

The FreezeWeapons Campaign - Realizing Integral Disarmament *because of the Pandemic*
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Your Eminences, Your Excellencies, Dear friends,

The fury of the virus illustrates the folly of war.

Exactly a year ago, on this day, the UN Secretary General conveyed the words calling for an immediate global ceasefire, in all corners of the world.

To put armed conflict on lockdown and focus together on the true fight of our lives.

In the Easter message of 2020, His Holiness Pope Francis iterated that this is not a time for division. That those who have responsibility in conflicts muster the courage to support the appeal for an immediate global ceasefire. And I quote:

“This is not a time for continuing to manufacture and deal in arms, spending vast amounts of money that ought to be used to care for others and save lives.”

End of quote.

Inspired by these words, our small team of academics, researchers and young volunteers, embarked on the FreezeWeapons campaign, as a complementary measure to support the calls for a global ceasefire.

The scourge of war is only exacerbated by the continued availability of weapons. The rationale behind war, is only justified by those who seek to benefit - politically, or financially.

Yet, the covid-19 pandemic illustrated that the greatest threats to our collective security and stability, come from not within our long lasting rivalries and animosities, but in spite of them.

Global catastrophic events, climate change, food insecurity, water insecurity, Disease X. These are the threats to our individual and collective existence, that remain - in spite of the horrific preoccupation with war, and the threat of war, that often characterises our final resolutions of political differences.

The opportunity costs, as we turn our collective scientific and political expertise, as we turn our financial and human capital, to missiles, and bullets, and machetes - is that we turn our attention away from a burning planet, from the development of credible healthcare infrastructure, from water desalination,... from a universal vaccine.

The inverse correlation between expenditure on militarism and healthcare provision has been empirically proven. The question now is - how do we act on this revelation.

The FreezeWeapons initiative identifies the facilitatory role the arms trade plays in the continuation of conflict.

Therefore, in the spirit of integral disarmament, we call on states and corporations, individually and collectively, to take concrete steps towards the cessation of the excessive production, trade and

supply of weapons, *to free-up* the human and financial resources to combat the covid-19 pandemic in the short and medium term. This will include the implementation of moratoria, that will suspend our unhealthy addiction to militarism.

It is our hope, that the steps taken in this direction, *will* enable a collective reprioritization of our security concerns. And in the long-term, our experiences will bring us closer to a heuristic adoption of integral security.

So while we welcome the adoption of the UN General Assembly Resolution 74/270 calling for global solidarity to fight the coronavirus disease,

the UN Security Council Resolution 2532 underlining support for the Secretary-General's global Ceasefire Appeal,

and more recently, the practical UN Security Council Resolution 2565 calling for ceasefires in conflict zones to allow the delivery of covid vaccines -

We call on the international community, to dig deeper, to focus on a significant source of violence - and stop the legal and illegal proliferation of weapons - as a complementary measure to the suspension of conflicts.

We call on the international community, to adopt the FreezeWeapons formal text.

We cannot silence the guns, while remaining *Silent* about the guns.

Recalling the words of the Holy Father, as conveyed today by His Eminence Cardinal Parolin, we must transform instruments of hatred into instruments of peace, and we must *reject* the increasing proliferation of arms.

This is crucial, if we are to *accept* the promotion of the common good, - if we are to *promote* integral human development.

Thank you for your attention.