Recently we wrote

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Understanding the Ukraine crisis - and how to resolve it

MAW chair Tim Devereux (pictured) and vice-president Colin Archer offer a way forward on the conflict in the Ukraine

Military confrontation between nuclear superpowers is the ultimate contemporary nightmare, as we are all too aware after the alarming escalation of the situation in the Ukraine.

How did it come to this? NATO saw Russia again threatening a democratic and sovereign state, while Russia saw NATO relentlessly expanding up to its frontiers. Furthermore, the US established anti-ballistic missile batteries in Poland and Romania, ostensibly protecting the West from rockets launched by "rogue states" such as Iran. But these installations could easily be used to attack Russia itself.

In the famous words of Robert Burns...
*"O, wad some Power the giftie gie us
To see oursels as others see us!
It wad frae monie a blunder free us".*

Consider - how would the USA view Russian missile launchers in Mexico, Canada (or Cuba!). Or for the UK, in Ireland or France? But similarly, how would we feel if we lived in the Ukraine, surrounded by Russia's tanks on several borders and with their troops threatening to invade?

Now this long-dreaded scenario has come to pass, with all the consequences in terms of death, suffering and human misery that war always entails.

Consider too the position of other ex-Soviet states. It is not unreasonable for them too to feel anxious about Moscow deciding that their independence isn't "real" either.

The problem is that neither Russia, still humiliated by the collapse of its empire, nor the USA, smarting from its Afghan and Iraqi debacles, are in the best frame of mind to engage in the sustained, give-and-take diplomacy that durable solutions require. They each think the other "understands best the language of force".

Reliance on such a belief could be suicidal, since the slope that leads to a nuclear confrontation is a slippery one.

We recognise that the taproot of this multiple conflict is a militarist-nationalist culture on all sides which, when brought into



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confrontation by glory-seeking politicians, creates a toxic mix. The result is appalling violence, compounded by all manner of fake news, cyber-attacks, economic sabotage and generalised instability. Clearly, NATO represents the dominant formation in today's world and wishes to remain so. But it has waged aggressive wars in recent years, undermining the UN and international law. However, the militarism of the underdog can be threatening too, especially to those caught in between. The ramifications of this war are enormous: across political, economic, humanitarian and other fields. This is a historic turning point akin to 9/11. Our government needs to change tack. While targeted sanctions clearly play a role in getting Putin to rethink, it should, rather than banging the war drums, focus on persuading its NATO and EU partners to work to get all sides back to diplomacy. This is not caving into a bully, it is the path away from a terrifying conflagration. Regardless of our views on the balance of blame, we urge all friends of peace to raise their voices in favour of creative non-military solutions. Given the grave risks, nothing is more urgent right now.

Recommended: Analysis and statements by groups such as International Peace Bureau, CND, International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons; World Beyond War, War Resisters International.

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Say it loud: Available from the MAW shop - our postcards are 25p each with postage costs of £1.
<https://abolishwar.net/product-category/postcards/>

Steps to peace in Ukraine: Here's an agenda for the peace talks, when they come - as they must, sooner or later. It is not comprehensive and each step is fraught with difficulty.

But grasping these nettles is far better than pursuing the perilous path of war.

1. Russia to withdraw from Ukraine as a whole and NATO to remove its missile bases from Eastern Europe.
2. Implement the Minsk agreements.
3. Ukraine to become a (genuinely) neutral state, such as Finland.
4. NATO to offer an explicit (written) moratorium on eastward expansion.
5. A raft of measures on military deployments and regional arms control, conventional and nuclear.
6. Convene a Europe-wide consultation (ideally via OSCE) to devise a new Common Security framework for the whole of Europe.

Pen in hand? How MAW members can help to make a difference

A year ago, MAW celebrated the entry into force of the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). The first meeting of the states which are party to the Treaty will take place this summer. Our government is still refusing to recognise the Treaty but, even as a non-signatory, it is entitled to attend the conference as an observer. (Other non-signatory NATO members Germany and Norway have indicated their willingness.) As a country which professes support for an international rules-based system, we surely have a duty to at least take an interest in a project which two-thirds of the world deem central to national security. Please follow this link to send an email to Foreign Secretary Liz Truss, urging her to attend: <https://cnd.eaction.org.uk/AskTheForeignSecretarytoAttendPNW> It would also be a good idea to write to your MP. MAW VP Baroness Christine Blower and the

Bishop of Coventry are pursuing the matter in the House of Lords, and MAW will lobby Fabian Hamilton MP, Shadow Minister for Peace and Disarmament.

- Looking elsewhere, more than 50 Nobel Laureates have launched the **Global Peace Dividend Campaign** calling for a reduction in international military spending of 2% per year over five years.

While many wish for a more ambitious target, it is a welcome addition to the debate and we call on people to back the campaign, sign and share the petition - www.peace-dividend.org The Global Campaign on Military Spending (UK) of which MAW is a member group, is supporting this initiative, as well as reaching out to other campaigners (eg on climate) and making plans for this year's Global Days of Action on Military Spending (GDAMS), due to begin on April 18.

Hilary Evans / Colin Archer

Human rights abusers go shopping for weaponry in Twickenham



MAW members were part of a local network of protesters objecting in January to the hosting of the annual International Armoured Vehicle Conference at Twickenham Rugby Stadium, a venue for the 2022 Six Nations Championship Rugby tournament.

Described as "the world's premier meeting ground for the armoured vehicles community", the event brought together major arms manufacturers and dealers including BAE Systems, Northrop Grumman, General Dynamics, Rheinmetall and Rafael with representatives of some of the world's biggest human rights abusers - China, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Turkey, Egypt and the UAE. Entrance tickets cost over £3,000, excluding the public, no signs or adverts were visible around the

stadium and most Twickenham residents - when asked in the street - had no idea that this was happening in their own town.

A large gathering with many prominent banners outside the stadium on the opening day of the conference left passers-by in no doubt about the nature of the event.

MAW Exec member David Collins has written to the CEO of the Rugby Football Union, requesting a meeting to discuss how the RFU came to facilitate the sale of weapons of war, designed to kill and maim civilians and military alike, in an arena dedicated to youth, health and fun.

● **Executive committee member Hilary Evans is pictured above**



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to our local papers, giving the survey link and inviting readers to respond to it. "Another tool is the Worries Box that we have alongside petitions at the weekly Stop War vigil in front of Bath Abbey. Passers-by write their concerns about the future on slips of paper and post them in the box."

That Worries Box also played a part in a Sixth Form Conference we organised in November, on the subject of Security. It brought together students from six different schools (both state and private) and as they arrived they put their worries into the box.

They listened attentively to the excellent presentation given by RS Outreach Worker Joanna Frew, which included a sample of (anonymous) worries. The students then gathered in groups to discuss their concerns and priorities for the future. Diana adds: "The seriousness and passion of their discussions and presentations was impressive."

"Recurrent themes were the climate crisis, poverty - especially among children, corruption and lack of accountability in government, and drink-spiking in public venues. Their "worries" and presentations provide potential data for the Review.

"If possible we would like to follow up on this by facilitating further discussions in schools."

For an electronic version of the newsletter email Gill Hurle at gill.hurle@abolis-hwar.org.uk **Abolish War** will next be published in June.

- Members may well be interested in a CND webinar - *Talks Not Bombs?* which makes the case for Britain giving up nuclear weapons Find it - and the full Lockdown playlist - at <https://cnduk.org/cnds-lockdown-seminars/>

MAW members offer creative ways to engage with peace

MAW member Alison Lochhead encourages everyone to visit a wonderful exhibition - curated by herself and other MAW members - in Oxfordshire



An exhibition entitled *The Glorious Art of Peace* opens on April 5 at the Cornerstone Arts Centre, Didcot (OX11 7NE) and will run until May 1. The mixed media exhibition weaves together words, images, sculpture and music to illustrate the impacts and devastation of war across the world - and it will provide food for thought at the current time. Alongside the art, you will also find poems and statements which challenge the status of war. The exhibition has been curated by

members of MAW. It is free to enter and, in addition, a special live event is planned for April:

- April 21, from 7 - 9pm, **War, Peace and Care for the Earth**

An evening of poetry, talks and songs with Frankie Armstrong, John Gittings, Sally Mears, Sue Gilmurray, Rona Topaz and Geraldine Bridges.

This event is free to attend.

For more information contact Ali Lochhead on 07976 272765.

<https://www.cornerstone-arts.org/gallery/glorious-art-peace-maw-collective>

The Movement for the Abolition of War – join us, or renew your membership

We aim to create a world where war is no longer seen as a way to solve a problem; where it has ceased to be an option; where conflict resolution means resolution. Working through education and dialogue, nationally and locally, we have the tools, skills and laws that we need, but we also need you - ordinary people can help us realise our goal, the abolition of war.

To join MAW or renew your membership, complete this form or download the membership and standing order forms from our website at <http://www.abolishwar.org.uk/join-us.html>.

Send the completed form (and cheque if applicable) to: Movement for the Abolition of War, 1 Old Mill Place, Haslemere, GU27 1NP

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Passionate about peace education?

If the answer is yes please join a virtual meeting at 3pm (GMT) Saturday, 26 March to discuss ways for MAW to expand its input into Peace Education.

This will be an exciting opportunity to share ideas and plan for the future.

Whether you are interested in going into schools to give presentations, preparing learning materials or simply have ideas to share - all are welcome. Contact Helen Horton at esthmc3@gmail.com if interested, even if you are unable to attend the day. The Zoom link will be sent by email.