

# Killing doesn't work; Let's try something else

How many people must be killed and maimed to create peace? As crazy as this question sounds, it is precisely the one that must be asked in the current environment. More than eight hundred Palestinians and thirteen Israelis have been killed in the past two weeks alone. In 2008, nearly 500 Americans soldiers were killed in Iraq and Afghanistan. During the same period, some 6,000-9,000 Iraqis were directly killed (with countless more dying due to lack of food or medicine). I don't understand how the continued killing of humans is an action for peace. If it does anything, it creates conditions favorable for more violence.

Daily we are told by our leaders (through the corporate media) that bombing and shooting is required to keep peace. We are given this message so often that it becomes normal and, therefore, acceptable. We are told how important it is that our military (and, more and more commonly, corporate mercenaries—such as Blackwater) invade/occupy other countries because this makes things safer.

How much killing will make us safe? The answer, in this new age of "terrorism," seems to be "as much as it takes." I don't accept that vague and deathly answer. It only serves to rationalize and justify killing more people, many of whom are completely innocent.

Why is so much killing necessary? We are told that it is because there are people that hate us and despise our way of life and/or religion. Yet, this goes against what I have learned from talking to people from many parts of the world. From my experiences, I recognize that people have much more in common than is different. The vast majority don't want more violence. We will all live more peacefully if we really try to get along. When the world's military budget is over one trillion dollars a year, we are not really trying.

But let's say that there are people that hate us. What good does it do to kill them? Some think that we need to kill them before they kill us. But the reality is this: in the process of activating this thinking, we will kill untold numbers of innocent people and doing so will not make us safer. It will only make more people hate us. This is where we stand right now in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Palestine (through our unyielding support of everything that Israel does). Children being raised in these (and other) countries are learning first hand that they should fear Americans. Many are learning that they should seek revenge for the crimes done to their families and their people by bombs and bullets. When will it end? Should we kill these children too?

The problem is, simply, our leaders aren't giving us any option other than killing. Why? I believe it is for two reasons. One, some people (and companies) are making lots of money out of continued death and destruction. Bombs (and their purveyors) are not cheap and the resources (such as oil) that inevitably get taken from foreign lands are very lucrative as well. Two, many of us don't operate on the principle that all human life is equally valuable. Thus, we feel superior to people from distant lands. This allows us to extract resources and labor from other parts of the world for little or



no money while not feeling the least bit responsible for the extreme poverty that exists in so much of it. Poverty is a form of violence—felt daily by more than half the people in the world right now. The people in Gaza have almost nothing to their name—food, medicine and electricity are at bare minimums or non-existent—and yet it is deemed acceptable to "starve" these poor people or to kill them if a scant few of them fight back against this inhuman blockade of basic goods.

Under these circumstances, we need something other than killing to bring true peace. How about, as a first step, let's start talking to one another. As it is, most of us have no idea what it is like to live in Iraq right now. Tragically, our televisions and radios are filled with "reality" nonsense and not focused on real lives and real people. So, I propose that we all start trying to engage in conversations and peaceful exchanges with people from other places. In order to do this with an open mind, I urge people to stop listening to the pro-violent propaganda, which permeates the airwaves (TV and radio), delivered by the supposed "savants" (perhaps better called "savages"). We can build peace one conversation at a time.

Beyond talking, we must alleviate poverty wherever it exists. We cannot expect destitute people to behave rationally and peacefully. If you or I were desperately hungry, we would fight for food. If our children were sick, we would fight to get them medicine. The recent bailout of banks, insurance firms, and auto companies proves how much we have to share if we really want to bring peace. The hundreds of billions of dollars that we spend on the military industrial complex (as President Eisenhower referred to it in 1961) is further proof of our immense wealth. We must make sure that everyone in the world has food, shelter, and basic health care. If we don't, we are destined to perpetuate violence and hatred.

The time is now to stop the violence and make peace. Remember, violence will not make us safe. It will only make more innocent people die and at the same time make us less safe. Talk to people and make sure they are not hungry or homeless. These solutions stand a chance, escalating violence doesn't.