



Cleveland Peace Action Newsletter

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

We've had no shortage of genocides, wars, and police-state actions prompting *peace action* in 2025. Donald Trump promised to serve as a "peace president" and avoid "endless war" but we see the opposite, including broken ceasefires in Gaza, settler violence in the West Bank, active military engagement with Iran in June and now with Venezuela, along with extrajudicial killings at sea, and continued provision of arms to Israel, Saudi Arabia, and United Arab Emirates.

Year-end appeals often ask for contributions and that is my intention, in part. But what is equally valuable is showing up. We certainly appreciate your donations and do put them to good use. From organizing the silent peace walk on the 80th anniversary of the Hiroshima bombing; sponsoring Sudan solidarity teach-in fundraisers, supporting Bethlehem University's Palestine Institute for Biodiversity and Sustainability; to helping shape the Resistance Project NEO to foster collaboration among local groups; promoting the films *Light*, *Sudan Remember Us*, and the Oscar-winning *No Other Land*; and reporting on a recent expedition to Bethlehem and Ramallah, Occupied Palestine.

Showing up is how we amplify our message in government offices, courtrooms, boardrooms, and the streets. Showing up is joining a consumer boycott or the Fast for Gaza which benefits Ashraf's Water for Gaza Campaign. When we show up in our dozens and hundreds, people pay attention. Letters to the editors of local newspapers enlighten and engage the electorate. Let's take advantage while we can and show up for one another.

Cleveland Peace Action (CPA) acts independently but coordinates with national Peace Action and affiliates around the country. You can make a tax-deductible contribution using the envelope in this newsletter or on our website. Find out more at peaceactioncleveland.org. Follow ClevelandPeaceAction on Instagram and Facebook.

Thank you for your support and please enjoy this collection of perspectives from CPA board members and other volunteers.

Don Bryant, President

What kind of world do we want to live in?

By Liz Kravanya

Recently, Pope Leo was asked about conflicts erupting around the globe. As leader of the Catholic Church, he's the spiritual guide for more than 1.4 billion people—which is basically the population of the entire internet on a Sunday morning. And when Pope Leo opened his mouth, he didn't whisper. He spoke with force about peace in Ukraine, calling for a ceasefire and serious negotiations; the persecution of Christians in Nigeria; and President Donald Trump's immigration policy. In his view, all three reflect violence against humanity—not exactly the stuff of spiritual gold stars.

It's becoming painfully obvious that the anti-immigrant policies—and yes, the masked ICE agents whisking people away like a bad reboot of a Cold War thriller—are not what the 55 percent of Catholics thought they were voting for in 2016 or 2024. People wanted border security, not a traveling production of “Authoritarianism: The Musical.”

The promises were simple: deport gang members, remove dangerous criminals, make the border secure. But what's actually happening in the United States? Beginning in March 2025, masked ICE agents were deployed into American cities to target pro-Palestine activists. Then the mission creep arrived—agents rounding up people of color, including American citizens and legal residents. At that point, it stopped looking like immigration enforcement and started looking like a mashup of Hitler's Gestapo, Stalin's NKVD, and Pol Pot's secret police—except somehow with worse branding. And America? Mostly silent.

Then came the National Guard to “support” ICE, followed by actual military units deployed in Los Angeles. For what? To normalize soldiers on city streets like we're auditioning for a dystopian Netflix series. And all of this runs straight into the 1878 Posse Comitatus Act—our national “Hey, maybe let's not use the military on civilians” clause. As people watched friends and neighbors disappear, Americans started waking up. As Pope Leo bluntly observed, “When people have lived good lives—many of them for 10, 15, 20 years – treating them with disrespect and instances of violence is troubling.” (That's Pope-speak for “What on Earth are you people doing?”)

Make no mistake: this isn't an immigration policy protecting national security. It's a blueprint for militarizing American cities and expanding federal power into places it doesn't belong. The big tax-cut legislation for billionaires? Surprise! It also delivered historic funding to ICE and the defense department. Apparently the rich weren't the only ones cashing in.

The Trump administration excels at announcing flashy, shiny, camera-ready policies that make wealthy donors clap like seals—while doing approximately zero actual work to fix the broken immigration system.

It's little wonder Americans (and the Pope!) are asking hard questions about the attitudes behind these policies. Most Americans believe openness to people from around the world is core to our national identity; only 35 percent see that openness as a threat. That's not a fringe—it's the majority speaking with common sense.

So we have to ask: What kind of society do we want? One with military units strolling down Main Street? A country where masked agents scoop people up based on the color of their skin? America was built on immigration. Posse Comitatus exists to protect citizens from military overreach. And Pope Leo XIV is right to sound the alarm: recent measures against migrants in the U.S. violate the basic principles of treating human beings “with humanity and dignity.”

So, the real question isn't what the Pope thinks. It's what we think. What kind of world do we want to live in?

Film Review: *A House of Dynamite*

By Francis Chiappa

A House of Dynamite, the new film by Katherine Bigelow, Oscar-winning director of *The Hurt Locker*, *Zero Dark Thirty*, and more, is a timely and riveting dramatic thriller about nuclear war. Per Netflix' website, Bigelow has been thinking about this subject for most of her entire life. "I grew up at a time when we were asked to hide under our desks in the event of a nuclear blast, which of course would do nothing," she tells Netflix. "But between then and now, it feels like the nuclear issue has been normalized. It's gone quiet. And yet we're still living in a world filled with dynamite."



An intercontinental ballistic missile has been launched from an unverified location, monitored in real time at a NORAD installation in Alaska. It's an ordinary day, military personnel at ease with their morning coffee and co-workers. As the missile is detected and presumed to be nuclear, concern and then alarm replaces calm. This is repeated at the White House and at STRATCOM. A normal day, kids getting dropped off at school, a general going on about the big game the night before. Then extreme urgency, where every action is consequential, right up the chain of command to the President. There are just twenty minutes to decide what to do, to make decisions about the futures of possibly hundreds of millions of people. Bigelow tells the story of these people and their families as they rush to avert utter catastrophe.

Reviews on IMDB were mixed. Everyone loved its electrifying, on-the-edge-of-your-seat filmmaking. But for many it fell flat, "a film without a conclusion." As someone who's thought a lot about nuclear war, I was left with the poignance and absurdity of the impossible choices created by the very existence of 12,000 nuclear warheads on this earth. *A House of Dynamite* should be a wakeup call for all who are not worried about nuclear war, a reminder that accidental nuclear war is entirely possible. It was narrowly avoided several times during the Cold War. In two separate incidents, President Eisenhower and later, some mid-level analysts on both sides, prevented Armageddon.

Current international tensions, lack of communication and trust between nuclear powers, and the expiration of Reagan-Gorbachev era arms control agreements all increase the risk. The last of these, the New START Treaty, is set to expire this February. Like the film, the real-life story lacks a conclusion. If we want a happy ending, we the people will have to work for it.

A House of Dynamite is currently streaming on Netflix.

PHOTO CREDIT: Eros Hoagland/Netflix

"Most of us have been conditioned...since armies are legal, we feel war is acceptable; in general, nobody feels war is criminal or that accepting it is criminal attitude. In fact, we have been brainwashed. War is monstrous.

Its very nature is one of tragedy and suffering."

His Holiness the Dalai Lama

Extra Judicial Execution is Tantamount to Cold-Blooded Murder So Much for "Innocent Until Proven Guilty"

By Lou Pumphrey

President Donald Trump yet again has horribly abused his power by ordering our military to blow up boats in the Caribbean Sea and eastern Pacific Ocean carrying suspected drug smugglers--despite the lack of evidence. The murders of suspects are softened by the words "extrajudicial executions." Drug smugglers who are caught on U.S. soil and found guilty in a court of law are never executed. They are imprisoned.

Trump's ordering of murders outside the U.S. has precedent. Nobel Peace Prize winner Barack Obama also shamefully abused his power when he dramatically expanded President George W. Bush's "kill list" to murder suspected terrorists overseas. Suspected terrorists captured in our country are never executed. If convicted, they are imprisoned.

Further, Obama authorized murdering 9/11 mastermind Osama bin Laden, who was unarmed and living peacefully with his family in Pakistan when killed by a U.S. Navy SEAL. As was the case with former Iraq president Saddam Hussein, bin Laden could have been captured rather than killed.

Shortly after bin Laden's "extrajudicial execution," Obama, a graduate of Harvard University's law school and familiar with due process, ironically said, "Justice has been done," when in fact revenge had been done.

***"True peace is not merely the absence of tension, it is the presence of justice."
Martin Luther King***

*To see some more of the actions that we hosted and participated in this year,
go to pages 6 and 9.*



Proposed Ohio Legislation – House Bill 292
By Terry Lodge

House Bill 292 was introduced in the Ohio General Assembly in May 2025 to create the Ohio Defense Commission. This new law would set up an off-the-books, secret state agency to funnel millions of taxpayer dollars into expansion and promotion of warfighting technology, munitions, and weapons produced by Ohio military manufacturers and service providers. The proposal was greeted with supporter testimony in the Ohio House Veterans and Military Affairs Committee on November 19, 2025.

As if a new, unneeded promotional campaign featuring more corporate welfare for Ohio companies that overcharge taxpayers millions of dollars to build tanks, drones and biowarfare weapons weren't outrageous enough, there's an additional aspect that flaunts American military hegemony: tens of millions of taxpayer funds for warmaking would be channeled through JobsOhio, the secretive nonprofit corporation set up 14 years ago by the Kasich administration, a "black box" conduit to commit and spend taxpayer funds on nearly-invisible corporate projects. All records of JobsOhio's opaque meetings, structure, decision making, expenditures, funding arrangements and even recipients of grants and contracts are deemed not to be public records by law. The only visibility of JobsOhio subsidies appears in occasional media references of such things as \$70 million in Ohio taxpayer funds to grubstake the planned multi-billion dollar Anduril drone factory near Columbus. H.B. 292 would require only that the Governor be given an annual report of the Ohio Defense Commission's corporate welfare handouts. All other records of the Commission's conflicts of interest, potentially illegal lobbying activity, and fiscal deeds would remain out of public and media reach.

Moreover, all income generated from State of Ohio investments in Israel Bonds would go into the Defense Commission's secret budget. Ohio receives roughly \$20,000,000 per year from Israel Bonds investment. Presently, the State Treasurer has locked up some \$262,000,000 of Ohio taxpayer dollars in Israel Bonds. The government of Israel uses that money to construct and develop illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank in violation of the World Court's 2024 ruling. Israel Bonds proceeds also go for Israeli purchases of weapons and munitions to pursue the Gaza genocide. While there are innumerable purposes that \$262,000,000 could be put for the benefit of Ohioans, H.B. 292 would channel the approximately \$20,000,000 annual income generated from financing the Israeli genocide in Gaza to support Ohio corporations making chemical, biological and other weapons and tanks to wage wars.

Among the supporters of H.B. 292 is the Ohio Life Sciences Association, which in testimony to the House Veterans and Military Development Committee mentioned that its member companies "are in the forefront of creating bioscience innovations critical to national defense, including advanced diagnostics and biosurveillance technologies, . . . vaccines, countermeasures, and biodefense tools." Battelle Memorial Institute, manager of multiple U.S. Department of Energy nuclear weapons facilities, would also be in line to benefit from undemocratically-allocated taxpayer war subsidies. H.B. 292 explicitly directs the War Commission to encourage collaboration between industry, education, and the military.

By making it the law to inject all Israel Bonds income into war promotion, Ohio's investments in the Bonds would be made a permanent fixture of state investment activity, with the explicit backing of war industries.

About Cleveland Peace Action

Our Mission: Working to end militarism in US foreign policy, reduce the threat of nuclear annihilation, and promote justice and human rights in Palestine and globally. We highlight the connections between militarism, colonialism, capitalism, patriarchy, racism, misogyny, and xenophobia.

Actions Against Genocide in Palestine



Venezuela and Extra-Judicial Killings

By Don Bryant

Twenty-one lethal attacks on Venezuelan boats by the Trump Administration overrides long-established international conventions. For decades, the Coast Guard has enforced these laws and protocols to intercept marine drug traders headed for the U.S. The Coast Guard has the authority to board boats suspected of breaking U.S. law, seize contraband, and arrest suspects. Gunshots are only fired after strict rules and warnings.



The U.S. Navy has violated all protocol by committing what amounts to piracy on the high seas. Since September, the US has destroyed 22 boats, 11 in the Caribbean Sea and 11 in the Eastern Pacific. At least 82 people have been killed in the illegal bombing campaign. These unprovoked attacks constitute human rights crimes. They may be war crimes, given the President's and Marco Rubio's insistences that the United States is "at war" with Venezuela. There was no direct or immediate threat to the U.S. by any Venezuelan vessels. The Trump administration has relabeled counter-narcotics operations as counterterrorism. The U.S. president assumes he has the right to murder civilians. "Labeling a drug cartel a terrorist organization and killing 11 members on a vessel, which may or may not have been destined for the United States, under the guise of an amorphous "national interest" is an extraordinary and unprecedented assertion of presidential power," writes Mark Nevitt, a former naval line officer and JAG, the legal arm of the United States Navy.

Unfortunately, that is what the U.S. Supreme Court did for President Trump in a 2024 ruling which granted presidents "absolute immunity" from prosecution for any criminal acts done as part of the President's "official" duties. Donald Trump will never have to stand trial for these illegal killings. But Marco Rubio does not have such protection.

Cleveland Peace Action condemns these unprecedented attacks which may have far-reaching consequences. A Strategic Association and Cooperation Treaty between Venezuela and Russia is now in the making. Russian hypersonic anti-ship missiles are now targeting U.S. Navy warships in the Caribbean. U.S. sanctions policy may have created this deadly scenario in our own hemisphere. Russian influence in the western hemisphere would raise the stakes for confrontation as it did in the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. The events brought the U.S. and Russia to the brink of war when U.S. deployments of nuclear missiles in Italy and Turkey were countered by Soviet deployments of nuclear missiles in Cuba.

We ask that you contact your representatives to urge them to co-sponsor H.Con.Res.61 "Directing the President, pursuant to section 5(c) of the War Powers Resolution, to remove United States Armed Forces from hostilities with presidentially designated terrorist organizations in the Western Hemisphere." No Ohio representative has co-sponsored yet. Let's change that! Contact your rep today!

"We can choose to use our lives for others to bring about a better and more just world for our children. People who make that choice will know hardship and sacrifice, but if they give themselves totally to the non-violent struggle for peace and justice they will also find that people will give them their hearts and they will never be hungry and never alone. And in giving of themselves they will discover a whole new life full of meaning and love."

Cesar Chavez

TAG sues to tag U.S. Genocidaires

By Terry Lodge

In May 2025, Taxpayers Against Genocide, a group of at least 4,000 U.S. taxpayers based in California, filed a legal complaint with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), an investigatory body mandated to enforce the Charter of the Organization of American States (OAS), the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man, and the American Convention on Human Rights. The TAG complaint invoked a procedure in international law where a grassroots group can pursue charges of the U.S. government's complicity with Israel in perpetrating the continuing genocide in Palestine.



The 99-page complaint encyclopedically cites publicly-available evidence of acts of mass murder, human rights crimes, ethnic cleansing, and probable violations of U.S federal criminal law as well as international criminal bans. TAG aims to hold both the Biden and Trump Administrations, as well as Congress, accountable for partnering with Israel to perpetrate the atrocities that have become routine in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

Although the IACHR cannot criminally prosecute US officials, it can find the U.S. government guilty of violating its international obligations under the American Declaration on the Rights and Duties of Man. The Declaration established the binding human rights requirements to which OAS member states, including the United States, must adhere. An IACHR finding of guilt of the US government would allow leveraging by human rights advocates in their other efforts to hold the US government accountable at the international level.

The complaint was prepared and filed by a legal team from the National Lawyers Guild (NLG) International Committee headed by Huwaida Arraf, a renowned crusader and co-founder of the Freedom Flotilla Coalition. Toledo attorney Terry Lodge, a member of the Cleveland Peace Action Board of Directors, is also on the four-lawyer team.

"The IACHR is at the early stages of its investigation, which is taking a long time to launch," Lodge commented. "There are concerns that political pressure may be brought on OAS member states by the U.S. government to try to derail the Commission's efforts. We're anticipating that unlike a typical court or administrative agency procedure, the planetary public will have an uphill fight simply to have an impartial inquiry that won't be shut down by the criminals who are perpetrating thousands of crimes per week."

Peace Action is the country's largest grassroots peace and disarmament organization, with more than 100,000 members. Cleveland Peace Action is one of over 70 autonomous affiliates and chapter organizations.

Silent Peace Walk on Hiroshima Day - August 6, 2025



LTTE: Upon whose shoulders we stand

By Thomas Kim Hill, Contributing Writer

Previously published in the Case Western Reserve University Observer, October 31, 2025

In recent months, we have lost several members of our Case Western Reserve University community. As we who work for peace with justice know, we stand on the shoulders of those who came before us.

I would like to remember Bennie Khoapa, Nahida Gordon, Douglas Kerr and Don Freeman, each of whom was single-minded in their life-long quest for truth, justice, and peace. It is no accident that we often chant in the streets the old Biblically-rooted adage, “No Truth, No Justice, No Peace.” On the other side are those who worship at the temple of Mammon where “It is all about the Benjamins,” in the classic words of the U.S. Representative Ilhan Omar. I offer below four brief sketches of four remarkable lives. I cannot possibly credit all of their accomplishments, but I hope to keep each of them alive in our memory.

Bennie Khoapa earned a Ph.D. at the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences at CWRU in the area of social welfare. He, himself, was a political refugee from South Africa, where his colleague Steve Biko was murdered by the South African apartheid police. Biko is the subject of the film, *Cry Freedom*, about resistance to apartheid after Nelson Mandela was imprisoned. Leaders of the African National Congress (ANC), Mandela’s congress, were all in prison, in exile or killed when Biko led a new youth movement for “black consciousness.” Like Biko, Bennie was confined for five years under house arrest. Bennie escaped to the U.S., got his degree and went on to teach sociology in Michigan. When the apartheid government fell, he returned home to teach at Durban University of Technology, where he directed the annual celebration honoring Biko.

Nahida Halaby Gordon taught bio-statistics at CWRU’s Frances Payne Bolton School of Nursing. She was one of the Palestinians driven from their homes by Jewish militias in the 1948 Palestinian Nakba (catastrophe in Arabic). 750,000 Palestinians, with their descendants, became permanent refugees in their own homeland, up until today. Nahida co-founded the Interfaith Committee for Peace in the Middle East along with other ’48 Palestinians. It brings together Muslims, Jews, Christians, and others in prayer and service to the cause of peace. Nahida shared a Cleveland Peace Action event with Abbas Hamideh of Al-Awda, standing for Palestinian Right of Return Coalition. Later in life she traveled to Jaffa in Israel to visit her father’s house (a polite Jewish owner allowed her to come inside to rekindle childhood memories). She published her book, *Palestine Is Our Home*, in 2016.

Douglas Kerr was a physician and researcher at CWRU and University Hospitals in pediatrics. He was born in Beirut, Lebanon in World War II and lived in several countries in the region before moving to the U.S. His brother, Malcolm Kerr, was a scholar of the Arab world and was chosen to become president of the American University of Beirut in the tumultuous 1980s, where he was assassinated in 1984. Doug dedicated himself to peace and was on the national board of Churches for Middle East Peace, which sends delegations of Americans to visit and learn about the Israel/Palestine (I/P) conflict. He teamed up with his wife, Mary Ann Kerr, in Cleveland to sponsor such trips. Theologians who witnessed Israeli apartheid firsthand often returned home to support boycott, divestment and sanctions in their own churches.

Doug was a leader in Cleveland Peace Action where he helped sponsor programs on Middle East peace-making. One guest was Iyad Burnat on the film *5 Broken Cameras*. Doug co-authored an important op-ed with CWRU professor Ted Steinberg in 2016 analyzing the I/P peace process.

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On whose shoulders we stand

Continued from page 10

Don Freeman attended Cleveland Public Schools in the 1950s and then CWRU as a scholarship student. He returned to teach at the secondary level in Cleveland. He was fired by Superintendent Paul Briggs, in collaboration with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, for working with and hosting Malcolm X in Cleveland. For years Don and his wife, Norma Freeman, attended and monitored meetings of the Cleveland Board of Education, documenting the failures that led the federal judge Frank Batista to order desegregation and busing to overcome deliberate patterns by the board to keep the schools segregated. Don and Norma regularly published their magazine, *Vibration*, to document this and other freedom struggles. The magazine was dedicated to “the resurrection of the mentally and spiritually dead.” Norma was proud of actually having met W.E.B. Du Bois at her historically black college in the South. Don spoke at vigils for Timothy Russell and Malissa Williams, killed by Cleveland police in East Cleveland, which he termed the 137 shots “Atrocity.” His book is entitled “Reflections of a Resolute Radical.”

It will be a tall order to fill the shoes of those who came before us at CWRU. But we can and must. Their marvelous leadership and work require us to carry on. We can keep on by supporting the students unfairly punished by CWRU’s administration for their strong stand against what is now almost universally condemned as genocide in Gaza. It will be a tall order to fill the shoes of those who came before us at CWRU. But we can and must. Their marvelous leadership and work require us to carry on. We can keep on by supporting the students unfairly punished by CWRU’s administration for their strong stand against what is now almost universally condemned as genocide in Gaza.

“Mankind must put an end to war, or war will put an end to mankind.”

John F. Kennedy

***“One is called to live nonviolently even if the change
one works for seems impossible.”***

Daniel Berrigan

***“Peace is not an absence of war, it is a virtue, a state of mind,
a disposition for benevolence, confidence, justice.”***

Baruch Spinoza

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