

# INTERNATIONAL BULLETIN



World without Wars and Violence, International Humanist Organisation

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## As we enter 2012 we reflect on the year gone by and our hopes for this year...

How has the world developed from a humanist point of view? Is the world a better or worse place to live in than 1 year ago? What can we do in our organisation and as individuals to contribute to the creation of the world that we all long to live in?

It was one year ago that the first events took place that would later on be called the Arab Spring. A Tunisian market trader set himself on fire and simultaneously awakened the hopes of people from Morocco to Syria, from Bahrain to Libya, who have been living under feared dictatorships for decades.

Within weeks the regime of Ben Ali had fallen, the people of Egypt were occupying Tahrir Square until Mubarak would agree to leave power, and the seeds of the Indignados of Spain and the Occupy Wall Street Movement in New York had been sown.

It is true that 2011 has given us in WwV moments of incredible joy and inspiration. It is possible that this year will be written about

in history books as the year when the people of the world started to become once more aware of the huge power they have to fight injustice and an economic system that enslaves the people of the entire globe.

Yet, at the same time, although we see the end of the current world order approaching on the horizon, its final death spasms are creating violence in multiple forms all around the world. Whereas armed violence in Egypt and Tunisia seems to have been relatively minor, with national Armies swiftly backing the people, the situation in Libya has horrified us for months. The USA and Western governments have shown again the evil they are capable of when they justify military intervention with "human rights," thereby emptying them of all meaning. Foreign intervention in the form of money and weapons created a war that only seems to have benefitted the oil companies. And now Syria is heading in the same direction...

The people, not only of the countries affected by social protests, but also those watching through their televisions around the world, have been manipulated through the media to believe that war is the only answer. But as Egypt and Tunisia showed, when the people withdraw their cooperation any system crumbles virtually overnight. It is true that more strength is needed to resist without violence, but war never works in anything other than a short term sense because wars always create the conditions for the next war. ▶

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■ In 2011 the subject of nuclear weapons was not heard of much in the global media. The NPT is not due for review until 2015 and although Iran is probably pursuing a goal of building a weapon, it doesn't seem to be in conditions to test anything yet.

This of course hasn't stopped the USA continuing their development of a missile shield programme, similar to the one that the Czechs resisted. And using Iran as a justification, the USA has announced new plans for a shield system with the involvement of Poland, Turkey and other countries. Russia, seeing this system as a direct threat to their own ability to respond to a military attack has recently increased their own military readiness and deployed missiles on the Polish border and elsewhere, ready to attack NATO installations. Medvedev has been broadcast on Russian TV speaking in the same terms that scared the world to its bones during the Cold War.

It is this increased tension, and the threat by the Russians to withdraw from the recently signed START treaty that has left many of us feeling the world is certainly more insecure at the end of 2011 than it was at the beginning.



In the financial world we have seen the opening battles in the War of the Markets. This is a frightening war that has started with an intense attack on the people of Greece and has spread to Ireland, Spain, Portugal and now Italy.

The IMF is going around the world "disciplining" national governments and forcing them to implement inhumanly hard austerity measures that are literally killing people. Two Prime Ministers have been removed from power in supposedly democratic countries and basically replaced by representatives of the bank.

The media once more support these actions telling the population that it is the only way, that the debt must be paid (even though it is not their personal debt), and that the world will come to an end if we don't obey the banks...

We have been saying for decades that this global economic system doesn't work. Or rather it works for a privileged few and leaves the rest of the world in a system of economic slavery. Whether you live in the

slums of Nairobi or the luxury apartments of Manhattan you are at the mercy of the banks. The banks allow you to have money or not, they produce not a thing in the world and yet through their speculation they can bring a country to its knees overnight. Their decision makers have no democratic legitimacy yet they influence the decisions about health, education and social welfare of nearly all countries of the world.



We know this system is crumbling and 2011 has shown it at its worst. People around the world are starting to consider alternative ways of running countries without the world's banks being in the hands of private corporations. In the meantime the banks are continuing their behaviour, sucking all public assets into private hands, and leaving no possibility for human beings to live in peace.

Yet we are hopeful, Silo reflected on this in 2009 in his video called the Experience and the TV show Sage of the Andes. "There won't be an apocalypse." He explained that we are in a moment of history when human beings have outgrown their ideologies, like a child outgrows its old clothes. Our 20<sup>th</sup> century ideologies of economics, religion, gender roles, human rights, sexuality, etc. are all going through a severe period of questioning. Nothing we believed 50 years ago is as it is today.

Our lives have changed beyond recognition. The world is more connected, technology hasn't just transformed the West, it has even reached the remotest villages of the poorest countries in the world. And at the same time a new generation is emerging that doesn't take as its reference what the older generation says. Young people are deciding for themselves what their values should be.

Everything old is perceived to be unfit for purpose. Nothing works for young people, and something must be done.

This awakening of young people is truly the most astonishing aspect of this new moment. They are inclusive, able to involve people of other ages and conditions; an interesting difference from the clashing attitude of other moments.

We are seeing a resurgence of interest in the themes of nonviolence. Instead of violent protest, we are seeing more and more non-violent Marches around the world (something that we'd like to think we've influenced with the raising of awareness caused by our own World March).

So, as humanists and members of World without Wars and Violence, what can and should we do in such a global situation? It is true that we are a tiny organisation and we have no great financial resources to count on. We are not in every country and even in the countries we are in our strength is small. Are we then to say to ourselves that there is no value in our attempt to contribute to non-violent social change?

No. We don't believe this. A nonviolent and human society is not yet guaranteed, and even if Silo predicted that the other half of the system (after communism) will collapse without an apocalypse, there are many opportunities for violence to increase, and there are many opportunities for those who propose nonviolence to say something useful.

In World without Wars we will continue to work in the direction of a new society. We will continue to preach nonviolence because more and more people want to hear about it. And this contribution we will make is the best thing for the situation we are working in. We don't need our name and our banner to appear in the headlines. It is enough for us to let future historians decide if the non-violent movement was influenced by Siloists or not.

In any case, as individuals, and as an organisation, we will continue to propose the simple spirituality of treating others as we want to be treated, our Parks and meeting places will be places where communities of nonviolence will continue to be developed, and the reference that we give to the people will be the beacons of light that inspire lives.

As we write this reflection it is 2 years since 10,000 pilgrims journeyed to our Park of Study and Reflection in Punta de Vacas, Argentina to celebrate the end of the World March for Peace and Nonviolence. From that beacon of peace and humanity, World without Wars was refounded.

In 2012 let us return to the world of people with our heads and foreheads luminous with the idealism we have within us, secure that although the year ahead will likely be more difficult for the people of the world, this is only a small difficulty on the path we are taking, that our future is assured and that the violence we live with every day is closer to its end.

With a big hug and best wishes for 2012.

Editorial Team

**SPAIN**

**Gathering for Peace and Disarmament**

**Madrid Ateneum** | The meeting's objective was to give visibility to the actions and proposals to overcome all kinds of violence: from wars, fear, oppression and discrimination to economic violence.

The meeting was held in collaboration with the Ateneum of Madrid, the artistic collective "Total Art", the association "Blind of the World", the "Anti-militarist Assembly of Madrid" and the "Universal Rights" association.

Attendees were very concerned about peace and disarmament and suggested campaigns to get Spain out of NATO, to prevent the installation of the space shield at the Rota naval base in Spain and for the conversion of military spending to social spending.



**CANADA**

**Towards a Peaceful Economy: Solutions for the 99%**

**Kitchener** | "Our current global money system is the generator of needless violence and destruction. For something new to happen, a dialogue about the fundamental factors of our economy must begin in the heart of the community."

The forum was held with the slogan "Towards a Peaceful Economy", with the project to connect globally with other peace and nonviolence forums. 50 peoples participated in the Forum. The day included movies, speakers and group discussion and planning. Our guest speaker, George Crowell has been studying monetary reform for over 20 years and spoke about the personal and social problems created by usury. George Crowell has a B.A. from Princeton University and a Th.D. from Union Theological Seminary in New York City. In 1968 he moved with his family to Canada to take a position in the Religious Studies Department at the University of Windsor.

A team will create a report for the day (based on the working group reports) to make available online, as well as to offer to governments.



**Education for nonviolence: The situation in Syria and youth**

**Montreal** | During the Forum for Peace and Nonviolence, Aliaa Kha-chouk and Anne Farrell presented two conferences to high school students in Montreal. They met 150 students. Aliaa, a Syrian filmmaker explained the non-violent actions carried out by the youth in Syria and this in spite of the risks of imprisonment. Whereas Anne presented the characteristics of the nonviolent movements in Egypt, Tunisia and in Spain (M15). Thereafter, the students took part in an individual reflection in class. 1. They described their personal experiences with violence as witness, victim and perpetrator (written work); 2. They exchanged in groups on the common points they had experienced. Some students expressed the moral tensions they felt as quiet witnesses. The exchange concluded on the need "for doing or for saying" something when we are witnessing an injustice or living some injustice. The conference explained that if the students decided not do to something they will be weakened internally. The students made some relations with the "occupy movement" which is gaining strength around the world with people deciding to occupy, to talk and to care for one another. The people felt their inner strength through being together, expressing the injustice they are living or witnessing.

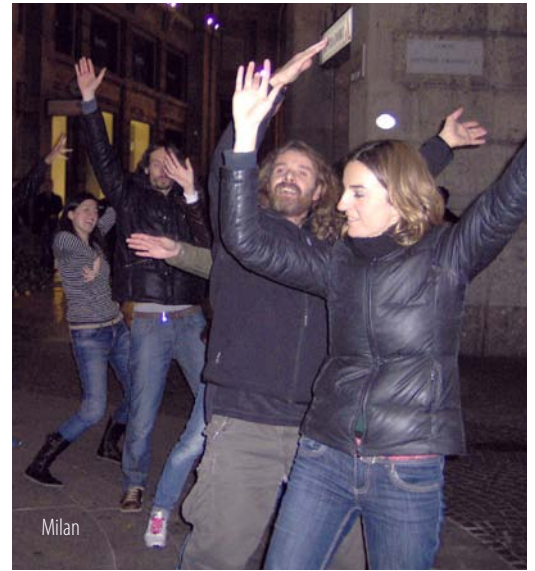


**ITALY**

**Flash Mob: The Wave of Nonviolence**

**Milan** | Within the project “Artistic Paths for Nonviolence”, a Flash Mob took place in a central square. After the dance, leaflets with slogans about nonviolence from Silo, Gandhi, M. L. King and others were distributed.

This project aims to involve people in order to develop and spread a new form of creative nonviolence.



Milan

**Workshop: The Women’s Nonviolence**

**Milan** | The first of seven meetings have taken place on November 12<sup>th</sup>. A project, a place, a moment where women can meet and work together to recognize difficulties, give new responses and build a new model based on active nonviolence.

25 people participated in the first meeting. In the beginning a brief theatrical moment helped to connect, followed by an interchange on what that experience had produced: emotions, reactions, thoughts.

After a moment of individual reflection, the participants talked about what had emerged in them and each group presented a summary.



Milan

**Nonviolence Award**

**Rome** | The association WwW Rome-Garbatella met in its representatives of Greenpeace Rome to create a Promoting Committee for the Nonviolence Award for 2012. The project involves a wide work of dissemination and training on the issue of nonviolence among young people in schools and Rome associations. On October 2<sup>nd</sup> a project or concrete action will be rewarded, together with a photographic award. The objective is to value those who contribute to the strengthening of a nonviolent consciousness and reinforce collaboration among all people working for this goal.



Milan



Milan

**CZECH REPUBLIC**

World without Wars and Violence in Brno organised a series of five evening lectures, each with two interesting speakers, live music and an open discussion. The topics were Conflicts for Energy, Active Nonviolence – Popular Movements in the Czech Republic and around the World, 9/11 and the War on Terror, Nuclear Weapons and Nuclear Energy, and Military Expenditure. Well-known academics and experts gave speeches. Some of the lectures were attended by up to 70 people.

World without Wars and Violence in Prague in cooperation with Community for Human Development and Convergence of Cultures organised a series of five workshops. The aim was to put together people who want to take action. Interactive brainstorming methods were used to plan activities in five areas; Conflicts behind our Lifestyle, Wars for Energy vs. Renewable Energy Sources, Nuclear Abolition, Education for Nonviolence and Racism and Xenophobia. Each workshop was attended by 10 to 15 people, some of whom became active members of the base team in Prague.

The World Forum had nice media coverage – an interview in a national TV station and another one in a national radio station.

A special guest to the Nuclear Abolition workshop in Prague was the vice-president of the Czech Senate, Mrs. Alena Gajduskova, who endorsed the World March in 2009 and now wants to cooperate with World without Wars on a campaign that will be launched in the beginning of 2012. The goal of the campaign is that the Czech Republic officially joins countries that are in favour of the Nuclear Weapons Convention that would ban nuclear weapons.

Apart from nuclear abolition, World without Wars in the Czech Republic will deal with the following topics next year; actions to prevent Czech participation in potential conflicts in the Middle East (such as Syria or Iran) and raising awareness of how wars, though they seem far away, are related to our lifestyle (through our energy sources, minerals, food and products we buy). In all these areas World without Wars will take action in all directions with a special focus on young people (high schools and university students).



**POLAND**

In Krakow, a gathering took place on the 11<sup>th</sup> of November to hear presentations about various forms of spirituality and personal change. We presented a video about Silo and gave the reading prepared for the day encouraging a personal reflection about the need for nonviolence for 11 seconds. We finished the event by releasing Chinese lanterns into the cold night sky. The 40 or so people who attended left having had a pleasant and interesting experience.



In Greece the forum took place in 5 different cities from one to five days. The five cities were: Heraklion, Athens, Thebes, Corfu and Preveza.

### Heraklion

In the biggest of the 4 cities of Crete, the forum lasted for 5 days from the 9<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> of November including all three dimensions: dialogue, art and spirituality. The forum was supported by the local municipality and in the opening ceremony the vice mayor declared his support for activities in the direction of nonviolence. It was the continuation of the March for Nonviolence that was carried out through the city on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of October, International Nonviolence day.

Over the five days participation was not massive with around 50 people in total taking part in all the various events but the quality of the discussions and the plans that emerged out of it were fantastic. The day by day program was as follows:

9<sup>th</sup> November: “Education and nonviolence”. Participants from all levels of education, from primary school to universities gathered together and the main topic was the creation in Crete of the network of “Universities and schools for nonviolence”.

10<sup>th</sup> November: “Spirituality and nonviolence”. The day was split into different topics that are actually very close to each other from the point of view of new humanism. The topics were activism and spirituality from the point of view of nonviolence. In the part of spirituality a great help was given by our dear friend and humanist Eduardo Gozalo who travelled from Istanbul for the event. The discussion mostly centred on the Parks of Study and Reflection and their role in today’s world. The process for the construction of a park in Greece was also discussed.

11<sup>th</sup> November: – “Art and nonviolence” In the “V. Kornaros” cinema 2 movies were shown: the well-known documentary “Zeitgeist Moving Forward” and the documentary about Silo, “Sage of the Andes”. After the showings a few people headed towards the main square of the city (Liberty square) where the 11” ceremony was carried out. It was a beautiful reflection about nonviolence on a personal and social level.

12<sup>th</sup> November: “How to cook a non-violent revolution” In this day was presented and then discussed a power point presentation created by the Spanish “Indignados” regarding the ways of organising and producing non-violent revolution.

13<sup>th</sup> November: “Economy and nonviolence”. The last day of the forum was directed to the most discussed topic in Greek society, the economy. Since the IMF, ECB and the EU arrived in the country one and a half years ago all citizens are searching for ways of nonviolent resistance to the economic measures and there were also some interesting proposals regarding a future plan, a resources based economy which concentrated a lot of interesting interchange.

### Athens

In the capital city all the efforts were concentrated on 11.11.11 when a beautiful presentation was made with the theme “spirituality and nonviolence”, identical to the one made the previous day in Heraklion, with the participation again of our friend Eduardo Gozalo. 40 people took part in the presentation and were interested to learn more and be involved more actively in the creation of the first Greek Park somewhere near Athens. It seems that the idea found more ground and it is moving with more confidence towards its realization.

After the discussions for the Greek Park several people headed towards Syntagma Square, the square in front of the Greek parliament where the 11” ceremony took place.

### Thebes

All the activities for the forum were created in a very short period of time with quite impressive results. The municipality of the town actively supported the World Forum which was spread throughout the town, with the participation of different organizations and started a wonderful process, especially in the field of education.

11<sup>th</sup> November: A beautiful ceremony for 11” seconds was held in a school where all the children took part and imagined the change they want to see in the world. After the ceremony the children drew beautiful pictures on a huge roll of paper that will travel all across Greece together with the photographic exhibition “Peace is...”.

12<sup>th</sup> November: A very beautiful presentation with magnificent events (like theatre with kids presenting different forms of violence) with the same topic as in Heraklion and Athens “spirituality and nonviolence” again with the help of Eduardo. The participants were impressed as they were coming into contact with the theme of nonviolence for the first time.

### Corfu

To all 90 schools of the island (elementary, high and senior high schools) an invitation was sent for the participation of the students, teachers and professors in the experience of 11s on the 11.11.11. High and senior high schools were also informed by phone. The idea was to reflect on the changes we desire on a personal and social level for 11s, once students gathered in the courtyard, before entering their classrooms. Although we don’t know the exact number of schools that participated, mostly because of the weather conditions on that day, teachers notified us of their intention to do the experience during lesson time. In any case, the dissemination and embracing of the concept was very moving. The idea has also been interestingly supported by an interview on the national channel.

### Preveza

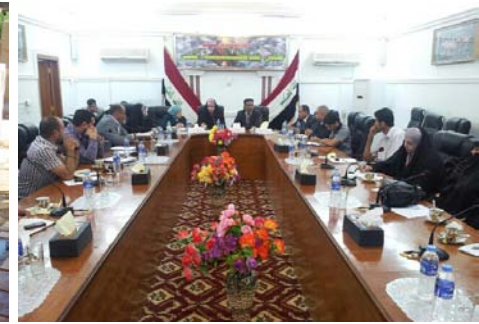
On the 12<sup>th</sup> of November a projection of the movie “Zeitgeist Moving Forward” was made with the participation of 20 people. During the break a ceremony similar to the 11” took place.

In general, the feeling of coordination in all the 5 cities was marvellous. It seems that the World Forum provided excellent possibilities both for local activities and national coordination in the field of nonviolence. It is already evident from various initiatives that came as a result of it.

**IRAQ**

The following events were organised:

- › Short lecture in a nursery school about what is peace and how we can apply nonviolence to our life.
- › Performance about domestic violence and its impact on children.
- › Meeting with Al Muthanna Province Council (local government) and the Committee of civil society organisations.



**ECUADOR**

**Guayaquil** | The World Forum for Peace involved several educational centres and institutions with initiatives about peace, different types of violence, the history of nonviolence, information about WwW and the Humanist Movement, information about the World March and the 11 seconds of reflexion.

Members of WwW visited

- › The Suarez Institute,
- › Private school Celestin Freinet,
- › Faculty of Philosophy,
- › Jose Andres Matheus School,
- › Dr. Abel Gilbert Ponton School,
- › Sanctuary Chapel at the Metropolitan Cathedral of Guayaquil.





# Declaration regarding the situation in Syria

World without Wars and Violence has been observing the dramatic events taking place in Syria in recent months with profound concern. It is clear that the non-violent popular protests in Tunisia and Egypt were not taken as models in the case of Libya. There, European governments and the USA, instead of reinforcing peaceful and nonviolent initiatives, backed the path of war and armed confrontation. Today Gaddafi has been brought down but, as in the case of Iraq and others, Libya has been totally devastated and is now in a situation of social disaster with countless numbers of dead, injured and physically and psychologically traumatised people who will take decades to recover and where, contrary to what the media say, democracy will not grow but rather fundamentalisms will start to appear. We fear that in Syria we are witnessing a repetition of the same situation.

It is very evident that Syrians, facing dictatorship and government repression, in the great majority, have responded peacefully, but it is also certain that armed groups are on the increase and seem to be financed and backed by obscure interests with the support of the USA, Israel and other states who have had their sights set for many years on bringing down the Syrian regime. The signals from the Governments of Russia and China show that they are not willing for what happened in Libya to be repeated this time on Syrian soil. The destabilization of the zone could have unpredictable consequences.

## In front of this tragic situation we express our concern and we demand:

- › the end of government repression of innocent citizens who demonstrate peacefully and the opening of an electoral process where Syrians will be able to choose a government elected by the people.
- › that Western governments headed by the USA, the UK and France stop supporting, financing and supplying weapons to the violent opposition and definitively back a way out of the conflict without armed confrontation.

## We reiterate:

- › Our support to all forms of non-violent and peaceful protest in Syria which struggle to improve living conditions, while rejecting the paths of violence and civil war.
- › The need to reinforce the search for peaceful and non-violent channels such as have been developed in several countries as this is the only way we will truly advance in this world which is suffering such convulsions. Violence leads to more violence and this could have unimaginably serious repercussions in a global context given the delicate moment we are in.

We hope that repression and the spilling of blood ends in Syria as soon as possible so that a new era may start where the deepest aspirations of her people may manifest.

# News from around the World

## Inauguration of the Stele of Nonviolence

**Rome, Italy, November 25<sup>th</sup>** | The ceremony took place in the presence of representatives of the Province (who financed the stele), the Town Hall, the Neighbourhood Hall and the Embassy of India. There were children of an elementary school who recited poems they had prepared with their teachers.

In front of a hundred people Cristiano Chiesa-Bini of WwW outlined the initiatives, from the World March for Peace and Nonviolence to the Nonviolence Award.



The stele, placed in the square where the two editions of “RUN THIS WAY! Nonviolence runs between us” took place, will be a physical reference to the path WwW is taking to strengthen the nonviolent consciousness among young people.

## March for Peace and Nonviolence

A rally organised by World without Wars marched through Kisumu, Kenya, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of October, the International Day of Nonviolence.

Throughout the day about 8000 people attended the event and many schools and institutions took part.

