

Peace is not just the absence of war or violent conflict. Peace, as understood here, is an active state distinguished by the values of tolerance, fairness, respect, co-operation and kindness. We may never fully reach this ideal, but a society in which these values predominate and are supported by its culture and institutions could be fairly described as a peaceful society.

War is not only an **act of violence** designed to compel an opponent to fulfil our will, it is also often a mutual enterprise that suits opponents though not necessarily their populations or communities. Who, for example, benefits from Britain's war in Afghanistan?

This war has cost more than **£12 billion**, that is **£240 for every adult Briton**. This does not include military and related civil service wages, long term care for the wounded nor the increased prison and rehabilitation costs for the hundreds of ex-soldiers who end up there.

It is estimated that up to half the cost of new benefit payments and welfare provision every year will be directly attributable to Britain's war in Afghanistan.

The cost of the estimated 30,000 Afghans killed, thousands more maimed and millions of displaced is hard to calculate in monetary terms – in pain and misery it's **incalculable**.

*After a lifetime of war watching, I see war as an endemic human disease, and governments the carriers.*  
Martha Gelhorn, Journalist.

The cost of Britain's part in the Iraq and Afghan wars could have paid for 550 secondary schools or 30 new hospitals, 100,000 teachers, 120,000 nurses etc, etc.

## Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 3

While politicians give the order to go to war it is the soldier who ultimately pulls the trigger. To simply blame politicians while praising soldiers for doing a good job ignores the long chain of responsibility. This includes, for example, the workers at the BAE's factory in Crewe whose 4 million plus bullets have been fired in Afghanistan. Refusing to do a bad thing is always right. All around the world and down the centuries men and women have refused to take part in war.



Memorial stone to commemorate conscientious objectors. London.

On April 1 1964 the **War Office** became the Ministry of Defence. The unchanged institution acquired a reassuring name. While many would object to an act of 'war', 'defence' on the other hand feels positively good.



From bullets and cluster bombs to unmanned missile carrying planes and nuclear weapons the vast industry devoted to perfecting tools for destruction and killing is universally called the **defence industry** and on its fortunes depend the payout of millions of pensions. Language - the words we use - colour and influence our thinking and understanding of the world around us.

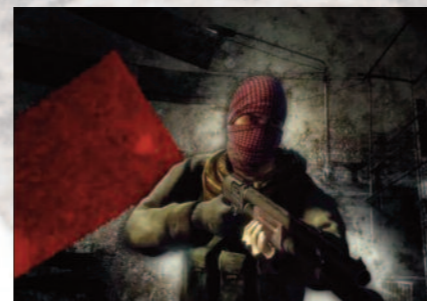
**A just war is a comfortable self-deception for those waging it and provides shelter under which any abomination can be committed with a clear conscience.**

# 1933 - 2010 WHITE POPPIES FOR A CULTURE OF PEACE

In a peace-oriented society a bloated and expensive military infrastructure, publicly supported armaments industry and vigorous state-promoted sales drives for 'British' made weapons to anyone with cash to spend would have no place.

**'Militarism is the characteristic, not of an army, but of society'** RH Tawney

As the Napoleonic wars came to an end, toy drum manufacturers bemoaned the fact that the drum – the war toy of that age – was no longer popular. Makers of violence-condoning toys and games have no such problem today. Violence is at the centre of the digital games industry and the new generation is being drilled to see war as an inevitable, if not desirable, fact of life. The US Army, for example, has produced its own brutal war game and offered it to the public. In their view it serves as a useful recruiting tool.



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While the coffin of every British dead soldier is televised, photographed, saluted on its way from the airport to the coroner and soldiers are named in Parliament by the Prime Minister as heroes who performed a valuable task, the 30,000 or so Afghans killed as a result of this war remain nameless, as do the 2.5 million refugees who are relegated to the status of victims for whom British charities raise funds from the British taxpayer.



Walking past the statue of General Haig, who commanded the British army in WW1 to lay a wreath of white poppies at the Cenotaph on Remembrance Day.

White poppies for peace, which the PPU has been promoting since 1938, are available at [whitepoppy.org.uk](http://whitepoppy.org.uk)



More about these issues [ppu.org.uk/info](http://ppu.org.uk/info)



*There is a consensus that it is OK to kill when your government decides who to kill. If you kill inside your country you get into trouble. If you kill outside your country, right time, right season, latest enemy, you get a medal.* Joan Baez, folk singer and peace activist.