

A FEMINIST'S GUIDE TO DISARMAMENT

A TOOLKIT



**The Gender
Security Project**

SUPPORTED BY THE MAYPOLE FUND

USING THIS TOOLKIT

This toolkit is intended to serve as a resource to create awareness on disarmament, the gendered impact of the weapons regime, and the need to advocate for disarmament world over. Written by two women from the majority world, this toolkit is an offering for anyone who shares our passion for a weapon-free future that prioritizes peace. This toolkit can be used as a springboard for awareness creation, advocacy efforts, and to facilitate conversation on the significant challenge that militarized world orders pose to the future of humankind. Specifically furthering attempts to achieve SDGs 5 and 16, this toolkit also presents examples of grass-roots level advocacy to call for disarmament.

CREDITS

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WHAT IS DISARMAMENT?

For more than seven decades, disarmament and arms limitation activism and efforts have been underway in all corners of the world. Although disarmament is often put on the backburner in all high-level negotiations on international peace and security, it is an increasingly relevant global issue as the past decades have seen an uptick in the number of intra-state and inter-state conflicts, in which the victims are overwhelmingly civilians. The lack of disarmament and arms control at regional, national, and local levels has resulted in devastating consequences, including prolonged, complex, and disruptive conflicts, exacerbated by the increased availability of military-grade and improvised weapons. Non-state actors are also becoming better equipped due to insufficiently secured stockpiles or illegal transfers from states or the black market.

Today, “an estimated 875 million small arms are in circulation and nuclear weapons states possess approximately 13,150 nuclear weapons”[i], highlighting the urgency and necessity of robust disarmament frameworks. In light of the rapid development of new weapons technologies as well as the proliferation of conventional arms and nuclear weapons, legal regulations and policies have not been able to catch up to these advancements. Through multilateral efforts such as the United Nations (UN), several treaties, international laws and conventions, and regimes have been established with the aim of regulating, restricting, or eliminating certain weapons.

In May 2018, the erstwhile UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres launched his global disarmament agenda, designating disarmament as a core priority of his tenure set out in the publication entitled ‘Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament’. It comprises several short-term and long-term ambitions including “the elimination of nuclear weapons, ensuring respect for norms against chemical and biological weapons, mitigating the impact of conventional arms, combating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, maintaining human control of weapons and AI, ensuring legal compliance in cyberspace, and resuscitating the multilateral disarmament processes and institutions”.[ii]

understanding disarmament

According to the UN Office of Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), countries have pursued disarmament for various reasons including to stop arms races, build trust in the international community and protect people from harm. Conventional arms control and disarmament measures have also played a crucial role in terminating conflicts, promoting peace and preventing the resumption of hostilities. They have enhanced transparency, confidence and stability at the regional level, leading to a reduction in the societal burden of military activities. Additionally, these measures have ensured that the principles of humanity are upheld and have prevented weapons from falling into the hands of malicious or unauthorised individuals or groups.[iv]

The UN disarmament framework comprises of several goals[v]: i) the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, ii) the regulation of conventional weapons and balanced reduction of armed forces, and iii) making sure new technologies are used in line with international norms. Other important aspects of disarmament are to i) end the illicit trade in small arms and associated ammunition, ii) ensure the security, physical protection and proper disposal of poorly maintained stockpiles, and iii) the need to rein in the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.[vi]

While disarmament seeks to completely eliminate the use of light weapons as well as conventional, military and nuclear weapons, arms control practices seek only to limit the use of arms instead of completely eliminating them. Conventional arms encompass commonly and widely used weapons in conflict, war and crime settings. This includes, for example, warships, landmines, small arms (such as guns and rifles), ammunition, cluster munitions, battle tanks, armoured combat vehicles and warships among others. According to the UN Charter, member states and its citizens by extension, are not forbidden from using conventional arms as long as it is used in accordance with international laws and regulations. For this reason, arms control and arms limitations are more widely used when referring to conventional arms.



DISARMAMENT, DEMOBILISATION AND REINTEGRATION (DDR)

Disarmament is one of three components that come together to create an end-to-end approach to ending the proliferation of arms. The three components are Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration. Disarmament is the process of reducing, limiting the use of, and entirely abolishing weapons of all kinds. In the UN's terms, it refers to the process of collecting, documenting, controlling, and disposing of small arms, ammunition, explosives, and light and heavy weapons held by combatants and civilians, and includes the development and implementation of arms management programmes.[vii]

Demobilisation is a process of standing down an armed group or armed forces from a combat-ready status. It can include processing individual combatants in temporary facilities and centres, and the whole massing of troops altogether within sites designated for this very aim. Combatants are first screened for information on their status and identities, as well as their health condition. Following this, they are oriented into a pre-discharge process where they work through challenges in integrating back into civilian life. Finally, they are discharged from their military engagement and are reintegrated and reinserted into civilian life.[viii]

Demobilisation can be crucial in helping combatants ease into life as civilians, especially in relation to processing and debriefing their experiences in active combat.

Reintegration is a process of bringing ex-combatants into civil society as civilians, where they are also equipped with sustainable employment and income. It is a socioeconomic process that takes place over time, and involves the local and grassroots level.[ix] Ex-combatants may receive therapy and counselling, training, education and other offerings toward their employment, social integration programs, and community engagement endeavours.[x]

DDR effectively lays the foundation for safeguarding and sustaining communities to which ex-combatants return, while also building capacity for long-term peace, security and development.[xi] DDR aims to remove weapons from members and combatants of armed groups, remove them from military structures, and help reintegrate them economically and socially into society as civilians, as well as active participants and stakeholders in peace processes in a post-conflict setting. It all begins with disarmament.

what makes disarmament difficult?

Despite advocacy and activism efforts from civil society and various international treaties and conventions that aim to govern disarmament, many challenges persist. The most significant challenge is the huge disconnect between commitments and implementation. Nuclear states pass laws and make policies to disarm, but the implementation is not in line with the goals and promises. States continue to depend on and increase armaments, weapons and military forces in suspicion of other states and to demonstrate relative power. Distrust and fear among states makes global disarmament efforts slow and often futile as states want to be prepared to defend themselves in the event of a war. Further, the rapid advancement of new technologies is outpacing the regulation which aims to encourage responsible innovation and application of such technologies.

why is disarmament necessary?

Disarmament is vital to maintain a safe, secure, and peaceful world. At the end of the Second World War, the founding of the United Nations was in endorsement of the key principles of disarmament, as the aim has been to prevent armed conflicts and militarism. Weapons are inherently disastrous and damaging, and produce devastating consequences to people and the planet, both in the present and the future. Several examples world over have stood testimony to the fact that weapons produce untold harm – whether used in times of outright war, or in circulation in peacetime. In the face of such aggression and violence, disarmament offers a way toward creating that peaceful future, where conflicts do not transcend into aggression and violence, but become sites for transformation.





WEAPONS

TYPES, TESTING, & DISPOSAL

Before proceeding to engage with disarmament, it is important to understand what weapons are, what different forms of weapons look like, and what impacts they may have. This section offers a broad overview of the various kinds of weapons that exist, in order to enable a wholesome understanding of the many forms that need to be addressed within the ambit of disarmament. While most weapons find some place in armed conflict situations, several weapons continue to proliferate through official and unofficial channels, and produced gendered harm when used disproportionately to target women, girls, and non-binary people.

types of weapons

CONVENTIONAL ARMS

Conventional weapons are those that can inflict damage as a result of kinetic, incendiary, and/or explosive energy. They include small arms, defensive shields, light weapons, sea and land mines, bombs, shells, rockets, missiles, and cluster munitions. They use explosive material based on chemical energy. The acceptable use of conventional weapons during a war or armed conflict is governed by the four Geneva Conventions. The use of specific kinds of conventional weapons are regulated or prohibited by the UN Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, the Convention on Cluster Munitions, the Mine Ban Treaty, and the Arms Trade Treaty.

SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS

Small Arms and Light Weapons refer to weapons that are portable, and comprise two categories, namely small arms and light weapons. Small arms are individual-service kinetic projectile firearms. They can be carried and operated by individual people. Typical examples of small arms include handguns (e.g., revolvers, pistols, derringers, and machine pistols), muskets and rifled muskets, shotguns, rifles (including assault, battle, carbine, designated marksman, short-barrelled, and sniper rifles), submachine guns, personal defence weapons, and light machine guns. Light weapons are infantry-portable weapons that are crew-served (carried and operated by two or more individuals) kinetic firearms, incendiary devices, and shoot explosive munitions. Examples of light weapons include anti-material and anti-tank rifles, general-purpose, medium, and unmounted machine guns, portable flamethrowers, grenades and grenade launchers, recoilless rifles, anti-tank missiles, air-defence systems, and mortars under 100 millimetres. They may also include ammunition, explosives, hand-grenades, and landmines.

LANDMINES

Landmines refer to explosive devices that are concealed under or camouflaged on the ground, with the aim of destroying an enemy target that may include combatants and vehicles and tanks, when they pass over it. The Mine Ban Convention defines it as a munition that is designed to be placed under, or near the ground or other surface area, to explode by the presence, proximity, or contact of a person or vehicle.

WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION

Weapons of mass destruction are weapons that have the capacity to cause significant harm to several individuals and/or to artificial and natural structures, or the biosphere. They include chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and any other weapon that can cause the scale of damage mentioned previously. Examples of weapons of mass destruction include aerial bombs, chemical explosives, large-scale weaponry, warfare technologies, and items used to cause significant harm as part of chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear warfare.

MISSILES

A missile is any projectile weapon that is thrown, shot, or propelled towards a target. It is a guided airborne ranged weapon that can embark on self-propelled flight, usually by a jet engine or a rocket motor. They have five components, namely the targeting, guidance, flight, engine, and warhead systems. Missiles are of a variety of different types, and are often used for a range of purposes that include surface-to-surface, surface-to-air, air-to-surface, air-to-air, and anti-satellite weapons.

CLUSTER MUNITIONS

A cluster munition is an air-dropped or ground-launched explosive weapon that releases or ejects smaller submunitions. It is a cluster of bombs, which are released to kill people or other targets. They are often used to disperse chemical or biological weapons, scatter landmines, or even non-munitions such as pamphlets

AMMUNITION

Ammunition refers to any material that is fired, scattered, dropped, or detonated from any weapon, or weapon system. The range can include expendable weapons such as bombs, grenades, landmines, and missiles, as well as the components of other weapons that produce the impact upon striking a target. They predominantly project a force against a given target, and can be of a range of different sizes.

MODERN TECHNOLOGIES

With the burgeoning development of artificial intelligence (AI) and the progressive intersections between AI and a range of fields, it might not be long before AI is used in new weapons technology in ways that maximise harm. The challenge new technology poses is their speed of proliferation and deployment, which is often not matched by legal regimes and strategic approaches for prevention and mitigation of resultant harm. With digitisation, innovation is gaining free rein in both implementation and dissemination. Some of the new technologies that we're seeing changing the nature of the weapons domain include software to penetrate information systems, computer-aided design, AI, and the use of 3D printers that evade control.[xii]

manufacture and testing of weapons

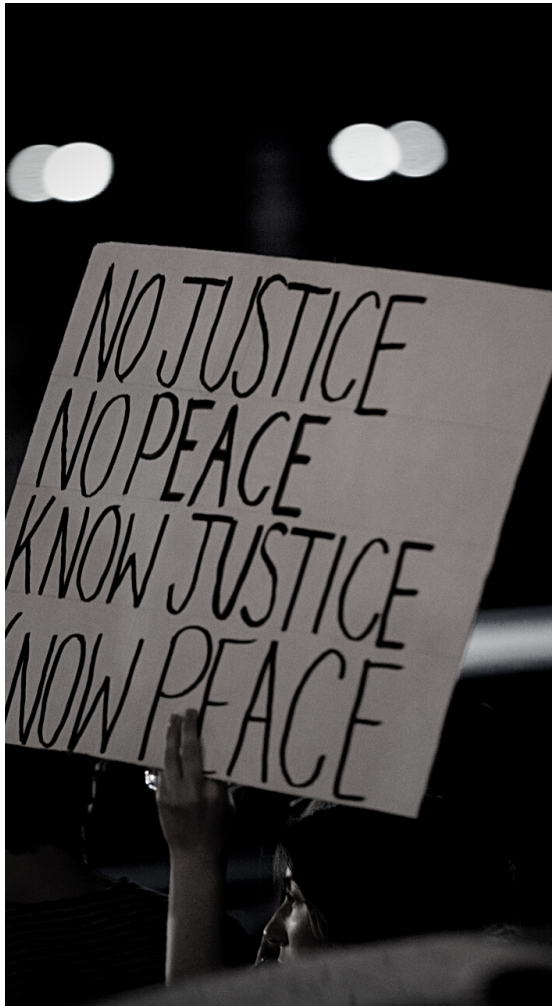
The manufacture and testing of weapons constitute an industry in themselves. The arms industry, also called the defence or military industry, is a global network that manufactures, tests, and sells weapons and technology. The industry comprises an end-to-end system that includes research and development, engineering, technology, production, servicing, testing, and deployment. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), the total global military expenditure increased by 3.7 per cent in real terms in 2022, to reach a new high of \$2240 billion.[xiii]

Many of the world's industrialised nations have their domestic arms industries to supply weapons, but there is also an illegal trade in weapons - especially in countries that face some form of political instability. According to the Small Arms Survey, as many as 875 million small arms circulate globally, produced by over 1000 companies across 100 countries.[xiv]

Tests are essentially experiments conducted to identify the performance, yield, and impacts of nuclear weapons. Through testing, weapons manufacturers gather information on the functioning of weapons, their detonation under various conditions, and the effects of their deployment. Most weapons are tested before rollout, and the most expansive of these tests in terms of impact involves the testing of nuclear weapons. These tests also produce significant impacts, including side effects that may not have been planned for. In some cases, tests are conducted in sites that are home to indigenous communities - without their consent or their agency being centred. Nuclear weapons testing is the site of a lot of activism and public outcry, especially because of the harm produced to the environment and people in regions where such tests are conducted.



disposing of weapons



Weapons disposal is a process aimed at the destruction, demilitarisation and elimination of military equipment that has become obsolete, expired or is in surplus. It The South Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC) defines the destruction of small arms and light weapons (SALW) and ammunition as “the process of final conversion of weapons, ammunition and explosives into an inert state that can no longer function as designed.”[xv]

The destruction of SALW and ammunition is codified in a number of international and regional agreements, Protocols and guidelines. These include UN regimes, United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (UN PoA) (2001) and United Nations Firearms Protocol (2005).

Some regional agreements include the Bamako Declaration on an African Common Position on the Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons (3 November 2000) and the Nairobi Protocol for the Prevention, Control and Reduction of Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa (2004). “No matter what type of destruction is chosen, it must render the SALW totally inoperable and non-repairable even by a skilled armourer or gunsmith. Furthermore, parts that could be used for spares or in the making of new weapons should also be destroyed. The process must be safe and should be efficient and repeatable.”[xvi]

This table[xvii] provides a summary of various disposal/destruction methods and several factors to consider, including pros and cons.

DISPOSAL OPTION	FACTORS			
Sale or Gift	Proliferation risks	Unattractive to reputable End User	Compliance with international arms export 'best practices'	Limited sales to 'military enthusiasts'
Training Targets	Limited market	Environmental impact	Final scrap disposal costs	Final scrap value can be reduced
Deep Sea Dumping	Legal Status of technique requires resolution.	Reaction of environmental lobby	No local deep sea dump sites. Long sea voyage required.	Artificial Reefs Coastal Defences Moorings
Conversion to Commercial Use	Engineering complexity	Market driven Limited market	High initial investment required	High risk strategy
Demilitarization - Dismantling and Recycling	Technique is simple	Maximise cost recovery through scrap sale	Economies of scale apply	Can draw on experience of Central Europe
Destruction	Apparently simple	Environmental factors	Final scrap disposal costs	Final scrap value can be reduced

why destroy weapons?

Destroying ammunition and SALW is an integral part of DDR processes. Following weapons collection, it is usually necessary to destroy weapons in order to improve the overall safety and security of the ecosystem to reduce the total number of illicit ammunition in public circulation. Such measures also ensure that the ammunition is not re-circulated, not used against civilians in the future, reduce illicit arms trade as well as an effective counter-proliferation measure.

Stockpiles and storage sites of collected weapons can be dangerous for nearby communities, and are perceptible to explosions due to fires, lightning, explosives, accidents or instability of propellants. In terms of socioeconomic factors, the destruction of weapons also demonstrates commitment to reducing violence and insecurity, and has proven to have positive psychological effects on the public. Large ceremonies of bonfires of guns have signalled the end of conflict in countries such as Cambodia, Kosovo and Serbia.[xviii]

environmental concerns in disposing weapons

The disposal of weapons can have significant environmental impacts, including the release of toxic substances, contamination of soil and water, air pollution and the potential for long-term ecological disruptions.

i) Release of toxic substances

Disposing conventional weapons such as bombs, bullets and missiles can result in the release of hazardous substances such as heavy metals (lead, mercury) and propellants (nitrocellulose). Such harmful substances can contaminate soil, surface water and groundwater, and may lead to long-term human health risks. Destroying chemical weapons can also release toxic substances and chemicals into the environment. Incineration, which involves burning the weapons, can also produce harmful by-products such as dioxins and furans, both of which pose risk to air quality and ecosystems.

ii) Soil and Water Contamination

Weapons disposal practices can contaminate soil and water, affecting biodiversity and dependent life in the process. Improper and reckless disposal of weapons in landfills can result in toxic substances leaking into the surrounding soil and groundwater. This poses risk to overall ecological stability by affecting the food chain and posing health hazards to humans and wildlife. Improper disposal into water bodies such as oceans and rivers can destabilise marine ecological balance and contaminate aquatic ecosystems, posing a threat to marine life.

iii) Air Pollution

Disposing weapons through burning, bonfires and incineration can release pollutants into the atmosphere, including heavy metals and lead. Burning explosive materials can also release toxic gases, greenhouse gases and particulate matter into the air, resulting in degrading air quality, climate change and harm towards human and wildlife health.

iv) Long-term Ecological Damage

Improper weapons disposal can lead to loss of biodiversity, destruction of habitat, disruption of food chains and an overall degradation of the ecosystem. These impacts can reach the point of no-reversal and severely affect the ability of recovery for local and regional ecosystems.[xix]

case study: making jewelry out of weapons

A unique way in which arms, ammunition and weapons are being repurposed and recycled in a manner that is sustainable is the use of scrap material in creating unique jewellery and accessories.

Article22, a pioneering brand, transforms bombs and shrapnel scraps into exquisite jewellery, known as Peacebomb jewellery[xx]. The brand works out of Laos, the most heavily bombed countries in the world that has faced the catastrophic consequences of 250 million bombs dropped. By utilising materials sourced from the remnants of conflict, Article22 contributes to the land clearance efforts in Laos. In addition to raising awareness about the enduring horrors of war, their jewellery also generates a positive impact on the ground by engaging local artisans and supporting traditional Laotian artisans, village development, community initiatives, and ongoing demining efforts. Each purchase contributes to MAG (Mines Advisory Group), an organisation dedicated to the safe and expert clearance of the 80 million unexploded bombs that continue to contaminate the land in Laos. Slate and Salt is another such brand that fashions sustainable jewelry from recycled bomb and bullet fragments, and supports vulnerable artisans in Laos as well as Cambodia[xxi].

From War to Peace is an American brand “dedicated to recycling weapons of war into peaceful symbols of beauty and function.”[xxii] Through their repurposing and recycling efforts, they repurpose copper obtained from disarmed nuclear weapon systems in the USA to craft a copper alloy known as Peace Bronze™. This unique material serves as the foundation for their collection of jewellery, accessories, and art. Hoping to see a demilitarised world, From War to Peace aims to shift the narrative and demonstrate that America is capable of making “beautiful products that celebrate peace, and that aren't designed to kill people.”[xxiii] Furthermore, From War to Peace also donates a portion of profits to peace and social justice organisations committed to systemic peaceful transformation, including Veterans for Peace, the National Peace Corps Association, and the International Peace Bureau.



**GENDER &
DISARMAMENT**

gendered harm from arms proliferation

Disarmament is fundamentally aimed at reducing and eliminating weapons, weapon materials, and weapon delivery systems to enhance peace, security, and the survival of humanity. It is not gender neutral, as the use of weapons and the deployment of militarised approaches to security have gendered impacts.[xxiv] From casual rhetoric to policy language, there is a patriarchal backdrop enabling this discrimination. For example, the possession of nuclear weapons is considered a demonstration of power - and the weapons themselves are referred to in gendered terms as “the big boys.”[xxv]

Women and non-binary people experience conflict and the use and proliferation of arms very distinctly from cis-het men. Some among them are relatively more vulnerable than their counterparts, oftentimes because of their relative positionality informed by religion, race, ethnicity, geography, and language, among other factors. This can also affect disarmament policies and their implementation.

In armed conflicts, women assume non-traditional roles, face sexual violence, and deal with an increased domestic care burden while they secure food, shelter, medication, and security for their families. Non-binary people are doubly vulnerable to violence in conflict, and in addition to handling non-traditional roles that might create adverse mental health impacts not limited to dysphoria, they may also have to perform and express their gender identities or hide their sex characteristics to avoid the backlash associated with being outed.[xxvi]

The use and progressive move away from the use of weapons, thus, must be understood and addressed through an intersectional, gendered focus.[xxvii]

Gender-based violence takes place across the peacetime-wartime continuum, and is largely normalised by cultural and structural factors, especially heteronormative and patriarchal ones. It is perpetrated at a large scale by both state and non-state actors alike in times of conflict, and is more often used systemically with a clear goal in mind rather than emerging as a byproduct of conflict settings.

In times of armed conflict, the idea of “masculine behaviour” takes on a new shade, where group pressure among militia and armed forces produce standards of behaviour that centre on increased aggression and the treatment of women and non-binary people as inferior, [xxviii] and expect civilians to conform in some situations, too. For example, research shows that the perpetration of sexual violence in armed conflict serves as a means for combatant socialisation.[xxix] There is a strong link between gun possession and use, and notions of masculinity. Gun culture operates as a site for the manifestation of masculinity, and manifests in the form of combatant socialisation, where a particular idea of what it is to be a man (i.e., using weapons) becomes the aspirational threshold that men and boys are held to.

These cultural norms of masculinity also inform the stereotypical notions of seeing men as protectors and women as those in need of protection. Armed conflict redefines the idea of masculine behaviour, where group and peer pressure amplify tendencies of aggression and normalise the use of violence.[xxx] As a result, men and boys are socialised into practising violence, and in several cases, even pressurised into committing acts of violence on others.

While men and boys often face the direct impact of harm from the proliferation and use of weapons, women and girls and non-binary people face the likelihood of exacerbated forms of violence they are already exposed to, in addition to newer ones. For example, guns and domestic, intimate partner, and sexual violence are lethal combinations, where the addition of guns in the perpetration of such forms of violence can culminate in death and/or grievous injuries. Militarised patriarchies, thus, produce even more dangerous impacts. The prevalence of sexual violence at gunpoint or under the threat of murder or assault of a loved one of the victim attest to this - and this happens both in times of armed conflict, and in areas of the world that are not necessarily in states of armed conflict.[xxxi]

Even as patriarchal attitudes that normalise gender-based violence and discrimination operate across the peacetime-wartime continuum, armed conflicts provide a backdrop of impunity. The breakdown of the security sector and administrative machinery, and the deployment of military force on ground often opens the door to the irresponsible, unauthorised, and/or illegal transfers of weapons. This motivated the inclusion of a separate provision under Article 7(4) of the Arms Trade Treaty, which prohibits states from transferring or authorising the transfer of weapons to sites where it is apparent that there is a risk of gender-based violence.

Another domain that produces gendered harm is the institution of arms trade and trafficking. While arms trade refers, as the name suggests, to the buying and selling of weapons and weapon systems, trafficking (also called gunrunning) is the illicit trade of weapon and weapons systems, or of contraband weapons and weapon systems. Very often, trafficking is associated with transnational criminal organisations and may include state and non-state actors as participants. The gendered impact of arms trade is informed by the unaccounted and unabashed movement of weapons that can be used against women and non-binary people without necessarily attracting attention under Article 7(4) of the Arms Trade Treaty, for instance. It is also deeply tied to human trafficking, sex slavery and other forms of slavery, as well as the direct proliferation of gender-based violence.

gendered harm in participation and redress

Even as it is true that women and non-binary persons are disproportionately affected by armed conflict, they are not victims alone. In many of the world's conflicts, women and girls are conscripted into military forces not to handle direct combat, but to perform gender stereotypical roles such as cooking, cleaning, carrying and maintaining supplies and rations, and performing care work.[xxxii] In certain cases, they are also recruited or trafficked as sex slaves or prostitutes.

Women and non-binary people also participate in the military in all countries of the world, but only Norway and Sweden (as of 2018) are known to conscript women and men in the army on the same formal conditions. As of January 2021, 21 countries allow transgender military personnel to serve openly: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Israel, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.[xxxiii] Cuba and Thailand reportedly allowed transgender service in a limited capacity.[xxxiv] However, there is no clarity on how truly inclusive these measures are, in reality.

Women and non-binary combatants also participate in 'irregular armies' through guerilla armies, liberation armies or militias.[xxxv] While people from across the gender spectrum may get involved in or support conflict for a variety of reasons including patriotism, religion, ideology, agreement with goals of war or forced recruitment, there are often gendered differences for women and men to join regular or irregular armies. In some cases such as in Eritrea and El Salvador, women joined the liberation movements in hope to regain agency and become free from oppression in their communities and societies. Similarly, "various liberation and revolutionary movements have included women's rights and equality for men and women in their programmes for political change." [xxxvi]

in the ddr context

Despite their participation in military options, women and non-binary persons are seldom included in DDR processes. DDR aims at enabling the disbanding of military forces in order to ease their members' transition and return to society. These activities "can involve the turning in of weapons and weapons caches, the physical relocation of ex-combatants (often first in camps and then to other locations), distribution of benefits packages for ex-combatants (this can include clothing, minimal amounts of food and cash settlements), and development of credit, training or other programmes to assist the reintegration of combatants into their communities." [xxxvii]

Even as it is true that women and non-binary persons are disproportionately affected by armed conflict, they are not victims alone. In many of the world's conflicts, women and girls are conscripted into military forces not to handle direct combat, but to perform gender stereotypical roles such as cooking, cleaning, carrying and maintaining supplies and rations, and performing care work.[xxxii] In certain cases, they are also recruited or trafficked as sex slaves or prostitutes.

Most such activities are specifically designed to focus exclusively on men, with very little attention being paid to the military experience of women and non-binary people in the forces. In many cases, since women and non-binary people take on non-combative and supportive roles such as nursing or cooking, not involving any weaponry, they are not included within the scope of DDR processes. The inherent heteropatriarchal structure of society also makes it easier for men to make the most out of reconstruction initiatives. [xxxviii]

Female ex-combatants also face a number of additional gendered consequences, such as raising children born from rape, ostracism, domestic violence, fear and stigmatisation, which prevent them from smooth reintegration into civilian life and society. Some female and non-binary ex-combatants may choose not to return to their communities and would rather relocate or remain in exile, in order to avoid reverting to traditional gendered ways of living and restrictive social norms.[xxxix]

Women have often been prevented from participating meaningfully in disarmament endeavours. The barriers to their participation have been identified as conceptual, technical, and political.[xl] The conceptual barriers to women's participation have their roots in the misconception that women do not need to or should not participate in negotiations for disarmament. This is informed by the notion that those that must be disarmed are men and the idea that weapons are often held and used as an important component of masculine identities. The technical barrier to participation comes down to capacity and skills to participate in negotiations for disarmament. These talks often require first-hand and expert-level knowledge of particular terminology, and very often take place in language(s) that need not represent the actual diversities on ground. Women are seldom skilled or included in capacity-building programmes for disarmament, peacebuilding, negotiation, and related processes. Finally, the political barriers that prevent women from participating manifest in the absence of women in leadership positions.[xli]

in the policy and law contexts

Women and non-binary people are In 2015, 181 countries sent representatives to conferences under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, of which 25 had never sent a woman, 24 had sent delegations of which at least 50% were women, altogether leaving women underrepresented in 87% of the countries that have been represented at review conferences.[xlii] According to the UN, wide gaps persist in women's participation in multilateral disarmament forums, where they remain grossly underrepresented in many weapons-related fields, including technical arms control, and only 12% of Ministers of Defence globally are women.[xliii] There is precious little data on the inclusion of non-binary people within these delegations.

Discussions, negotiations, and deliberations on disarmament, the regulation of arms and military expenditures, and the disposal of arms almost never include women and non-binary people, nor their points of view.[xliv] This is often informed by the heteropatriarchal systemic mechanism in place that views women and non-binary people as potential vulnerable victims when compared to cis-het men, who are historically considered responsible for protection.[xlv] The poor representation of women and non-binary people in dialogue and policymaking and implementation in relation to disarmament means that their lived experiences of armed conflict and the proliferation of arms will be excluded. Without including a gender perspective, DDR initiatives tend to assume that ex-combatants form a homogenous group, and therefore strategies and approaches are not built on an inclusive foundation. Without a gender lens, DDR initiatives may re-entrench gender inequalities on ground by assuming that women are victims and men must strive to protect them, while ignoring non-binary people altogether.[xlvi]

the wps agenda

Starting in 2000, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1325, which established the epoch-making Women, Peace, and Security Agenda. The agenda focuses on the impact of armed conflict on women, and prioritises the prevention of and protection from sexual violence in armed conflict, increasing the participation of women in peace processes, and prioritising relief and recovery.[xlvii] The WPS Agenda calls for the inclusion of a gender mainstreaming lens in UN Programmes and related missions in charge of handling disarmament.[xlviii] However, the term "arms control" is not mentioned, and the word "disarmament" appears only as part of DDR processes of former combatants.[xlix] Although it mentions DDR, it makes a case for taking into account the needs of women ex-combatants, ensuring the participation of women and their protection from violence, particularly sexual violence, in these processes.[l]

Relevant points on disarmament as articulated under each Resolution are presented in the table below:

Resolution	Content
1325 (2000)	The Resolution called for all DDR processes to take the different needs of men and women ex-combatants into account. It also highlighted the need for mine-clearance and mine-awareness programmes to take into account the special needs of women and girls.
1820 (2008)	The Resolution highlighted the need to hold consultations with women in and the protection of women from (sexual) violence in DDR processes.
1888 (2009)	The Resolution emphasised the need for the protection of women from violence, including from sexual violence in DDR processes.
1889 (2009)	The Resolution highlighted the need for DDR processes to take into consideration the particular needs of women, girls, and children.
1960 (2010)	The Resolution did not mention disarmament.
2106 (2013)	The Resolution called for the inclusion of women in planning DDR processes with the aim of preventing sexual violence against them, and to enable the provision of trauma and reintegration support to women and children associated with fighting forces. This Resolution mentioned Article 7.4 of the Arms Trade Treaty concerning gender-based violence.
2122 (2013)	The Resolution called for the full and effective participation and protection of women in DDR processes, and in efforts to combat and eradicate the illicit transfer and misuse of SALWs. The Resolution also acknowledged the ATT, especially Article 7.4, and pins its hopes on the contributions of these provisions towards the reduction of GBV in armed conflict and post-conflict contexts.
2242 (2015)	The Resolution calls for the empowerment of women in order for them to participate in the design and implementation of efforts to control the proliferation of SALWs, and calls for the mitigation of the risk of women getting involved in the illicit transfer of SALWs.
2467 (2019)	The Resolution calls for the full and effective participation and protection of women in DDR processes, highlights the impact of SALWs on civilians in armed conflict, including GBV against women and girls in conflict, and acknowledges Article 7.4 of the ATT.
2493 (2019)	The Resolution requests the Secretary-General to report on the full and effective participation and protection of women in DDR processes
2538 (2020)	The Resolution did not mention disarmament.

In principle, disarmament and arms control are fundamentally interwoven with all four pillars of the WPS Agenda.^[li] The UN Office for Disarmament Affairs is a member of the UN Standing Committee on the WPS Agenda. In the 2020 Report on the WPS Agenda to the Security Council^[lii] the UN Secretary-General named disarmament and the reduction of excessive military expenditure as one of the five key goals for the next decade of action under the WPS Agenda.^[liii] The 2021 Report on the WPS Agenda to the Security Council focused on military expenditure and recommended advocacy for people-centric policies to encourage greater investments in social and human security.^[liv]

The agenda is typically implemented through National Action Plans, Regional Action Plans, and in some cases, through Civilian Action Plans. In the former two, states are the key agents in charge of implementation. Currently, at the time of writing, 107 UN Member states have adopted National Action Plans.^[lv] However, not all states have referenced, mentioned, or prioritised disarmament in their National Action Plans - only a under 54% have done so.^[lvi]

Despite its limited focus, it is important to acknowledge that the WPS Agenda prioritises the amplification of women's voices through their active participation in peace processes, of which disarmament constitutes a significant part. However, in the conflation of sex and gender, non-binary individuals are often sidelined in these approaches.

other security paradigms

Although not necessarily known in these terms, the feminist security paradigm covers a range of instruments, policy measures, and mechanisms that centre - or call on relevant actors to centre - a gendered lens in understanding the impact of militarised security paradigms. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted in 1995, prioritised military spending as a major site of action to enhance social development and gender equality. More recently, the Generation Equality Compact on Women, Peace and Security of 2021 invites states, academia, civil society to sign on to the compact action on military's expenditures, as well as states to ratify the Arms Trade Treaty.^[lvii]

Beyond the WPS Agenda, there are specific instruments at the international level that address the gender and arms nexus.

Security Council Resolutions

Resolutions 2117 (2013) and 2220 (2015), which address the proliferation of SALWs, the WPS Agenda is mentioned rather significantly, as the Resolution calls for the integration of gender perspectives into DDR and highlights the importance of the full and meaningful participation of women and women's organisations in all levels of policymaking, planning, and implementation processes concerning with the control of SALWs.[lviii] More specifically, Resolution 2220 calls for the collection of sex-disaggregated data on SALW proliferation, and makes a compelling case for detailed research on the gendered impacts of the proliferation of SALWs. It also indicates that the UN Secretary-General should include an analysis of the situation concerning SALWs and the needs of women and children in relation to this context.[lix]

A Resolution concerning security sector reforms (SSR), namely Resolution 2151 (2014), refers to the WPS resolutions,[lx] and calls for the integration of gender perspectives in SSR, and “[u]nderscores the importance of women’s equal and effective participation and full involvement in all stages of the security sector reform process.” The Resolution suggests that more women should be deployed in the security sector and that more concrete measures should be implemented to prevent sexual violence. Further, Resolution 2365 (2017), which addresses mine action, emphasises the need to integrate gender- and age-specific considerations across all areas of mine action.[lxi]

General Assembly Resolutions

In 2010, UN General Assembly considered the specific implications of the WPS Agenda for disarmament through its adoption of Resolution 65/69 of 2010.[lxii] This Resolution considers the participation of both men and women essential for the attainment of sustainable peace and security, and encourages member states, regional and subregional organisations, the UN and its specialised agencies to promote the equitable representation of women in all decision-making processes on matters concerning disarmament, non-proliferation, and arms control. States are called upon to support and strengthen the effective participation of women in organisations working in the field of disarmament at the local, national, regional and subregional levels.

In Resolution 67/48 (2012),^[ixiii] the General assembly called on member states and other relevant actors to promote equal opportunities for women to participate in decision-making processes, and to offer up relevant forms of support to strengthen their effective participation through capacity-building in the domain of disarmament. This was more or less emphasised in Resolution 68/33 (2013).^[ixiv]

Resolution 69/61 (2014)^[ixv] made note of the Arms Trade Treaty, and calls on states to implement its provisions in full, including the provision on serious acts of gender-based violence. It calls on member states to understand the impact of armed violence, especially the impact of illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons on women and girls.



INTERNATIONAL LAW AND POLICY ON DISARMAMENT



The current international law and policy mechanisms governing disarmament comprise a blend of bilateral, multilateral, and regional treaties, conventions, security council resolutions, and state practice. The current regime is presented in brief below. This section is presented with the aim of enabling informed advocacy.

international legal instruments

THE ARMS TRADE TREATY, 2013

The Arms Trade Treaty was adopted after seven years of deliberation at the UN. The Treaty regulates international trade in conventional weapons and seeks to prevent and reduce human suffering, and the international transfers of conventional arms, ammunitions, parts, and components, in order to reduce human suffering. Under the ATT, arms transfers are forbidden when there is a defined level of risk that war crimes and/or serious violations of international human rights law will be violated as a result of their presence. It was adopted on April 2, 2013, and came into force on December 24, 2014, after 50 states signed and ratified it.

The ATT aims to establish the highest possible common international standards to regulate international trade in conventional arms, to prevent and eradicate the illicit trade in conventional arms, and to prevent the diversion of such arms. It applies to the following categories of conventional arms: battle tanks, armoured combat vehicles, large-calibre artillery systems, combat aircraft, attack helicopters, warships, missiles and missile launchers and small arms and light weapons. However, states can voluntarily apply the Treaty to a broader range of conventional arms. The ATT also covers ammunitions and munitions that are fired, launched, or delivered by conventional arms covered under the Treaty, and to the parts and components that make it possible to assemble the conventional arms covered under the Treaty.

The ATT regulates the export, import, transit, transshipment, and brokering of arms, ammunitions/munitions, and parts and components. Transfers that violate measures adopted under Chapter VII of the UN Charter and of such weapons and items where such transfers would violate a state party's relevant international obligations are prohibited. Transfers are also prohibited if the state party has knowledge at the time of authorising the transfer that such items would be used to commit genocide, crimes against humanity, grave breaches of the four Geneva Conventions, attacks directed against civilian objects or civilians protected as such, or other war crimes as defined by international agreements to which it is a party. If not prohibited under the above provision, the state party must assess whether such a transfer has the potential to be used to commit or facilitate a serious violation of international humanitarian and human rights laws.

international legal instruments

State parties are encouraged to reassess authorisation if it becomes aware of relevant new information. States must implement the ATT in a consistent, objective, and non-discriminatory manner, and must establish and maintain a national control system to implement the Treaty, including by taking steps to regulate the export, import, transit, transshipment of, and brokering activities related to, conventional arms, and to regulate the exports of related ammunition and parts and components. States should also establish and maintain a national control list of the weapons and items covered, and make this list available to other states parties. An effective and transparent control system is essential – so the state must also designate one or more national points of contact to exchange information on matters concerning Treaty implementation. States can decide the form, structure, and legislative approach towards setting up its national control system. In practice, this looks like adopting and implementing legislative, administrative, and practical measures, and assessing whether such measures are necessary to comply with the ATT.

THE ANTARCTIC TREATY, 1959

The Antarctic Treaty prohibits nuclear explosions and the disposal of radioactive waste on Antarctic, and declares that the Antarctic shall be used exclusively for peaceful purposes. As a Treaty aimed at demilitarising Antarctica, the intention is to establish it as a zone free of nuclear tests and the disposal of radioactive waste, and to set aside disputes over territorial sovereignty. It has been one of the most successful “disarmament regimes.”^[lxvi] As of 2023, there are 56 states party to the Treaty. Of these, 29 states, including all 12 original signatories to the Treaty, have consultative (voting) status. The consultative members include the 7 countries that claim portions of Antarctica as their territory. The 49 non-claimant countries do not recognise the claims of others.

THE ANTI-BALLISTIC (ABM) TREATY

The Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty was originally a bilateral agreement between the US and the USSR, where both sides promised to establish no more than one ABM on their national territory. The Treaty banned the testing, development, and deployment of sea-, air-, space-, and mobile land-based systems. It was meant to be in force for 30 years from 1972. Five years after the USSR dissolved, four former Soviet Republics aligned with the US that they would succeed the USSR's role in the Treaty. However, fearing risks of nuclear blackmail, the US withdrew from the Treaty. As it was a bilateral Treaty, it stood terminated following the US' withdrawal.

international legal instruments

BIOLOGICAL AND TOXIN WEAPONS CONVENTION, 1975

The Biological Weapons Convention entered into force in 1975. It has 125 signatories, and builds on the Protocols of the Geneva Conventions, which banned the use and deployment of gas in war. It also bans the development, production, stockpiling, and transportation of biological and toxic weapons, and bans the urging of the destruction of these weapons within nine months after the Convention enters into force. This was the first multilateral Treaty to ban an entire category of weapons of mass destruction. However, it has no provisions for verification. It remains a key element in the international community's efforts to address the proliferation of WMDs, and has established a strong norm against biological weapons. The Convention has now attained near universal membership with 185 state parties and 4 signatory states.

THE CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION, 1993

The Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction or The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), 1993: adopted in 1993, and entered into force in April 1997, bans the development, production, stockpiling, acquisition, transfer, and use of chemical weapons by state parties. The Treaty lists out all the chemicals and precursors that are banned, and establishes a comprehensive, elaborate, and intrusive verification regime. The Convention effectively aims to eliminate a full category of weapons of mass destruction by prohibiting the development, production, acquisition, stockpiling, retention, transfer, and/or use of chemical weapons by state parties. The CWC expects state parties to take steps to enforce the prohibition in respect of natural and legal persons within their jurisdictions. States parties that sign onto the Convention effectively agree to chemically disarm by destroying all stockpiles of chemical weapons they may hold, and all facilities that produced them, alongside any chemical weapons they abandoned on the territory of other States Parties in the past. In doing so, they also agree to create a verification regime for specific toxic chemicals and their precursors. The intention behind this is to ensure that such chemicals are used only for purposes that the CWC does not prohibit. The CWC also incorporates a concept called the challenge inspection, under which any state party that has doubts about another state party's compliance can request a surprise inspection. This means that they can ask to conduct 'anytime anywhere' inspections, and there is no right of refusal.

international legal instruments

The OSI is the most crucial component of the verification regime. When the Treaty enters into force, state parties can request an inspection to gather evidence on ground, if the IMS has detected a possible nuclear explosion. The OSI will also help determine whether a nuclear explosion took place, and who was responsible for violating the Treaty. In effect, this will be the ultimate verification measure.

In effect, the CTBT is a fundamental component of the international nuclear arms control and disarmament framework. It aims to end nuclear testing and curb nuclear arms proliferation – both in countries that have not deployed nuclear weapons yet, and in countries that want to upgrade their existing nuclear arsenals or create more advanced generations of nuclear weapons. It aims to pave the way for trust that all clandestine nuclear tests will be detected, and seeks to prevent serious health and environmental impacts associated with nuclear tests.

CONVENTION ON CERTAIN CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS, 1983

The Convention on the Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious to or Have Indiscriminate Effects (CCW), also called the Inhumane Weapons Convention, and its five Protocols restrict or prohibit the use of conventional weapons that have effects that are considered excessively cruel or indiscriminate – that is, they do not distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate targets. The CCW contains general provisions. The Protocols are optional agreements annexed to the CCW and contain specific provisions that prohibit or restrict the use of specific weapons or weapon systems. Protocol I prohibits the use of fragment weapons made of material that cannot be detected inside the body. Protocol II restricts the use of mines, booby-traps, and similar devices. Protocol III restricts the use of incendiary weapons. Protocol IV prohibits the use and transfer of blinding laser weapons. Protocol V establishes a framework for the use and clearance of the explosive remnants of war.

To become a party to the CCW, states must accept at least two Protocols of the full lot. The CCW aims to restrict or outlaw specific types of weapons used in armed conflict. It protects military troops from inhumane injuries, and prevents non-combatant civilians from accidentally being wounded or killed by certain types of arms. Initially, when the Treaty entered into force in December 1983, it applied to incendiary weapons, mines, booby-traps, and weapons designed to injure through very small fragments. However, its 126 members have progressively expanded this list, to include blinding laser weapons and unexploded munitions left over after combat.

international legal instruments

THE CONVENTION ON CLUSTER MUNITIONS, 2008

The Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) aims to address the humanitarian consequences and unacceptable harm to civilians caused by cluster munitions. It categorically prohibits cluster munitions, and establishes a framework for action. The CCM was adopted in May 2008 and opened for signature in Oslo in December 2008 and CCM is one of the most significant treaties to have been adopted in the international disarmament regime, since the ban on anti-personnel landmines in 1997.

The Treaty is intended to stigmatise the use and accumulation of cluster bombs, to the point that even countries that do not sign the Treaty will not be able to use them without facing international condemnation and outrage. It bans the use, production, stockpiling, and transfer of cluster munitions and makes it mandatory for countries to clear affected areas, assist victims, and destroy stockpiles. It also establishes a framework for cooperation and assistance to ensure adequate care and rehabilitation for survivors and their communities, the clearance of contaminated areas, risk education, and the destruction of stockpiles.

Broadly, the CCM establishes measures to prohibit the use, development, production, acquisition, stockpiling, retention and transfer of cluster munitions. It establishes remedial measures such as the destruction of stockpiles, clearance of cluster munitions and the provision of assistance to victims, cooperative approaches to implementation through multi-level partnerships, and measures to ensure transparency in reporting on the status and progress of implementation. When states ratify or accede to the CCM, they commit to never use, produce, stockpile, or transfer cluster munitions, to destroy existing stockpiles within eight years of ratification or accession, to clear contaminated land within ten years of ratification or accession, to provide comprehensive assistance to victims, to provide technical, material, and financial assistance to other state parties, to undertake and implement transparency measures, to adopt national implementation measures, and to promote universal adherence to the CCM.

THE CONVENTION ON THE PHYSICAL PROTECTION OF NUCLEAR MATERIAL, 1980

The Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material, one of the main legal instruments in the nuclear security regime adopted under the IAEA, was signed in March 1980 and entered into force in February 1987. The Convention provides a legal basis for the deployment of physical protection measures for nuclear material, and establishes a framework for international cooperation against the theft or unauthorised diversion of nuclear materials.

international legal instruments

Under the Convention, states are obliged to ensure the physical protection of nuclear material used for peaceful purposes during international transport, criminalise certain offences involving nuclear material, and cooperate globally in addressing the theft, robbery, and/or unlawful taking of nuclear material or credible threat thereof.

The Convention was amended in May 2016, to include nuclear facilities and nuclear material used for peaceful purposes within the contexts of domestic use, storage, and transport under its physical protection mechanism. The amendment also extended criminalisation to offences related to illicit trafficking and sabotage of nuclear material or nuclear facilities, and provides for strengthened international cooperation in light of the expanded scope, such as assistance and information sharing in the event of sabotage. This Convention is the only internationally binding undertaking in the domain of the physical protection of nuclear material and facilities used for peaceful purposes.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL MODIFICATION CONVENTION (ENMOD) - 1977

The Convention on the Prohibition of Military or Any Other Hostile Use of Environmental Modification Techniques (Environmental Modification Convention or ENMOD), opened for signature on 18 May 1977 in Geneva and entered into force on 5 October 1978. It aims at prohibiting military or any other hostile use of environmental modification techniques. It also bans weather warfare, which refers to the modification of the weather for the sake of inducing damage and destruction. It contains ten articles and one annex on the Consultative Committee of Experts. The ENMOD Treaty can be used by ENMOD member states seeking climate change loss and damage compensation from other ENMOD member states before the International Court of Justice.

CONVENTIONAL FORCES IN EUROPE (CFE), 1992

The Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, signed in November 1990, aims at reducing the possibility for major offensive operations in Europe through the reduction of troops and armaments in Central Europe. It seeks to reduce the possibility of surprise armed attacks and resultant triggering of major offensive operations in Europe. It limits conventional armaments in Europe to under 40,000 battle tanks, 60,000 armoured combat vehicles, 40,000 pieces of artillery, 13,600 combat aircraft and 4,000 helicopters. In May 1992, the parties to the CFE signed the Tashkent Agreement on the Principles and Procedures for the Implementation of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, which redistributed the former USSR's equipment and strength targets among the signatories.

international legal instruments

THE INTERMEDIATE NUCLEAR FORCES, 1987

The Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty was adopted in 1987, and had a deadline of June 1, 1991. Under the Treaty, the US and Soviet Union had to eliminate and permanently forswear all of their nuclear and conventional ground-launched ballistic and cruise missiles with ranges of 500 to 5,500 kilometres. By the Treaty's deadline in 1991, the US and Russia had destroyed a total of 2,692 short-, medium-, and intermediate-range missiles. This was the first instance where the superpowers agreed to reduce their nuclear arsenals, eliminate an entire category of nuclear weapons, and deploy extensive OSI for verification. The US formally withdrew from the Treaty in August 2019.

THE NUCLEAR NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY, 1968

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) is the only legal instrument at the international level to articulate a binding commitment to nuclear disarmament in the form of a multilateral Treaty on part of the nuclear weapon states. Under the NPT, nuclear weapon states pledge to disarm, and non-nuclear weapon states pledge to never acquire nuclear weapons. It was adopted in 1968 and entered into force in 1970. At the time, China, France, the UK, US, and Soviet Union were nuclear armed states. Since then, India, Israel, Pakistan, and The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) developed nuclear weapons, but remain the only countries that are not party to the Treaty. A total of 190 countries ratified the Treaty, but DPRK withdrew after ratification, leaving the regime with 189 parties. The NPT has a Review Conference (RevCon) to assess implementation and issue consensus documents, and a Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) to prepare for the review.

THE SEABED TREATY, 1971

The Treaty on the Prohibition of the Emplacement of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction on the Seabed and Ocean Floor and in the Subsoil Thereof (Seabed Treaty) Treaty of 1971 prohibits the placement of nuclear weapons or weapons of mass destruction or any other types of weapons of mass destruction or structures, launching installations, or any other facilities specifically designed for storing, testing, or using such weapons on the seabed and ocean floor beyond a 12 mile coastal zone. It aims to eliminate the possibility of an underwater arms race and promote the peaceful operation of water bodies. It entered into force in 1972. While the US, UK, USSR, China, have ratified it, France has not. The Seabed Treaty allows verification through observation, and additional procedures that may be agreed upon from time to time.

international legal instruments

THE STRATEGIC ARMS REDUCTION TREATY I (START I)

The Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty I (START I) was the first Treaty that required the US and Soviet/Russian reductions of strategic nuclear weapons. Signed in January 1991 by the US and Soviet Union, it was fundamental for the creation of a framework that ensured predictability and stability for deep reductions. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Treaty took longer to enter into force, as state classification as nuclear and non-nuclear had to be determined. By the end of the dissolution, Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan had strategic nuclear weapons, so they became members of START I in May 1992, through the Lisbon Protocol. Start I entered into force in December 1994. The reduction of nuclear weapons had to be completed within seven years after entry into force and maintained for eight years. OSIs were conducted to verify the states. Start I expired in December 2009.

THE STRATEGIC ARMS REDUCTION TREATY II (START II) / STRATEGIC OFFENSIVE REDUCTION TREATY (SORT) 2002

The United States and Russia signed START II in January 1993, but the Treaty never entered into force. A decade of efforts to bring START II into force ended eventually in June 2002, and the US and Russia concluded negotiations on the 2002 SORT, or the Moscow Treaty), which entered into force in 2003. SORT stipulated a ceiling on deployment, at 1700-2200 strategic warheads for both countries' nuclear arsenals. This limit superseded START II's cap of 3000-3500 warheads. SORT was followed by the 2010 New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) in 2011.

THE STRATEGIC ARMS REDUCTION TREATY III (START III)

Following SORT, START III seemed unlikely. START III proposed a limit of 2000-2500 warheads for both countries' nuclear arsenals. It intended for the US and Russia to negotiate measures concerning the transparency of strategic nuclear warhead inventories and the destruction of strategic nuclear warheads and other jointly agreed technical and organisational measures to promote the irreversibility of deep reductions. Further, START III intended for the US and Russia to resolve issues concerning the goal of making the current START treaties unlimited in duration. However, negotiations on START III were not successful, and a Treaty was never signed.

international legal instruments

THE NEW STRATEGIC ARMS REDUCTION TREATY (NEW START), 2010

A new START was signed by Russia and the United States in 2010 to further limit and reduce their strategic offensive arms in accordance with the provision of this Treaty.

THE STRATEGIC ARMS LIMITATION TREATY (SALT I), 1972

The United States and the Soviet Union engaged in talks between 1969 and 1972. In the course of these talks, they negotiated the first agreements to place limits and restraints on their central and most important armaments, such as the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, and the Interim Agreement on strategic offensive arms.

THE STRATEGIC ARMS LIMITATION TREATY II (SALT II), 1979

The second Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty raised the limits on intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), and heavy bombers, while placing other limits on multiple re-entry vehicles and bombers with intermediate-range missiles. SALT II was intended to remain in effect through 1985. However, it was never ratified.

THE OTTAWA CONVENTION / MINE BAN TREATY, 1997

The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction opened for signature in December 1997 and entered into force on March 1, 1999. This Convention had the speediest ratification process among all major arms control treaties. It is also the first to officially ban a class of weapon in wide use, and combines the components of humanitarian and arms control law (i.e., inter alia, individuals and not just states alone have rights and responsibilities under the Treaty). The Ottawa Convention came about as a result of a coalition of NGOs and mid-size governments without the participation of the major military powers. Major landmines producers including the US, Russia, China, and Pakistan have not signed the Treaty.

international legal instruments

THE OUTER SPACE TREATY, 1967

The Outer Space Treaty prohibits the deployment of nuclear and/or other weapons of mass destruction in outer space, including in Earth's orbit.

THE AGREEMENT GOVERNING THE ACTIVITIES OF STATES ON THE MOON AND OTHER CELESTIAL BODIES, 1979

The Agreement Governing the Activities of States on the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies (1979), also called the Moon Treaty, bans military use of the Moon and other Celestial bodies

THE PARTIAL TEST BAN TREATY (PTBT), 1963

The PTBT banned all but underground nuclear explosions. It was signed in August 1963 and entered into force in October 1963. The US, USSR, and UK are signatories, having written the Treaty and serving as its depositories. It was negotiated in 6 weeks. This Treaty prohibited all test detonations of nuclear weapons, except those conducted underground. A comprehensive ban, though initially negotiated, was abandoned as a result of technical questions concerning the detection of underground tests, and Soviet concerns around the intrusive nature of proposed verification methods. The PTBT did not stop the arms race, but its enactment enabled a substantial decline in the concentration of radioactive particles in the atmosphere.

THE TREATY OF BANGKOK, 1995

The Treaty of Bangkok, 1995 entered into force in 1997, and set up the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapons Free Zone among 10 Southeast Asian states – namely Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand, the Philippines, and Vietnam. The Treaty prohibits the development, testing, stationing, transport, manufacture, and possession of nuclear weapons, and prohibits the dumping of waste in the region. However, the Treaty allows nuclear energy. The Zone itself is the area comprising the territories of the states and their continental shelves and exclusive economic zones. The Treaty also has a Protocol, in which the US, UK, Russia, France, and China undertake to respect the Treaty and avoid contributing to its violation by state parties – however, the nuclear weapon states have not signed this Protocol.

international legal instruments

THE TREATY OF PELINDABA, 1996

The Treaty of Pelindaba was adopted in 1996 and entered into force in 2009. This created the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone, prohibits any and all nuclear weapons in this zone, and requires the destruction of any and all nuclear devices. The Treaty calls on nuclear weapons states to provide assurances that they will not use nuclear weapons against the states party to the Treaty. It prohibits the research, development, manufacture, stockpiling, acquisition, testing, possession, control or stationing of nuclear explosive devices in the territory of parties to the Treaty and the dumping of radioactive wastes in the African zone by Treaty parties. Further, it prohibits any attack against nuclear installations in the zone by Treaty parties and requires them to maintain the highest standards of physical protection of nuclear material, facilities and equipment, which are to be used exclusively for peaceful purposes. All parties are expected to apply the full range of safeguards established by the International Atomic Energy Agency to all their peaceful nuclear activities. The Treaty has also established a compliance verification mechanism and the African Commission on Nuclear Energy. Each party is free to decide for itself on whether or not to allow visits by foreign ships and aircraft to its ports and airfields. The Treaty also upholds the freedom of navigation on the high seas and does not affect rights to passage through territorial waters guaranteed by international law.

THE TREATY OF RAROTONGA, 1985

The Treaty of Rarotonga, 1985 created and established the South Pacific Nuclear-Free Zone, and prohibits the manufacture, possession, and testing of nuclear devices, and the dumping of nuclear waste. It entered into force in 1986. It was signed by the South Pacific nations of Australia, the Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu on the island of Rarotonga (where the capital of the Cook Islands is located) in August 1985, and entered into force in December 1986. Since then, it has been ratified by all of those states. The Treaty of Rarotonga has three Protocols, which have been signed by the five declared nuclear states (except Protocol 1, which China and Russia have not signed as they do not have any territory in the nuclear-free zone). The Protocols prohibit manufacture, stationing, or testing of nuclear weapons in territories within the Zone (I), the use of nuclear weapons against parties to the treaty and against territories where Protocol 1 is in force (II), and prohibits all testing within the Zone (III). In 1996, France and the UK signed and ratified the three Protocols. The US signed them the same year, but has not ratified them. China signed and ratified Protocols 2 and 3 in 1987. Russia has also ratified Protocols 2 and 3 with reservations.

international legal instruments

THE TREATY OF TLATELOLCO, 1967

The Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America or the Treaty of Tlatelolco, 1967, prohibits the testing, production, possession, or acquisition of nuclear weapons in the Latin American nuclear-weapon-free zone. Nuclear weapons states party to the Treaty cannot use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against parties to the treaty and its Protocols. This was the first Treaty to exclude nuclear weapons from an inhabited region of the globe. Under this Treaty, state parties must conclude a comprehensive safeguards agreements with the International Atomic Energy Agency. It established has a mechanism for states to request special inspections in case of suspected violations. It formally entered into force when all states in the nuclear-weapon-free zone brought their agreements into force, but offered room to waive this requirement and bring the Treaty into force on a national basis. The Treaty also has two additional Protocols to the Treaty. Protocol I binds overseas countries with territories in the region (US, UK, France, and The Netherlands) to the terms of the Treaty, and Protocol II requires nuclear weapons states to refrain from undermining in any way the nuclear-free status of the region. It has been signed and ratified by the US, the UK, France, China, and Russia.

THE TREATY ON THE PROHIBITION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS (TPNW), 2017

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, also called the nuclear ban Treaty, is a landmark international legislative instrument that prohibits the development, testing, production, manufacture, transfer, possession, stockpiling, use, or threat of use of nuclear weapons, and allowing nuclear weapons to be stationed on the territory of states parties. The Treaty prohibits states parties from assisting, encouraging, or inducing anyone to engage in any of these activities and includes an obligation to provide assistance to all victims of the use and testing of nuclear weapons and take measures for the remediation of contaminated environments. The preamble acknowledges the harm caused as a result of nuclear weapons, including the disproportionate impact on women and girls, and on indigenous peoples around the world.

international legal instruments

THE THRESHOLD TEST BAN TREATY, 1974

Signed by the US and USSR in 1974, the Threshold Test Ban Treaty limited nuclear explosions to 150 kilotons. It is one of the key antecedents to the CTBT. A threshold has military importance as it removes the possibility of testing new or existing nuclear weapons transcending the fractional-megaton range. In the 1960s, there were several tests exceeding 150 kilotons by both the US and USSR – and this Treaty enabled the enforcement of mutual restraint, and this reduced the explosive force of new nuclear warheads and bombs that could otherwise be tested for weapons systems. The Treaty drew out a clear understanding of the relationship between the explosive power of reliable, tested warheads and the first-strike capability of a state.

THE WOMEN, PEACE, AND SECURITY AGENDA AND DISARMAMENT

The Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Agenda emerged with the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) and has grown with the adoption of nine additional resolutions.^[lxvii] The WPS Agenda centres on four pillars, namely the prevention of violence, protection and participation of women and girls, and relief and recovery. Disarmament is not explicitly included under Resolution 1325, except within the ambit of DDR. However, the agenda can be relied on for women to bring broader questions concerning disarmament into peace processes. Furthermore, the focus on conflict-related sexual violence can also be understood in light of the nexus between the proliferation of weapons and gendered forms of conflict-related violence. Within the ambit of relief and recovery, the emphasis on disarmament education can be articulated.

THE UN CONFERENCE ON THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT / STOCKHOLM DECLARATION, 1972

The UN Conference on the Human Environment adopted the Declaration of the UN Conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm Declaration), following its meeting from June 5-16, 1972. The Declaration centred on establishing a shared outlook and common principles to inspire and guide the peoples of the world in the preservation and enhancement of the human environment. Principle 26 of the Stockholm Declaration emphasises the ban on nuclear weapons, and states that: “Man and his environment must be spared the effects of nuclear weapons and all other means of mass destruction. States must strive to reach prompt agreement, in the relevant international organs, on the elimination and complete destruction of such weapons.”

FEMINIST ADVOCACY FOR DISARMAMENT

A black and white photograph of a protest sign made of cardboard. The sign is held by a person's hand on the left side. The text on the sign is written in large, bold, black capital letters. The background is blurred, showing other people and signs at a protest.

STAND UP AND
CHANGE
THE WORLD

Anyone can call for disarmament: An individual, an organisation, a collective, a state, or even an international body. As an individual, it can be confusing and overwhelming to understand where to even begin in advocating for disarmament. It can also seem like you are powerless as an individual - however, that is not the case. Below are simple but effective actions and steps you can take in your journey of disarmament advocacy.



1. STAY INFORMED

Keep yourself up-to-date by following breaking news, regional reports, podcasts, academic journals and first-hand accounts of survivors. Many useful websites keep up-to-date information on fact sheets, timelines, calendars and publication that can facilitate further study, research and even networking. It is a good practice to follow both international institutions/NGOs working on disarmament as well as local and regional initiatives. As a starting point for international platforms, you can explore:

UN Office for Disarmament Affairs: www.un.org/disarmament

Conference on Disarmament: <http://www.unog.ch/>

Control Arms www.controlarms.org

United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) www.unidir.org

International Action Network on Small Arms www.iansa.org

Small Arms Survey www.smallarmssurvey.org

Reaching Critical Will www.reachingcriticalwill.org

2. START A CLUB IN YOUR SCHOOL, UNIVERSITY, OR COMMUNITY

Recruit fellow students or friends to start a school club, university club/society or a local advocacy group. “Creating forums for discussion allows for healthy exchanges of ideas and inspires participants to better familiarise themselves with the topics and remain actively engaged.”[lxviii] Moreover, more diverse groups and individuals bring new perspectives, ideas and expertise to the table. Once you have established and promoted your club, you may plan events to attract more audiences and build awareness for issues surrounding disarmament. Examples include a youth conference, a film or documentary screening, a book club, weekly discussion forms, a panel discussion and a presentation.

3. ATTEND A CONFERENCE OR PARTICIPATE IN A MODEL UN

“Model United Nations (MUN), also known as Model UN, is an organised simulation of the United Nations that aims to educate participants about current events, topics in international relations, diplomacy and the United Nations agenda.”[lix] If you are organising or participating as a delegate in a MUN, you can add GCD as an agenda item. You may also want to do some research about local think-tanks or academic institutions who host conferences which are open to the public. Such fora are excellent platforms to strengthen activism and grassroots advocacy efforts, learn more information, spread awareness, build or create a network, and mobilise people into joining your cause. You can hear from experts or those with the lived experience of being directly affected by arms and weapons, and to gain new perspectives on current law and policy in the disarmament field.



4. USE MULTIMEDIA TO RAISE YOUR VOICE

Using multimedia platforms and digital tools such as video, audio, web design, graphics or animation can be an effective way to get your messages and ideas across. Witness (www.witness.org) is a useful resource to learn more about video advocacy. You may also engage with a local radio, community radio or campus radio station (if you are a student) that offer air-time for solutions, activism and ideas for social causes. Make sure you have relevant facts and statistics memorised to add depth to your arguments and ideas, and drive home the intensity and urgency of the cause you are advocating for. You may also want to explore digital storytelling and blogging as an alternative platform to speak about your views and ideas concerning disarmament. You can choose to write an article, or an opinion piece, a longer whitepaper or research paper or even a column for a newspaper. Alternatively, you can start your own blog and invite your peers to contribute!

5. VOLUNTEER

Social movements achieve the greatest success when they employ effective strategies for action. Using one's understanding, knowledge or even lived experience of nuclear weapons, small arms, and light weapons, you can advocate for change. Joining forces with others is a significant way to take action, as it amplifies the collective voice. This can be done through physical means, such as participating in demonstrations, rallies, marches, and teach-ins, where individuals come together in person.





6. KEEP AN EYE ON TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENTS

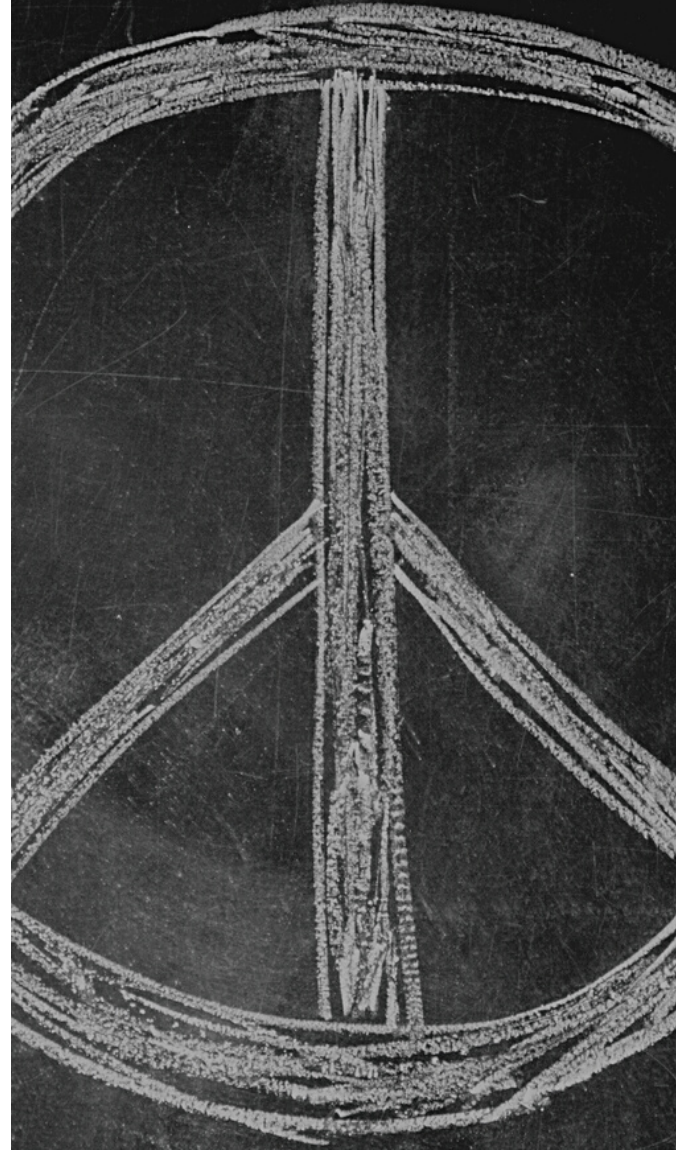
As technology makes steady progress, the world of weapons is also gaining strength. The development of weapons also poses unique challenges, which the law and policy may not be able to conceptualise and address overnight. The key to responding to these rapid developments and to advocate for change is to be informed, and the best way to be informed is to read and educate yourself. Following some of the key scholars and authors, organisations, and news outlets that carry information on the newest trends in weapons and weapons systems, as well as their impacts can help you stay on top of evolving challenges as they emerge.

7. ENGAGE IN ETHICAL CONSUMPTION

Some of the biggest corporations that are engaged in manufacturing and selling arms and weapons[[lxx](#)] are also engaged in multiple other industries. Prioritising ethical consumption by choosing a small business over a large corporation can serve as a powerful way to deviate away from normalising militarism - it might seem like a small step to take that might, perceptibly, feel like a clipped toenail for the massive industries that are involved in the arms trade, but it goes a long way if the collective were to engage in these mindful choices.

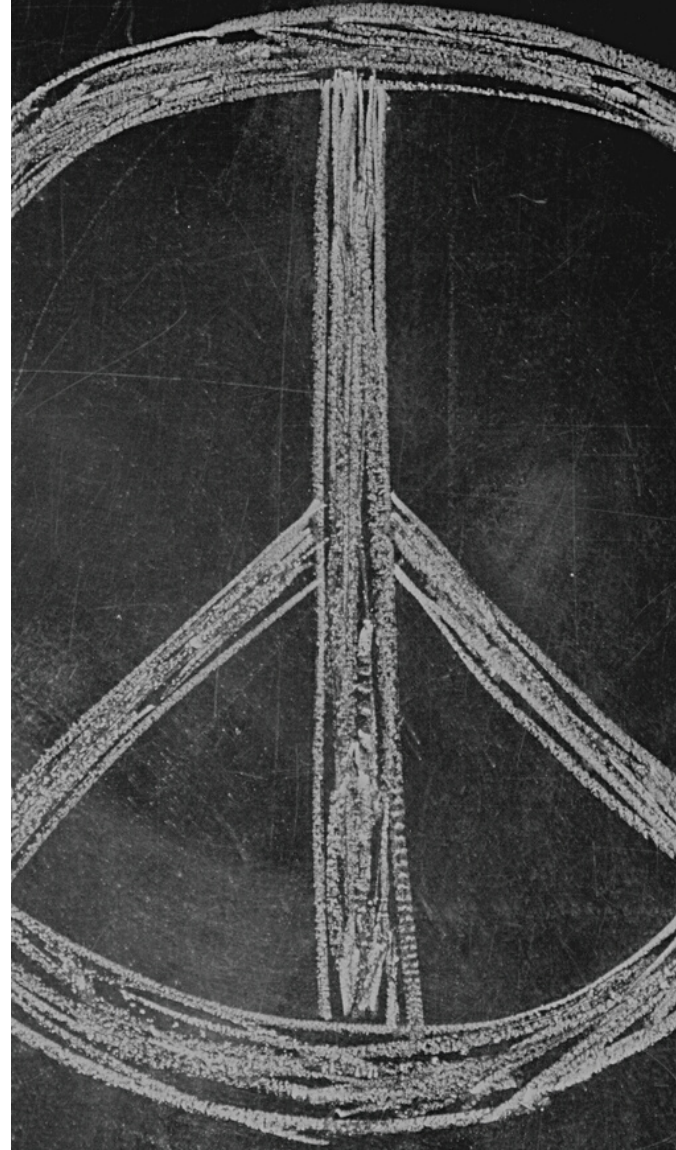
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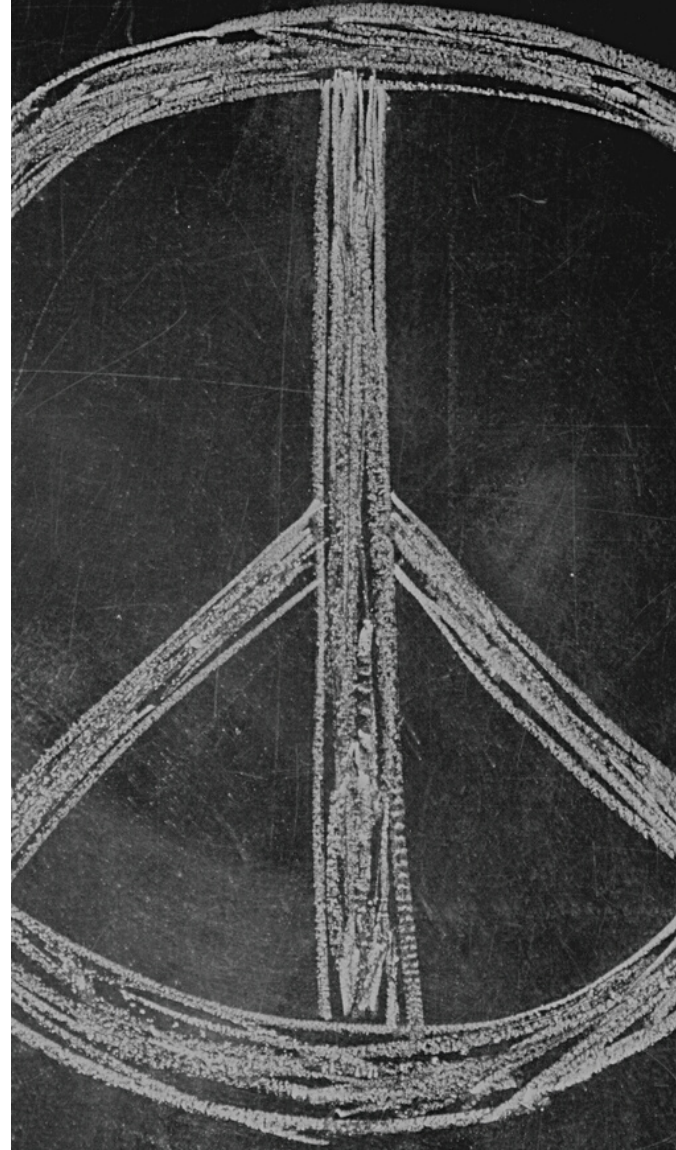
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