

Event Hosted by Global Diversity
Peace Centre London

London Peace Conference of Leaders

Responding to Terrorism – Building Culture of Peace

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Venue:

Mist Lounge (Peace Hall)
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1. Introduction - Turmoil in the World Today

Good evening and thanks for inviting me to give a talk today. I would like to thank Mr M.S. Elahi and Global Diversity Peace Centre for doing exceptionally good work on interfaith harmony developing better understanding, cooperation and respect between people of different faiths which is very much needed in a world of chaos today. It is only through the courageous actions of all of us we can bring changes to live in a better world.

At a time of increasing tension over Ukraine, the Middle East, increase in extremism, fanaticism, continuing fruitless wars and massacres in Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Pakistan and the present terrorist attacks in Paris, Beirut and Mali, the world seems to be descending into a dangerous situation as if the world is up in arms. It is worth noting that none of these countries have ever attacked UK. The lesson is simple. Military intervention is the problem, not the solution as war begets war. To stop terrorism US and the West have to stop invading other countries. The Euro-American practice of arming and funding dictators and insurgencies leaves no space for open political debate, hence terrorism is the inevitable consequences.

According to the Global Terrorism Index, in 2014, terrorism reached its highest level ever with 13,370 terrorist attacks in 93 countries killing 32,658 people and with the economic cost of \$52.9 billion. That is for 2014, just one year. 40 countries including some G20 countries are funding the gruesome activities of ISIS and other terrorist organisations. No wonder the stocks and shares of leading weapon/defence industry manufacturers like Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, General Dynamics have surged after the Paris attacks. What we need to do is to stop arms sales to most reactionary and authoritarian regimes in the region and start peace negotiations with the conflicting parties to end war.

Both sides in the conflict ISIS (Islamic State) and Western military intervention has resulted in barbaric killings leading to a cycle of violence and hate. The renewed Shia vs Sunni competition and the rise of Islamic State or ISIS and its call for the establishment of the Caliphate has added to the militant vicious sectarianism. Can the western leaders really think they can tackle the militants by bombing them? If you need to create a just and civilised world we must try to understand the root causes of conflict – talk with, listen and to empathise with the people in the region and explore non-violent alternatives. Violence is a tragedy, but by getting distracted by it from the road of non-violence is a double tragedy. It is time for us to take powerful actions for peace.

2. Violence, Extremism, Terrorism and its Consequences

The war against terrorism is terrorism. How do we stop terrorism? Stop committing it. And stop creating fear to foster terrorism. The UN definition of terrorism is:

“Terrorism is violence carried out by individual, group or state actors designed to frighten a non-combatant population for political reasons. The victims are usually chosen randomly (targets of opportunity) or selectively (representative or symbolic targets) from a population in order to pass a message which may be intimidation, coercion and/or propaganda. It differs from assassination where the victim is the main target.”

But in order to build a disarmed world, we need to analyse the root causes of the increasing violence and conflict, and take ownership of what has gone wrong. This means saying No to war, and yes to peace.

Yet, what can be done. Global military spending, which costs an average of 4.6 billion dollars a day continues to rise, while the violence of an unjust economic order in which 1% of world population owns 50% of the global wealth. Poverty is spreading all over the world and the global social crisis is deepening. I believe we must abolish militarism, nuclear weapons and war, disband NATO, (which should have been done when the Warsaw Pact was disbanded,) and start to base our International Relations on International Law and Human Rights. In October this year, we celebrated 70 Years of United Nations Charter, and it gives us an opportunity to defend, democratize and upgrade this indispensable global institution, so that it can serve its founding aims effectively and reaffirm the norm of the UN Charter, which is ‘that peace shall be established by peaceful means’. We need to affirm the United Nations as the Body that represents the Human Global Family, and hold it accountable for its Mission ‘To save the world from the Scourge of war’.

World is inter-dependent as never before-through technology, internet, mass communications, trade etc: and it is easier to work together for a peaceful and violence free society

3. Prospects for Peace

The UNESCO preamble is as relevant today as it was in 1945: "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed".

We call ourselves civilised. But a true civilisation does not need to possess weapons and to train millions of men and women in armed forces and send them to war. To counteract the evil of warmongering we need a global movement for a positive change to show we can live with our fellow human beings in peace, by taking steps to build a peaceful and secure world based on non-militarist approaches. A radical rethinking of political forces is needed to initiate an act of reconciliation.

More constructive alternatives to military intervention include:

- Need of political will and more effective leadership, efforts at a global scale for a world without war. No wars are good ones. All are fought for wealth, power, conquest and dominance.
- Immediate halt to air strikes and stopping the flow of arms to the regions of conflict,
- Prioritising diplomatic intervention under United Nations auspices,
- Insisting on a renewed peace process for Syria, Iraq, Middle East and Ukraine that includes all parties
- Helping create peaceful and just societies – changing the mindset from revenge and gun culture which provides the framework for terrorism to culture of peace, compassion, forgiveness and non-violence.

4. Solutions

We recognise the danger to the human family if we continue down the road of militarism and war, instead of recognising the imperative of Peace for the very survival of humanity. We are witnessing the re-militarisation of Europe, and the revival of cold war politics. We, the People must insist there be no cold war again, and encourage Political Leaders to move away from the rhetoric of enmity and war to begin a dialogue and negotiate, and work co-operatively together. World Political and Spiritual Leaders have a huge responsibility to help abolish nuclear weapons and war and join together in the enormous task of General and Complete Disarmament.

In recent years we have witness an increase of militant fundamentalism. All must challenge this violent extremism as it will not be stopped by yet more violence from Governments. UK has been bombing countries for decade and a half at the cost of millions of life, without any tangible results. Why in the 21st Century Military Industrial Complex (MIC) is producing more guns, weapons and bullets which have made arms industry the biggest trade in the world. It can only result in more violence, wars and suffering.

5. Harnessing Spiritual Roots of Peace

Peace in Islam means, "The absence of oppression, corruption, injustice and tyranny", rather than simply absence of war. Islam wants peaceful relations between states in the world community now menaced by monstrous military operations, if continued will eradicate life on this planet. Prophet Mohammed Said "Whoever kills one man, kills humanity." Islam religion never teaches or guide to kill or oppress any Muslims or non Muslims. Majority of 1.2 billion Muslims around the world live peaceful lives. No ideology, no deeply felt grievance, no religious belief or political cause can justify the shedding of so much innocent blood.

A study by Common Cause Foundation to be published next month, reveals that humans are more interested in helpfulness, honesty, forgiveness and justice than in money, fame, status and power. By affirming our common humanity, we are also able to affirm our other forms of identity, such as religion, race, age, sex, ethnicity and status, as part of the wonderful diversity of human life.

6. Civil Society Actions

We can make peaceful world by influencing policy makers and civil society by

- Contacting MP's, MEP's, Foreign Ministers or heads of governments to call for ceasefire and diplomatic negotiations to end conflicts based as a political process in the outcome of Vienna talks held in October 2015.
- Opposing violence, wars, militarism and an end to glorification of violence and hate
- Countering immoral, illogical, anti-human business of funding military hardware for war-profiteers
- No more attacks and no more invasions and to solve conflicts through dialogue and not by force
- Holding meetings like today to foster values of oneness, harmony, multiculturalism and cultural diversity
- Need for global religious leaders to speak out against violence and have a dialogue and cooperation between faiths for building harmony
- Change begins with one person
- Gandhi, Mandela, Martin Luther King – were individuals who fought against their political system to achieve their moral objectives.
- Begin peace education when children enter school
- David Frost asked John Lennon in an interview, "When Hitler marched into Czechoslovakia, if people had said 'peace and love' to him, it wouldn't have done much good." Lennon said, "No, but what if they had been saying it to him from the moment he was born? That was wonderful." Gandhi also said that if we want peace in the world, we have to start with children.

7. Conclusion and Way Forward

We all have to work together for the survival of our species, to end wars before they end us, to solve the intractable problems we face not by rivalries but through co-operation. Real change would be to alter the paradigm built on violence as a solution and to stop training successive generations of soldiers and jihadists to kill or be killed in a war.

The total economic impact of violence in 2014 reached \$14.3 trillion, or 13.4% of global GDP. That's equivalent to the combined economies of Canada, France, Germany, Spain and the UK. So we can see how much savings we can achieve by eradicating violence and create enough stimulus to tackle terrorism, financial, climate change crisis and wipe out hunger and extreme poverty. It could also provide education, stimulate culture and improve social justice.

The message is simple: Peace is an investment in humanity's progress for a better future. The way to peace is to overcome evil with good, falsehood with truth and hatred with love. The bottom line is we should have increasing desire to be of service to others with greater love and compassion for building societies and cultures on the basis of peace and nonviolence.

Things do change. Europeans have made Europe peaceful for the first time in history, and have understood that wars and militarism make humanity less safe rather than protecting it. Slavery, colonialism and Apartheid era is gone. There was cold war, but then the Soviet Union dissolved. Let us not start another new cold war. Recently we had reunification of Germany. 95 countries have completely abolished the death penalty. 27 countries have no armies.

What we need today is urgent change by extraordinary change makers, courageous peace leaders who do not give up against all odds to inspire global movement for a just and peaceful world. Our greatest strength as individuals is citizen power. Individuals, organisations and countries - let us cooperate on a global scale to take bold but doable, practical steps to change things around and sow the seeds for a more peaceful and prosperous world. Peace is a violence free social justice society. I think the religions of the world must give the global community a fresh moral vision for peace it so desperately needs. Then we will have as good a chance as any for building a just and peaceful world.

One of my most favourite and treasured verses in the Qur'an has a universal message: "If God had so willed, He could have made you a single people, but His plan is to test you in what He has given you, so strive as one human race in all virtues according to what He has given you (5:48)."

Thanks for listening.

8. Words of Wisdom

"If there is to be peace in the world, there must be peace in the nations. If there is to be peace in the nations, There must be peace in the cities. If there is to be peace in the cities, there must be peace between neighbours. If there is to be peace between neighbours, there must be peace in the home. If there is to be peace in the home, there must be peace in the heart."

Chinese Philosopher, Lao Tse, 6th Century BCE

"May there be peace to the heavens, peace the skies, peace to the atmosphere. May there be peace on the earth and peace in the waters. May there be peace to the forests and peace to the mountains. May there be peace to the plants, animals and to all creatures. May we all live in peace"

From the Vedas, considered to be the oldest book on the Earth

One of my most treasured verses in the Qur'an has a universal message: "If God had so willed, He could have made you a single people, but His plan is to test you in what He has given you, so strive as one human race in all virtues according to what He has given you (5:48)." Most especially in the wake of trauma and terror, how we each decide to engage with "the other" is our own individual choice, but the fate is shared by us all.

The Qu'ran

"It is law of love that rules mankind had violence and hate rules us we would have become extinct long ago. The tragedy is that so called civilised persons and nations conduct themselves as if the bases of society was violence."

Gandhi

"It is never right to do wrong or to requite wrong with wrong, or when we suffer evil to defend ourselves by doing evil in return." :

Socrates 469 - 399 BC

Notes:

1. Mairead Maguire, The Disturbing Expansion of the Military-Industrial Complex, 14th October, 2014
2. Lord Hannay, Who Rules The World, 9th September, 2008
3. Ramsey Clark, United Nations Turning into NATO Tool of Aggressions
4. Vijay Mehta, The Economics of Killing: How the West Fuels War and Poverty in the Developing World, Pluto Press, London, 2012
5. Vijay Mehta, A new Momentum for Peace: No Syria Intervention – What Next?, 29th March 2014
6. Noam Chomsky, US, The World's Leading Terrorist State, November 04, 2014
7. IPB Statement: There Is No Military Solution To Fundamentalism, Geneva, 16 October 2014
8. Pax Christi, 2014 Report on global financing on nuclear industry
9. Noam Chomsky, Can Civilisation Survive Capitalisation, New York Times News Syndicate 2013
10. Nita Bhalla, Spend Less on Arms, More on Schools, says Nobel Laureate Kailash Satyarthi, 21st Oct, 2014
11. Vijay Mehta, A Nonviolent Sustainable Future is Possible by Overcoming Violence, Wars, and Inequality, 8th ICPNA, India
12. War Impoverishes Us, World Beyond War
13. Adams, David, "A Culture of Peace is the Best Alternative to Terrorism," World Beyond War

Bio – **Vijay Mehta** is a distinguished author and leading peace activist and a champion for Development and Human Rights. He is the chair of Uniting for Peace (www.unitingforpeace.org) and Founding Trustee of Fortune Forum Charity (www.fortuneforum.org).

Working since 1979, Uniting for Peace is a non-profit organisation devoted to creating and promoting a global culture of peace, nonviolence and poverty reduction. The flagship campaign of Uniting for Peace is called 4D for World Peace. It is a campaign to create global frameworks for taking actions on interconnecting global issues of disarming and demilitarising the world and the savings thus achieved to be deployed for development and democracy.

The charity Fortune Forum whose founder is Renu Mehta, daughter of Vijay Mehta, held summits (2005 and 2006) where Former US President Clinton, Former US Vice President Al Gore and Actor Michael Douglas were keynote speakers. The summits raised over a million pounds for charity and attracted a worldwide audience of 1.3 billion people (one fifth of humanity) including print and media coverage.

Vijay Mehta's books include *The Economics of Killing* (2012), *The Fortune Forum Code: For a Sustainable Future* (2006), *Arms No More* (2005) and *The United Nations and its Future in the 21st Century* (2005).

In 2014, Vijay Mehta's bio, "The Audacity of Dreams" appeared in the book *Karma Kurry*, published by Jaico Publishing House (India). It included 25 other inspiring change-makers' biographies. Nelson Mandela who wrote the foreword to the book, had this to say, "Ordinary people do extra ordinary things. These stories have that power to inspire people to rise and act, to make a difference." To read Vijay Mehta's full bio, please follow this link: <http://goo.gl/JcUGwr>

He has appeared in various TV programmes including BBC World, Press TV, Ajtak-24 hour Indian news channel, and Think Peace documentary, Canada, among others. The Sunday Times, Independent, Observer and Guardian newspapers, among other journals have written about him. His life is devoted to the service of peace, humanity and our planet.

Vijay Mehta is the recipient of the Global Indian Karmaveer (Action hero) Puraskaar (Award) by iCONGO (International Confederation of NGO's). He is now a noble-laureate 2012 – 2013 of the iCONGO team of advisors and mentors (www.icongo.in). It is an award for outstanding luminaries working for peace and social justice.

He has been appointed a fellow of the New Westminster College, Province of British Columbia, Canada in 2013.

Vijay Mehta's book "**The Economics of Killing: How the West Fuels Wars and Poverty in the Developing World**" is published by Pluto Press (UK) / Palgrave Macmillan (USA) / Amazon (Worldwide). For reviews and endorsements of the book, please visit: www.theeconomicsofkillling.org and was read and commented by figures such as Tony Benn, Mairead Maguire, Alice Walker and Deepak Chopra.

Vijay Mehta's new book "Exporting Europe's Peace" to be published next year makes the case for EU and its preservation of peace in Europe and how by applying EU model to the rest of the world we can make war unthinkable.

"Vijay...a long standing activist for peace, development, human rights and environment"
The Sunday Times Magazine, London 1st February, 2009

"Vijay Mehta lends intellectual credibility to the project and wrote 'The Fortune Forum Code for a Sustainable Future', a sort of manifesto that will underpin the group's future activities."
The Independent, London 26 September 2006

"Thank you for all you do Vijay - both the Organisation and yourself are inspiration and give us all hope that both yourself and Uniting for Peace can bring a world without war. Indeed it is possible, even in our own time."
Mairead Corrigan Maguire, Nobel Peace Laureate (1976)

Vijay Mehta is among the 1,300 Notable Peacemakers Throughout History
http://peace.maripo.com/p_peacemakers.htm

He is among the 98 Peace Philanthropists around the world.
http://peace.maripo.com/p_philanthropy_bios.htm