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December 2023 Newsletter



Happy Holidays

Want to donate to
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If you haven't yet made
your 2023 donation,
please consider doing
so soon! Email
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for more information
on how to donate.



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THANK YOU

Thank you to all those who helped support Ploughshares Calgary by coming out to the Peace Fair held along with the Calgary Justice Film Festival, those who participated in the Partnership event at Villages, and/or those who purchased merchandise from our Mom's Pantry campaign and Spolumbo's campaign earlier this year.

Ploughshares relies on these kinds of fundraisers to help us to meet our ongoing expenses. We have also been so very grateful to those of you who have made donations this past year to us.

Thank you, thank you, from the bottom of our hearts!

Today's Wars No Excuse to Abandon Nuclear Disarmament

For the first time, the four leading organizations in Canada devoted to nuclear disarmament issues — Canadian Pugwash Group, Canadian Network to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, Canadians for a Nuclear Weapons Convention and Project Ploughshares — co-sponsored a single event on Oct. 19, 2023. This extraordinary Roundtable, “Revitalizing Nuclear Disarmament After the Ukraine War,” was convened at a moment of extreme danger to the world. This is the Roundtable’s abridged report to the Government of Canada.

The global nuclear arms control and disarmament machinery is in a deep crisis. This crisis far predates the Ukraine war and must be understood in the broader context of the breakdown and abandonment of nuclear weapons treaties alongside the introduction of new destabilizing weapons technologies and modernization of existing nuclear arsenals. Russia’s threat to use nuclear weapons in the Ukraine war has exacerbated the existential risk of nuclear conflict.

Due to a lack of sustained leadership on human security issues, blind allegiance to allies, and structural underfunding of arms control work, Canada has lost credibility, capacity and trust. There is an urgent need for Canada to restore its place as a leading middle power with powerful ideas.

The ongoing Ukraine war and the violent hostilities in the Middle East ought not to be used as excuses for the failure to advance a workable plan for comprehensive negotiations for the elimination of nuclear weapons, but rather as catalysts to accelerate progress on this urgent objective. During the Cold War, states were able to “compartmentalize” their work for nuclear disarmament in the midst of the exigencies of the East-West divide. Now, in the new multi-polar world, which is fraught with confrontation, states must return to the use of trust-building communication to advance mutual security interests.

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) was built on an understanding of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons. This valuable treaty ought not to be scorned by the nuclear weapons states and the NATO leadership. Even if Canada is not prepared, at this juncture, to sign the TPNW, it should at least show its concern for the protection of humanity by attending as an Observer the second meeting of the states parties to the TPNW Nov. 27-Dec. 1, 2023.

We congratulate Canada for currently pursuing a dialogue within NATO on reducing nuclear risks; but the government should go further and advocate, within the processes of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the replacement of nuclear deterrence with a common security program.

In a multi-polar world, common security is the only way to peace — and survival. Canada must re-focus its vision away from reliance on nuclear deterrence and amplify the declaration issued by the G20 that any threat or use of nuclear weapons is “inadmissible.”

Urgent steps toward this end would include:

1. A government call for the immediate resumption of bilateral talks between Russia and the U.S. to conclude a follow-up agreement to the New START prior to its expiration in 2026.
2. Promotion of No-First-Use policies to reduce the saliency of nuclear weapons in national security policies.
3. Advocating de-alerting of nuclear weapons to insert a firebreak for nuclear use.

The Special Roundtable appeals to the government to lead in lifting the level of parliamentary debate and public discourse to a higher level.

Signed By:



Ploughshares

Canadians for a
Nuclear Weapons Convention



Rassemblement canadien pour
une convention sur les armes nucléaires

Steering Committee



CANADIAN NETWORK TO
ABOLISH NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Le Réseau canadien pour
l'abolition des armes nucléaires

Canadian
Pugwash

Affiliate of the Pugwash Conferences
on Science and World Affairs

les Conférences
Pugwash
Canada

Affiliate des Conférences Pugwash
sur la Science et les Affaires Mondiales



YOUR EMPATHY IS KILLING US

Mushon Zer-Aviv Medium November 9th, 2023 Summary

- Psychologist Paul Bloom argues that empathy is indeed a treacherous path, likening it to a spotlight that illuminates one individual, leaving others in the dark. According to Bloom, we are more likely to direct the spotlight of empathy toward those we perceive as more similar to us.
- Bloom argues that empathy should not serve as a moral compass. Bloom instead advocates for compassion, which goes beyond feeling another's pain; and involves a deep sense of concern and a genuine desire to alleviate suffering.
- The responses to the war between Israel and Palestine have mostly been either of **three types**:
 - **1. YES / NO**
 - To judge by social media, the world is divided between good and evil. No nuances, no context, no grey areas. To truly eradicate evil, one must make a clear cut and choose a side: you're either with the victim or you're with the perpetrator.
 - **2. YES, BUT...**
 - Yes, the world is indeed complex and cruel, there are innocent victims on the other side, BUT...
 - ...but they voted for these leaders and continuously support them
 - ...but they educate their children to hate and kill
 - This line of reasoning is compelling and can be used to a certain degree, against any sides in this conflict. Both sides are corrupted by the conflict, and both sides suffer; however, any acknowledgment of the other side's pain is accompanied by a significant "BUT...".



YOUR EMPATHY IS KILLING US

◦ 3. OH DEAR...

- Choosing a side to empathize with and to fight for reaffirms one's own morality. Fighting the good fight and protecting the good victims from the evil perpetrators is indeed a noble thing to do. But what if the lines between good and evil are not so easily drawn? The biggest danger in acknowledging complexity is resignation.
- Documentary film maker Adam Curtis described this phenomenon as “Oh Dearism”, in a short opinion video clip in which he claims that:
 - “Political conflicts around the world, from Darfur to Gaza, are now portrayed to us as simple illustrations of the mindless cruelty of the human race, about which nothing can be done, and to which the only response is: Oh dear.”

◦ Bonus Round: YES, AND...

- A fourth potential response to the war is to replace any “YES, BUT” with a “YES, AND...” which allows for the coexistence of truthful statements, serving as adjacent factors to be addressed both separately and simultaneously
 - YES, Palestinians will be forever traumatized by this war,
 - AND Israelis will be forever traumatized by this war.
- And while this non-binary “YES, AND” may be harder and more tasking, it is urgently required, so let's start here:
 - YES, from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free,
 - AND so would Israel.

To read the full article, click [here](#).





2023 ARMS CONTROL PERSON(S) OF THE YEAR NOMINEES

The 2023 nominees are:

- Prime Minister Fumio Kishida of Japan
- Leonardo Bencini, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Italy to the Conference on Disarmament and President of the ninth Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) Review Conference
- Christopher Nolan, director and writer of the film biopic Oppenheimer
- The leaders of several grassroots organizations—including Just Moms STL, the Navajo Uranium Radiation Victims Committee, and the Tularosa Basin Downwinders Consortium, among others
- IAEA Support and Assistance Mission to Zaporizhzhya (ISAMZ)
- Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, head of the United Transitional Cabinet and leader of democratic forces of Belarus
- Workers and technicians at the U.S. Army’s Pueblo Chemical Depot in Colorado and Blue Grass Army Depot in Kentucky
- The governments of Bulgaria, Slovakia, South Africa, and Peru
- The governments of Austria and 27 co-sponsoring states

To read more about the 2023 nominees and to place your vote, click [here](#).





EVENTS

- On Tuesday, December 12th, **BOSS Dodgeball League and Dodgeball Calgary collaborate this winter to bring you “Skipping in a Winter Wonderland” charity dodgeball tournament.** All proceeds go towards supporting Skipping Stone. Skipping Stone is a Calgary-based organization that aims to connect trans and gender-diverse youth, adults, and families with comprehensive and low-barrier access to the support they need and deserve. This will take place from 7:00 pm to 10:00 pm at Vincent Massey School (939 45 St SW). Tickets start at \$15 and are available on Eventrbite.ca.
- On Wednesday, December 20th, **Globe Cinema will be showing “It’s a Wonderful Life”.** This night will be in benefit of all in attendance and in support of Made by Momma and Children's Cottage Society. Tickets are available by donation on Eventbrite.ca. This event takes place at Globe Cinema (617 8 Avenue, SW); doors open at 7:00 pm.





GOOD NEWS

- Elle Gianelli of Stockton California has been making coloured socks with silly designs on them for years, sending them to seniors in nursing and care homes to brighten up their day. The high school junior started the project Socks 4 Seniors all the way back in the 7th grade, and has so far spruced up 92 care homes in 48 states, making a few pen-pals along the way. Her goal for this Christmas season is to send boxes of her silly socks to seniors in all 50 states. To reach her goal, Gianelli is hoping to raise \$10,000 through GoFundMe for a big sock drive. She's so far surpassed her \$10,000 goal. (Good News Network, December 6th, 2023).
- Fourteen-year-old Calgarian, Ella Altvater, wants to make a difference this Christmas. Ella has saved all her babysitting money through the year, along with her allowance, and used that to purchase items to make "Christmas fun bags." Each bag, which costs \$10, has 14 items including stickers, a pencil and eraser, crafts, book marks, playdough, a light up ring, snap bracelets and a candy cane. All proceeds will be given to the Calgary Food Bank. Last year, Ella donated just over \$1,000 to the Calgary Food Bank, she hopes to achieve that goal again this year. (CTV News Calgary, November 29th, 2023).



Ella Altvater

Photo Credits: CTV News Calgary



GOOD NEWS

- This past Sunday, 475 children and their families were invited by the Northmount Kiwanis Club to Toys R Us in Sunridge for a Christmas celebration. Each child was given \$40 to spend on a gift of their choice in the store. This seasonal celebration also included face painting, balloon animals, and pictures with Santa. Kids were also gifted stuffed animals that were donated by the Calgary Hitmen Teddy Bear Toss. (CTV News Calgary, December 10th, 2023).
- 89-year-old Calgarian, Merle Smith, has been selling Christmas trees since 1957. Smith recalls that when he first started selling christmas trees, they were priced around \$2.50. They now range in cost from \$35-\$65. Though prices have risen, Smith says some of his customers have remained loyal, with some families returning for generations. His favourite thing to do is interact with the kids. At his peak, Smith was selling 800 trees and managing seven lots. Now, he operates just one located at 26th Street and 28th Avenue S.E. He has around 200 trees still left for sale. (CTV News Calgary, December 8th, 2023).



Merle Smith

Photo Credits: CTV News Calgary