



**AGAINST WARMONGERING IN WASHINGTON:
UPHOLDING THE PRACTICE OF PEACE**

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DR. MAULANA KARENGA

The warmongers in Washington have stepped back from the brink of waging war against the Syrian people, but no one should imagine they have been converted to peace or have lost faith in the devastating effectiveness of overwhelming firepower in meeting challenges and making self-serving changes in the world. Nor should we imagine they have given up worshipping the god of war as the quick and compelling answer to the problems of ensured profit-making, unimpeded resource seizure, and enduring dominance in domestic and world affairs. Thus, we must continue to resist this immoral, illegal and irrational move toward war and the deep-rooted racial, religious, economic, and cultural commitments and claims that wed them to war and ill-prepare them for the needed work and practice of peace.

It is the teachings of our honored ancestors; found in the sacred text of the *Odu Ifa*, that “war ruins the world”, disrupting, wounding and destroying lives and injuring and laying waste the land and all in it. Thus, even in justifiable wars of self-defense against attack, occupation and unbearable oppression, we must be reluctant soldiers, pushed into action as a last resort, but still firmly committed to the ancient ethical vision of a world without war and to the difficult and demanding sacrifice and work necessary to achieve this. This means demonstrating always and everywhere a conscious and continuing moral commitment to the work and practice of peace. And this peace cannot be the commonly called for peace of dominance and security for the rich and powerful, and oppression, imposition and insecurity for the poor and vulnerable. For real peace is always the presence and practice of justice which ends

oppression and hostilities and provides security and well-being for all.

Thus, this too is a teaching of our honored ancestors, found in the sacred text of the *Husia*, “exceedingly good is the practice of peace and there is no blame in peace, for those who practice it”. It is within the framework of these teachings and the central and overarching African ethical imperative to respect the sacredness of life and the dignity and rights of human beings in all their diversity; and to approach the world itself as sacred space that we hold fast to a continuing commitment to peace and a persistent presumption against war. And thus, we do and must oppose the proposal, planning, “preaching” and waging of war against Syria, as well as other vulnerable peoples.

Indeed, such a war would be unjust and unjustifiable, immoral and illegal for several compelling reasons. First, it would be an immoral war against the Syrian people, not against Syria as an abstract political entity or against a conveniently hated and discredited dictator, or simply against chemical weapon sites, but against a living community of people. It would mean the “acceptable”, intentional and unintentional “collateral damage killing” of children, women and men not at war with us and unable to defend themselves. Secondly, it would be an illegal war in violation of international law. For it would be waging an aggressive war against people who have done nothing to us, pose no threat to U.S. security, and who have as much right as we do to live their lives secure from self-deluding “saviors” whose salvation and deliverance translate in real life as certain death and widespread destruction.

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Thirdly, the proposed war would be a blatant hypocritical contradiction, pretending concern for the embattled and suffering Syrian people while killing them, and destroying the basis and means of their life. It is also crassly hypocritical and grossly cruel to feign concern for Syrian women and children while sending drones to kill hundreds of children, women and civilians in general in Somalia, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Yemen, remaining silent about the military's brutally killing of over a thousand civilians in Egypt and supporting the occupation of Haiti and Palestine which constantly involves killing of children, women and other innocent civilians. Likewise, its similarly and vulgarly hypocritical to rage against possession and use of chemical weapons when this country and its allies have them and have used them (napalm and white phosphorus bombs), and also when the country has supplied and/or supported their use by Israel (white phosphorus) against the Palestinian people and by Iraq (poison gas) against the Kurdish and Iranian peoples.

Fourthly, war would consume vital resources better spent and most needed elsewhere, i.e., providing food security, health care, housing, education, job creation, preserving the environment, rebuilding infrastructure, etc. Most often, however, it is the financial cost that is given as the first and most important reason for opposing war. But as argued above, it is the human cost in lives and the basis and means of life that forms the moral foundation for opposition to war. And the importance of this material and financial loss is its lessening and diverting resources vital to human life and the means, conditions and environment to sustain it.

Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune, who was deeply committed to the work of peace nationally and internationally, assigned our people, a particular and powerful moral role in the indispensable project which she calls "the building of peace" in the world. Seeing peace as vital to human life and progress and an ever urgent issue, she tells us, "This is the time for us to contribute something enduring and to take our place in the world. The peace of the world for which all people yearn in their hearts will not come as a result of armament treaties or political compromises; (and) it will not come if we 'just wait'. World peace must be built".

Indeed, she states, "It will be built by those who have human understanding, sympathetic knowledge and good will towards others. It will be the result of the cooperative work of those who have learned to work, to think, those who know the problems and have the feelings of the realities of life and have their eyes on its spiritual meanings". Here she reaffirms the special and central role we must assume in respect for and response to the compelling moral call of our history and heritage. Thus, she says, "Our heritage has prepared us to make our own contribution to the structuring of a better world. Out of our suffering and our sacrifice we may rise to assist in the righting of others' wrongs (and) approach world problems with a depth of understanding". Indeed, it is a depth of understanding drawn from centuries of suffering, sacrifice and struggle for good in the world, i.e., peace with justice, justice in freedom, and freedom with conditions and capacities which contribute to human flourishing and the well-being of the world.

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