



Our Mission

The Boundary Peace Initiative represents a growing number of area residents of diverse backgrounds brought together over the Iraqi crisis. We support multilateral action for non-violent conflict resolution, human rights, ecological integrity for the planet and international law, through education and dialogue locally and globally. We encourage everyone's participation as we strive for peace and justice to build a better world for future generations.
 BPI web site: www.boundarypeace.20m.com

Boundary Peace Initiative meets on the 2nd & 4th Thursday @ 7 pm in the Slavonic Seniors Center on 72nd Ave. & 7th Street

Bhutan set to plough lone furrow as world's first wholly organic country

By: John Vidal & Annie Kelly; The Guardian Feb. 11, 2013

By shunning all but organic farming techniques, the Himalayan state will cement its status as a paradigm of sustainability

Bhutan plans to become the first country in the world to turn its agriculture completely organic, banning the sales of pesticides and herbicides and relying on its own animals and farm waste for fertilisers.

But rather than accept that this will mean farmers of the small Himalayan kingdom of around 1.2m people (according to Pema Gyamtsho, Bhutan's minister of agriculture and forests; the World Bank estimates it at around 740,000) will be able to grow less food, the government expects them to be able to grow more – and to export increasing amounts of high quality niche foods to neighbouring India, China and other countries.

The decision to go organic was both practical and philosophical, said Gyamtsho, in Delhi for the annual sustainable development conference last week. "Ours is a mountainous terrain. When we use chemicals they don't stay where we use them, they impact the water and plants. We say that we need to consider all the environment. Most of our farm practices are traditional farming, so we are largely organic anyway.

"But we are Buddhists, too, and we believe in living in harmony with nature. Animals have the right to live, we like to see plants happy and insects happy," he said.

Gyamtsho, like most members of the cabinet, is a farmer himself, coming from Bumthang in central Bhutan but studying western farming methods in New Zealand and Switzerland. "Going organic will take time," he said. "We have set no deadline. We cannot do it tomorrow. Instead we will achieve it region by region and crop by crop."

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(from last column) **Bhutan**

The overwhelmingly agrarian nation, which really only opened its doors to world influences 30 years ago, is now facing many of the development pangs being felt everywhere in rapidly emerging countries. Young people reluctant to live just by farming are migrating to India and elsewhere, there is a population explosion, and there is inevitable pressure for consumerism and cultural change.

But, says Gyamtsho, Bhutan's future depends largely on how it responds to interlinked development challenges like climate change, and food and energy security. "We would already be self-sufficient in food if we only ate what we produced. But we import rice. Rice eating is now very common, but traditionally it was very hard to get. Only the rich and the elite had it. Rice conferred status. Now the trend is reversing. People are becoming more health-conscious and are eating grains like buckwheat and wheat."

In the west, organic food growing is widely thought to reduce the size of crops because they become more susceptible to pests. But this is being challenged in Bhutan and some regions of Asia, where smallholders are developing new techniques to grow more and are not losing soil quality.

Systems like "sustainable root intensification" (SRI), which carefully regulate the amount of water that crops need and the age at which seedlings are planted out, have shown that organic crop yields can be doubled with no synthetic chemicals.

"We are experimenting with different methods of growing crops like SRI but we are also going to increase the amount of irrigated land and use traditional varieties of crops which do not require inputs and have pest resistance," says Gyamtsho.

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To Do

The B.C. Southern Interior Peace Coalition Fall Conference Oct. 19th in Castlegar. Agenda, venue, time etc TBA. For info call Laura @ 442-0434 or JJ @ 442-8252

White Poppies will be for sale in local businesses as soon as they arrive. This is an alternative or an addition to the red poppy. We will include more information in the next issue of the Newsletter.

(from page 1) **Bhutan**

However, a run of exceptionally warm years and erratic weather has left many farmers doubtful they can do without chemicals.

In Paro, a largely farming district in south-west Bhutan, farmers are already struggling to grow enough to feed their families and local government officials say they are having to distribute fertiliser and pesticides in larger quantities to help people grow more.

"I have heard of the plan to turn everything organic. But we are facing serious problems just getting people to grow enough", said Rinzen Wangchuk, district farm officer.

"Most people here are smallholder farmers. The last few years we have had problems with the crops. The weather has been very erratic. It's been warmer than normal and all the chilli crops are full of pests. We are having to rely on fertilisers more than we have ever had to in the past and even these are not working as well as they initially did."

Dawa Tshering, who depends on his two acres of rice paddy and a vegetable garden, says that for decades his farming was chemical free.

"But its harder now because all our children are either in the capital or studying. Nobody wants to stay, which means we have to work harder. It's just my wife and myself here. We cannot grow enough to feed ourselves and take crops to the market, so we have to use chemicals for the first time. We would like to go back to farming how we used to, where we just used what nature provided."

But in a world looking for new ideas, Bhutan is already called the poster child of sustainable development. More than 95% of the population has clean water and electricity, 80% of the country is forested and, to the envy of many countries, it is carbon neutral and food secure.

In addition, it is now basing its economic development on the pursuit of collective happiness.

"We have no fossil fuels or nuclear. But we are blessed with rivers which give us the potential of over 30,000 megawatts of electricity. So far we only exploit 2,000 megawatts. We exploit enough now to export to India and in the pipeline we have 10,000 megawatts more. The biggest threat we face is cars. The number is increasing every day. Everyone wants to buy cars and that means we must import fuel. That is why we must develop our energy."

Agriculture minister Gyamtsho remains optimistic. "Hopefully we can provide solutions. What is at stake is the future. We need governments who can make bold decisions now rather than later."

• This article was amended on 13 February 2013 to attribute the figure given for the population of Bhutan

What is absurd and monstrous about war is that men who have no personal quarrel should be trained to murder one another in cold blood. Aldous Huxley

Development must be about freedom from fear and freedom from want

By: Mandeep Tiwana: The Gaurdian March 6, 2013

People need good living standards but they also need civil and political freedoms to ensure the benefits of development are evenly spread

Rising inequality, abuses by transnational corporations and the global democratic deficit were key themes at last week's UN consultation on [governance and the post-2015 development agenda](#), in Johannesburg, South Africa. The consultation was one of a series of expert meetings the UN is holding to debate what should replace the millennium development goals (MDGs), which expire in 2015.

The demand for "honest and transparent governance" was the second most critical issue highlighted by respondents in the UN's global survey for a better world. Strong demands are being made by civil society for good governance to be viewed both as an issue to be considered across development as well as a standalone target post the MDGs, with clear indicators to measure levels of "participatory democracy".

There is huge pressure from financial institutions, big business and some world leaders, however, to ensure that the primary focus of the post-2015 development agenda remains on economic growth. Many civil society groups view the MDGs' assumption that there can be development without freedom as lop-sided. Although the MDGs have a strong focus on poverty reduction and some economic and social rights, they contain no mention of "good governance" and "Democratic and participatory governance based on the will of people" – both of which were clearly spelt out in the millennium declaration.

The declaration, passed by a UN general assembly resolution in 2000, contains a comprehensive vision of development underpinned by human rights, and is the source document of the MDGs. In 2001, when the MDGs were formulated, influential voices were able to convince the international community that democratic freedoms could be relegated in favour of progress on economic indicators.

The Arab spring has clearly shown that development must be about both freedom from fear and freedom from want. People need good standards of living where their basic needs are met but they also need civil and political freedoms to have a say in the decisions that affect their lives and to ensure that the benefits of development are evenly spread.

Large numbers of people, however, are unable to influence their governments: 57% of the world's population live in countries where basic civil liberties and political freedoms are curtailed, according to the US non-profit organisation Freedom House. In far too many countries, including Cambodia, China, Ethiopia and Rwanda, which are lauded for their progress on the MDGs, simple acts of peaceful dissent against government-dictated development policy carry risks of imprisonment or worse.

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(From page 2) **Development**

A key challenge for the international community is narrowing the rapidly expanding gap between rich and poor people. The richest 1% of the population continue to prosper despite the financial crisis, while the overwhelming majority – and impoverished people in particular – are excluded from the fruits of prosperity. Even pro-business newspaper the Economist has called for the adoption of "centrist" economic policies as the inequality gap mirrors 19th-century levels. Oxfam estimates that the world's top 100 billionaires earned \$240bn in 2012, enough to "make extreme poverty history four times over".

A consequence of inequality is the huge expansion of transnational corporate power relentlessly pushing for privatisation of natural resources and public goods. Rights abuses are having a detrimental effect on populations even as governments overlook their excesses. Human Rights Watch lamented the "failed approach to corporate accountability" in its 2013 world report (pdf).

Communities that traditionally relied on rivers, forests and communal grazing grounds are increasingly being displaced by corporations – including extractive, construction and agriculture industries – through government collusion. Basic services such as health, housing, education and mass transport, that are the responsibility of governments to provide, are increasingly being outsourced under the garb of public-private partnerships, which makes them accessible only to those who are able to pay.

In response to the issues that emerged from last week's consultation, Graça Machel, a member of the UN's high-level panel, asked delegates: "What needs to change in 2015?" A simple answer would be for decision-makers to reread the promises made by world leaders in the millennium declaration on freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature and shared responsibility. Viewing development in mostly monetised terms, and as the sum total of the eight MDGs, is outmoded and irrelevant. Human development needs to be defined by the UN in the widest possible terms and through the lens of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which gives equal priority to civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

It is time to put people at the centre of development and ditch the business as usual approach if we are to address impending and interlinked economic, social, political, environmental and humanitarian crises. In the millennium declaration, world leaders said: "Men and women have the right to live their lives and raise their children in dignity, free from hunger and from the fear of violence, oppression or injustice." Why, then, are influential politicians equating good governance with economic growth, and not democratic freedoms, access to justice, and accountability?

Mandeep Tiwana is policy and advocacy manager at Civicus: World Alliance for Citizen Participation



Book & Film Recommendations **The Deserter's Tale (The story of an ordinary soldier who walked away from the War in Iraq)**

By: Joshua Key as told to Lawrence Hill

Publisher: House of Anansi Press Inc. © 2007

I know that many Americans have their minds made up about people like me. They think we are cowards who just couldn't take it. I don't blame them. I had my own mind made up about war deserters long before I set foot in Iraq. But I know right from wrong. I had a conscience by the age of six. I had to suspend it for a while in Iraq. Soldiers are taught that it is "Army first, God second, and family third." I am not a coward and I never flinched from danger. The easiest thing would have been to keep on doing what I was told to do. Every so slowly, as the jets raced and the illumination rounds burned and the houses fell during the long Iraqi nights, my conscience returned. It could no longer be Army first, God second, and family third. It had to be the tiny voice inside me that would not sleep any longer. I am not this man, I told myself. I cannot do these things any longer.

This is the story of how that voice finally grew louder than the rumbling of tanks and the blaze of gunfire and the hollering of commanders. This is the story of how it came to be that I went to Iraq as a private first class in the United States Army. This is the story of what I did to the Iraqi people and what I saw other Americans do to them, and why I deserted the war and became an outlaw in my own country. I was made to be a criminal in Iraq, but I am a criminal no longer and I am never going back.



Films donated by the No Boundaries Film Club to the Grand Forks Public

You will have to wait for new films until the Festival in Feb. 2014 but if you have a film you wish to list please let us know.

***Ed. Note:** If you have read a book or seen a film that you feel would be of interest or informative please let us know and we will include them in this section. Email the name of the book, the author and the publisher with a brief explanation of the book, and for the film the name, the producer and a brief explanation of the contents to Laura at l4peace@telus.net. Thank you.*

It is the job of thinking people not to be on the side of the executioners.

Albert Camus

War On Syria - Frequently Asked Questions

By: *The Canadian Peace Alliance: www.acp-cpa.ca | cpa@web.ca | [@canadianpeace](https://twitter.com/canadianpeace)*

What is the potential impact on Syria if the US and/or its allies attack? Don't the people of Syria want our help? Any attack on a sovereign state that is not authorized by the UN Security Council (and this one will not be) is illegal. But more importantly, this war, cloaked as a “humanitarian intervention”, will be deeply immoral and unethical. It will continue a shameful tradition of Western intervention in the Middle East, which uses the Responsibility to Protect doctrine to justify more killing. The experiences of recent military interventions in Libya, Iraq and Afghanistan show that bombing and occupation result in tens, or even hundreds of thousands of people being killed. This makes life more dangerous, not less. Western military intervention would fundamentally undermine Syrians’ right to determine their own future.

What is the potential impact on the region? The impact of an attack is extremely serious – this cannot be overstated. Military action against Syria has the potential to cause widespread violence and retaliation from forces in the region, and possibly even from Russia.

Parties outside Syria are backing different sides, intervening with arms, money and covert action. The US and its allies have armed the Syrian opposition. The CIA has been authorized to support the opposition in trying to topple the Assad regime, and has been training rebel forces. On the other hand, Iran and Russia have been supporting their longtime ally, the Syrian Government. Over the last ten years, the War on Terror has drastically destabilized the Middle East. A US attack on Syria could have grave and unpredictable consequences as is evidenced in all past and present conflicts. The conflict is already spreading to Lebanon and Turkey, and could also involve Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Iraq and Iran. Egypt, Jordan, and Iraq have all declared they will not allow their airspace to be used for an attack on Syria.

Isn't the Assad regime using chemical weapons? The pretext for attacking Syria is the allegation that the Syrian government used chemical weapons in Damascus; just after a UN team had arrived in the country to investigate an earlier alleged use of chemical weapons. The idea that the Syrian government would launch a chemical weapons attack at the moment when the UN team was in the country defies logic. But the United States government has declared, in advance of any actual investigation, that the Syrian government is already guilty. In other words, Obama decided to use chemical weapons as an excuse to go to war.

We have no reason to trust the U.S. government’s version of what happened. This is the same government that has routinely deceived the American people on many issues, as was recently revealed by Edward Snowden’s leaks related to NSA spying.

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(From last column) War On Syria

Even if true, there is also evidence of chemical weapons in use by others in the Syrian conflict. Further, if the US cared about dying Syrians, bombing the country would not be an appropriate response. It’s not as if the US has never used chemical weapons, either; the US used white phosphorus and depleted uranium in Fallujah in 2004, as well as napalm and Agent Orange during the Vietnam War and first and remains the only one to use atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Isn't this about democracy? US allies, particularly Saudi Arabia and Qatar, have no interest in democracy in the Middle East. They are among the most authoritarian regimes in the region. If Western governments were really concerned about promoting democracy in the region, they would not be supplying weapons to Saudi Arabia and Bahrain.

In a recent Reuter’s poll, only 9 percent of Americans favored direct U.S. military intervention, and 89 percent opposed arming the Syrian opposition. If Obama was concerned about democracy, he would listen to the American people and not go to war. As for Canada, Stephen Harper has already lied to Canadians on four separate occasions that he would not extend the military mission to Afghanistan. So much for democracy.

What is the real motive for war? Assad’s record on human rights has not worried the western powers in the past. The US sent detainees for interrogation and torture to Syria as part of the “global war on terror” as did Canada when they sent Maher Arar to be tortured by the Syrians. An attack on Iran remains the ultimate goal for the US. Intervention for regime change in Syria is a stepping-stone toward that goal.

U.S. foreign policy is not one of benign humanitarian concern. Washington’s goal is control of the oil-rich and strategic Middle East region. The US and its allies have worked to destroy independent governments and popular movements in the region for decades

What has Canada’s involvement with Syria been since the insurrection in 2011? Canada helped to organize, and became a member of, the Friends of Syria Group (FSG), a group of governments seeking regime change in Syria.

Canada’s role was ostensibly to send humanitarian assistance for refugees. Foreign Minister John Baird has boasted that the Harper government of Canada is currently involved, along with other countries, in developing a post-Assad government for Syria.

Military sources have suggested Canada’s role might include air transport support, refueling, the JTF2 special forces unit, and possibly CF-18 fighter jets. The Canadian military has assets in the region, including the HMCS Toronto.

The Canadian military continues to plan for military action on Syria. It is crucial that the anti-war movement remain in the streets to make sure Harper doesn’t support this war, just as we successfully persuaded PM Jean Chretien from “putting boots on the ground” in Iraq.

Sources: <http://stopwar.org.uk>, <http://www.answercoalition.org>

The Boundary Peace Initiative (BPI) welcomes articles. All articles are the responsibility of the author and may not be common consensus. To submit an article, contact **Laura** at **250-442-0434** or **L4peace@telus.net**. The BPI is a member of: Southern Interior Peace Coalition, Canadian Peace Alliance, Abolition 2000, Lawyers Against the War, Canadian Voice of Women for Peace, an affiliate of the Fellowship of Reconciliation and works with various local and global groups.

Voice your opinion to the Prime Minister and all MPs. Free postage: {Name of MP}, Parliament Buildings, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0A6 Go to the Government of Canada website for emails of all MPs, Ministers at <http://www.canada.gc.ca>