

Edwina Hughes - Pacifism or militarism: the life or death choice for people and the planet?

Militarism and militarisation pose particular challenges for respect for life, the planet and the sacred. Yet the pervasive ongoing costs and consequences of militarism are often overlooked when compared with the attention given to the tragedy of armed conflict and war. Militarism is a destructive ideology that is seldom challenged, but its dominance increasingly places the future of humanity and the planet at risk.

This presentation provides an overview of some of the resources for public education that Peace Movement Aotearoa has developed around New Zealand's role in the global cycle of violence, and the ideologies of pacifism and militarism – the life or death choice for people and the planet.

The first section provides an outline of some of the costs and consequences of militarism – both globally and in Aotearoa New Zealand - in relation to human security, social justice, environmental sustainability, climate justice, attitudes towards violence as a means of resolving conflict, and the increasing level of militarisation of children and their education here and what that means for the future.

The second section outlines the threat that existing weapons of mass destruction pose to the planet, and the unprecedented new threat to the future of humanity - lethal autonomous weapons systems (“killer robots”), robotic weapons with the ability to select and attack targets without any human involvement.

The presentation concludes with some questions about pacifism and militarism, and asks whether pacifism can lead to the changes that are necessary to develop the kind of peaceful relationships we want within and among communities here, with communities overseas, and within the global community.