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Want to donate to Ploughshares Calgary? If you haven't yet made your 2024 donation, please consider doing so soon!

Email office@ploughshares.ca for more information on how to donate.



April 2024 Newsletter

PLOUGHSHARE CALGARY PRESENTS:

From Stress to Strategies for Nuclear Weapons Abolition

**JOIN US FOR AN EDUCATIONAL MEETING
FEATURING BEV DELONG**



Join us on Zoom



**Wednesday,
April 10th**



7:00PM MDT

Contact Us:





FUNDRAISER

ARE YOU READY FOR BBQ SEASON?

Once again we are partnering with Calgary's iconic Spolumbo's to offer you high-quality, locally-made meat products, all ready for your summer BBQs!

Your purchase will help support Ploughshares Calgary Society.
Thank you so much for your consideration!

INSTRUCTIONS ON HOW TO ORDER:



OR visit:

www.ploughsharescalgary.ca/fundraising

**ORDERS NEED TO
BE COMPLETED BY**

APRIL 30TH

Orders will be due to arrive on Thursday, May 16th.
Orders will be available for pick-up at Parkdale United Church
(2919 8th Avenue, NW)

More details regarding pickup date and time to come soon

Contact us at: office@ploughsharescalgary.ca for help

Canada closer to compliance with export control obligations after decision on arms transfers to Israel, but must go further

MARCH 21, 2024

Project Ploughshares welcomes Canada's decision to halt future arms exports to Israel, as legally obligated under domestic legislation and international law.

The decision follows a House of Commons motion of March 18, 2024, which included a directive for Canadian officials to “[c]ease the further authorization and transfer of arms exports to Israel to ensure compliance with Canada’s arms export regime and increase efforts to stop the illegal trade of arms, including to Hamas.” The motion passed with a vote of 204 to 117.

This is a positive step that brings Canada closer to compliance with its arms control obligations, which dictate that arms exports cannot be authorized when there is a substantial risk that they could be used by the end-user to commit serious human rights violations.

At the same time, **we lament that the new policy does not apply to export permits that have already been issued, and which Global Affairs Canada has the full authority to revoke.**

Canada's decision to halt future arms exports is founded on a recognition of substantial risk of misuse, a risk that is equally applicable to extant arms export authorizations.

Ottawa approved nearly \$30 million in arms transfers to Israel between October and December 2023 alone. The new directive continues to allow the transfer of these weapon systems to Israel along with any other permits that were authorized prior to January 8, 2024. It also fails to address Canada's transfer of military end-use parts and components to Israel via the United States, which remain unregulated and unreported.

Given Israel's conduct during its ongoing operation in Gaza, which has been characterized by a blatant disregard for the most fundamental precepts of international humanitarian law – including the principles of distinction, precaution, and proportionality – the substantial risk threshold has clearly been crossed.

More than 31,000 Palestinians, most civilians, have been killed in the current conflict in Gaza.

Credible human rights monitors, including UN experts, have stated that Israel has violated international humanitarian and human rights law throughout the conflict.

Project Ploughshares calls on the Government of Canada to act in good faith and take concrete action towards realizing all objectives of the motion passed on March 18, including through a presumption-of-denial policy on the further authorization of military exports to Israel, and an immediate cessation of previously authorized transfers.



WHAT BEST PICTURE WINNER OPPENHEIMER GETS RIGHT – AND WRONG – ABOUT THE THREAT OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Haydn Belfield

Vox

March 11, 2024

Summary

- The USA and Russia each have around 1,500 warheads deployed – ready to launch.
- Each of these is a hydrogen (or thermonuclear) bomb.
- In the event of the detection of a possible incoming nuclear strike, the president of the United States has perhaps 12 minutes to decide whether to launch all of these missiles.
- In a 2022 Nature Food paper, researchers led by Lili Xia find that a full-scale nuclear war could reduce crop yields between 50 percent and 90 percent and kill 2 to 5 billion people.
- This would mean north of 90 percent of the populations of the US, Europe, Russia, and China starving to death.
- Since Oppenheimer’s release, the film’s director, Christopher Nolan, has actively drawn attention to the continued dangers of nuclear war.
- In Nolan’s BAFTA acceptance speech in February, he said:
 - “Our film ends on what I think is a dramatically necessary note of despair. But in the real world there are all kinds of individuals and organizations that have fought long and hard to reduce the number of nuclear weapons in the world. Since its peak in 1967, they’ve done it by almost 90 percent. Of late that’s gone the wrong way. And so in accepting this I want to acknowledge their efforts and point out that they show the necessity and the potential of efforts for peace.”
- From the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty to the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty to the Open Skies Treaty, the key Cold War pacts that constrained Russia and the US have been torn up in the 21st century.
- The one remaining nuclear treaty, the New START Treaty, expires automatically on February 5, 2026. Russian President, Vladimir Putin, has withdrawn from New START’s inspections regime.

WHAT BEST PICTURE WINNER OPPENHEIMER GETS RIGHT – AND WRONG – ABOUT THE THREAT OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS



- In the film, they focus far too much on Oppenheimer and his Los Alamos scientists while completely ignoring Oak Ridge, Tennessee, or Hanford, Washington.
- These production plants for enriched uranium and plutonium respectively were responsible for more than 80 percent of the budget of the Manhattan Project and most of its staff. It is these locations and people that actually produced the bomb.
- The film also presents the United States as desperately behind the Nazis who have, according to Oppenheimer, an “18-month head start” in the nuclear arms race, and suggests that “in a straight race, the Germans win.”
- However, none of this was true. Hitler had decided against a serious program at a presentation in June 1942.
- The film also fails to show Joseph Rotblat, the only scientist to resign from the project.
- In 1957, Rotblat organized a conference in the small village of Pugwash, Nova Scotia. The Pugwash Conferences would go on to spread key ideas for arms control agreements on nuclear testing, limiting warheads, and banning biological weapons.
- Rotblat and Pugwash shared the 1995 Nobel Peace Prize.

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



UN REPORT ON OCT. 7 SEXUAL VIOLENCE DOCUMENTS FAR FEWER INCIDENTS THAN ISRAELI ACCOUNTS

**Dawn Clancy
Pass Blue
March 6th, 2024
Summary**

- The United Nations said it found “reasonable grounds” to believe that Israeli women were subjected to sexual violence across “several locations” on Oct. 7 during the attack by Hamas in southern Israel.
- The findings were released by the UN in a 24-page report on March 4, a result of a visit, at the invitation of the Israeli government, by Pramila Patten, the UN special representative on sexual violence in conflict.
- Patten stated that the Israeli government had talked about hundreds, if not thousands of cases of “brutal sexual violence perpetrated against men, women and children,” but she added: “I have not found anything like that.”
- Some aspects of Patten’s report’s were welcomed by the Israeli government; however, others were critical, including Israel Katz.
- Israeli foreign minister, Israel Katz, was critical of UN Secretary-General António Guterres. Katz wrote on X (formerly known as Twitter): “Despite the authority granted to him, the UN Secretary General did not order the convening of the Security Council in view of the [reports] findings, in order to declare the Hamas organization a terrorist organization and impose sanctions on its supporters.”
- According to the Jerusalem Post, Katz has ordered Israeli embassies “to begin a large-scale hasbara (public diplomacy) campaign” on March 7, “in light of the findings of the UN report on sexual violence in the Hamas massacre on October 7.” The Post said: “The aim is to put pressure on the UN to define Hamas as a terrorist organization and to ensure an emergency meeting of the Security Council in order to discuss the findings of the report.



UN REPORT ON OCT. 7 SEXUAL VIOLENCE DOCUMENTS FAR FEWER INCIDENTS THAN ISRAELI ACCOUNTS

- According to the report, Patten’s team reviewed more than 5,000 photos and around 50 hours of video footage and audio of the attacks, as well as information that was provided by the Israeli government, independent sources and open-source material. Yet the “information,” Patten stressed, is not “evidence” to be used, say, in a court of law.
- Complicating the work of Patten’s group, according to the report, the Israeli authorities faced “numerous challenges” in collecting evidence of potential crimes committed on Oct. 7 – including survivor and witness testimonies and forensic evidence – due primarily to the chaos that day. Patten’s team was therefore limited in its ability to “draw definitive forensic conclusions in many instances.”
- Unlike what has been reported in mostly international media, including The New York Times, Patten clarified that her team did not find a pattern of widespread sexual violence by Hamas on Oct. 7 as “they did not look into attribution.”

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



WE ARE ONLY POWERLESS IF WE REMAIN SILENT

**Alex Neve: Moving Rights Along
April 4th, 2024
Blog Post**

32,000+ Palestinian deaths are an excruciating agony beyond any measure of humanity, and that genocidal toll continues to mount daily. To think of all the children killed, maimed, starved and orphaned tears at the soul.

Six months on, still we mourn and anguish for the 1200+ who were callously terrorized, murdered and abducted in Israel on October 7th. For whom there has been no justice.

And now, 'car by car'. Now we are wrecked by this despicable, calculating and deliberate, cold-blooded murder of seven aid workers. They dared bring food to the starving. They were hunted down by rockets. It defies belief. Yet it is our reality. Our reality.

Every single one of these lives matter. The 32,000 lives. The 1200 lives. The 7 lives.

Yet how many lives, in particular WHOSE LIFE, will finally be enough to end this? Surely there is a limit. Surely?

It was enough so very long ago, long before October 7 in fact. But it is an eternity far beyond enough now. The world must find its backbone. Leaders must find their conviction. International law must finally be made to soar.

Enough with immoral equivocating. Enough with meaningless dismay. Enough with empty words. Enough with resolutions that go nowhere. Enough with watching and not acting.





WE ARE ONLY POWERLESS IF WE REMAIN SILENT

Where are the emergency G7 and G20 meetings? Where are the daily Biden calls to Netanyahu? Where are the real consequences to end the madness of genocide and occupation? End all arms shipments? Trade sanctions? Travel bans? International Criminal Court and other charges, trials and convictions? And so much more...

Where is a united world, making it clear that it ends now? Not only in Gaza, but also in Sudan, in Haiti, in Ukraine, in DRC, in Syria. Not only for Palestinians and Israelis, but for the Rohingya and the Uyghurs, the women of Afghanistan & refugees turned away at so many borders.

The world of universal human rights has long been promised and long been betrayed. No leader, in Canada or any other country, deserves to lead unless they are prepared to deliver on that promise, every minute of every day. No excuses. No trade-offs. No half measures.

This is not about other peoples and other conflicts. This is about us all. We are witness and we are complicit. We are watching real time genocide in Gaza. Acknowledge and claim that. We must. We cannot lie or pretend. We know.

And we are only powerless if we remain silent.

Alex Neve was the Exec. Director of Amnesty International Canada for a long period of time then retired about a year ago. He is now teaching international human rights courses at Dalhousie Law and U. of O Law. He is the new Chairperson of Canadians for a Nuclear Weapons Convention



PLOUGHSHARES CALGARY LIBRARY

Ploughshares Calgary Society has a small library located in our office at Parkdale United Church. It contains books and magazines on topics related to nuclear weapons and disarmament, nonviolence, faith and disarmament, peace education, children's books related to peace, and many other relevant topics. Members are welcome to browse our collection and to borrow books from the library during office hours. (We hope to soon have the titles of resources available on our website, and would welcome volunteers who might like to help us with this project.) Recently, long-time Ploughshares Calgary supporter, Dr. Arthur Clark, generously donated a number of new books to our library. These relevant and informative new titles are:

African Americans Against the Bomb: Nuclear Weapons, Colonialism, and the Black Freedom Movement (Nincent J. Intondi, 2015)

Command and Control: Nuclear Weapons, the Damascus Accident, and the Illusion of Safety (Eric Schlosser, 2013)

Thermonuclear Monarchy: Choosing Between Democracy and Doom (Elaine Scarry, 2014 - summary edition)

Not for the Faint of Heart: Lessons in Courage, Power, and Persistence (Ambassador Wendy R. Sherman, 2018)

Able Archer: The Secret History of the NATO Exercise that Almost Triggered Nuclear War (Edited by Nate Jones, A National Security Archive Book, 2016)

In addition, Dr. Clark donated three books that were written by our recent speaker, Rivera Sun. How exciting to have copies of these to offer to loan to our members! The titles of these new books are:

The Dandelion Insurrection

The Dandelion Insurrection Study Guide

The Roots of Resistance

We give our sincere thanks to Dr. Clark for his generous and thoughtful support of our ongoing education about these important topics.



UPCOMING PLOUGHSHARES CALGARY EVENTS

- On Wednesday, April 10th, **Ploughshares Calgary Society** will host **From Stress to Strategies for Nuclear Weapons Abolition** featuring **Bev DeLong**. Bev DeLong will present an update on the nuclear weapons situation – both the worrying and the good news. What is the media failing to explain to us? We will discuss what actions we as individuals or a group might engage to build a hopeful future. This event takes place on Zoom starting at 7:00pm. Please register for free on our Eventbrite page or by emailing our office at: office@ploughsharescalgary.ca.
- On Wednesday, May 8th, **Ploughshares Calgary Society** will host **Dr. Daniel Voth**, a professor of Political Studies U of C, on a topic relating to Decolonization.
- On Wednesday, June 12th, **Ploughshares Calgary Society** will be hosting their **Annual General Meeting**. More information to come soon.





EVENTS

- On Friday, April 12th, **Beautiful Minds** will be hosting **a talent show to raise funds for Woods Homes**. Get ready to be dazzled and amazed at our upcoming talent show extravaganza! Join us for an afternoon filled with jaw-dropping performances, electrifying music, and unforgettable acts that will leave you cheering for more. From sensational singers to mind-bending dancers, our talented lineup promises to captivate audiences of all ages. Mark your calendars and prepare to witness the extraordinary at our talent show event! This event starts at 2:30pm at Stan Grad Centre (1301 16 Avenue NW). Tickets start at \$10 and are available on [Eventbrite.ca](https://www.eventbrite.ca).
- On Saturday, April 20th, **Blue Willow Entertainment & The Breaking Free Foundation (BFF)** will be hosting **Music 4 Mental Health**, a great night of live music at their April Artist Showcase featuring 4 Alberta artists and supporting mental health. The Breaking Free Foundation aims to provide survivors of traumatic life events with the treatment and support needed to reclaim their lives. This event starts at 7:00pm at the Paradise Beverage Company (1319 Edmonton Trail NE). Tickets are available for presale for \$15.00 and are available for \$20 at the door. Tickets are available on [bluewillowentertainment.ca](https://www.bluewillowentertainment.ca).
- On Sunday April 28th, **Inn From The Cold** will be hosting their **13th annual Steps to End Homelessness**. Join hundreds of Calgarians at the McHugh Bluff stairs in Crescent Heights for a fun active way to help end family homelessness. Following the event, challengers and spectators are invited to enjoy a BBQ sponsored by Spolumbo's, a family carnival, and an award ceremony for competing individuals and teams! To learn more & register for this free event, head to [EndHomelessness.ca](https://www.EndHomelessness.ca).



GOOD NEWS

- Local Calgarian, Kelsey Merkeley is getting some international recognition, while also supporting women and girls worldwide. Merkeley is donating 25 per cent of the proceeds from sales of a heart-shaped pendant she designed to **Days for Girls. Days for Girls** is an international charity organization that supports women and girls facing stigmatization related to menstruation. “They offer education initiatives and period kits to women in need in a lot of African countries and Middle Eastern countries, where menstruation stigmatization is really high – women shunned because they’re considered dirty,” Merkeley said. “It’s just a natural part of being a woman and it’s a beautiful part of being a woman.” (Global News Calgary, April 2nd, 2024).
- An Akita named ‘Hero’ saved his owner’s life last week, remaining by his side through two frigid Alberta nights, fending off coyotes, and eventually alerting rescuers. When a passerby named Curtis Dahl was walking in a field of mud and grass near the sugar factory in the town of Taber, Hero came running up and bit his dog around the neck. Dahl said he tussled with Hero for ten minutes trying to get him off his dog, and needed stitches on his finger by the end of it. Dahl called both the police & animal services to alert them of Hero’s presence. When officers arrived, they saw Hero lying down exhausted near a terraced plot of grass and weeds near the road and suddenly heard a cry for help. Arriving, they found a 61-year-old man on his back in a ditch, shivering and unable to move. He told police he’d been stuck there for two days while Hero protected him. (Good News Network, April 2nd, 2024).

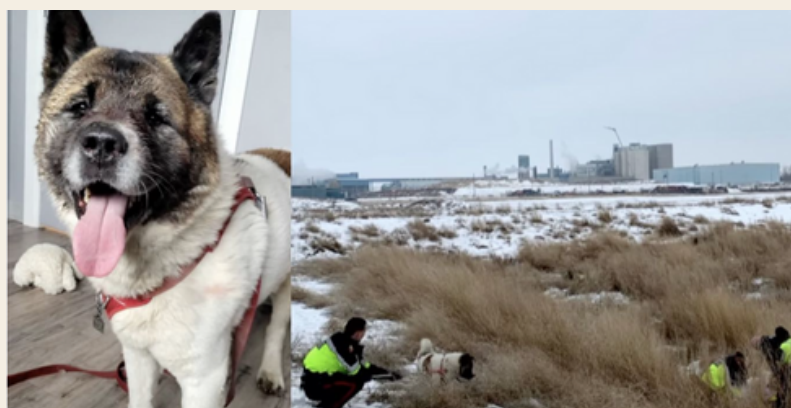


Photo Credits:

Taber Lost Paws Society / Taber Police Service





GOOD NEWS

- Members of a leadership club at Forest Lawn High School are crocheting flowers, then putting them together to make bouquets. The students are making them to give to young patients at the Alberta Children’s Hospital (ACH) in Calgary. “When you have flowers, it’s like a constant reminder that someone thought of you,” Grade 12 student Emeline Niyonsenga said. “It’s good to see that people support you.” The students have spent the past five months on the project. The teens are crocheting enough flowers to make 50 bouquets for kids at the ACH. Along with the flowers, the students are also crocheting surprise items for the young patients. “We’re making a jellyfish for every bouquet – it’d be more appealing to the kids,” Grade 11 student Sammy Dumayhe said. The students are planning on sending their bouquets to the ACH later this spring. (Global News Calgary, March 21st, 2024).
- Therese Ojibway, a mother from Millburn, New Jersey, originally began to leave tiny houses and traces of fairies in the forests around the Rahway Trail in the South Mountain Conservancy as a way to enrich her autistic son’s experience in nature. Over time, the fairy homes, fairy footprints, and fairy dust began to accumulate, and once the park authorities caught wind of the project, they let her continue on for 10 whole years. Today ‘The Fairy Trail’ is a volunteer-led organization that provides a fantastical space for children to let their imaginations thrive. Over 100 tiny homes have been built in the area and tucked into the nooks and crannies of the forest—the perfect place for fairies. (Good News Network, March 28, 2024)



Creator of the Fairy Trail Therese Ojibway and her son
 Photo Credits: Goods News Network