War or Peace: What is your commitment?

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With the Middle East on the boil, do we as health professionals remain passive and uninvolved, thereby supporting the war through our silence?

On February 15, 2003, over a million participated in the largest rally London had seen for decades. Hundreds of thousands marched through Berlin; two lakhs marched through Damascus; thousands joined marches in Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Brussels, South Korea, Australia, Malaysia and Thailand; hundreds in Bosnia, Hong Kong and Moscow; and thousands in Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Johannesburg, Tokyo, Dhaka. It was the largest anti-war rally in recent decades.

No more war; No more bombs; No more war and bombs for oil rhetoric please!

Earlier many braved the cold in many American cities and many joined similar protests in Delhi and Kolkata and kerala soon after. The protests were a significant and inspiring message by peace loving world citizens all over the globe. They were not swayed by the pro-war rhetoric of Bush and Blair; nor impressed by the machination of the armament and nuclear transnational corporations all over the world; nor provoked by the demonstration of some leaders or even stereotyping of one of the important religions of the world. Men and women, young and old, school children and college students; farmers and teachers, artists and musicians, disabled and minorities; people of all religions, class and ethnicity joined the protest in an overwhelming groundswell of public opinion. No more war; No more bombs; No more war and bombs for oil rhetoric please!

To live in peace takes a lot of commitment. To promote a world in which Health for All Now can be a reality, needs all of us to be as anti-war as we are anti-disease.

Twenty five years ago in 1978, the Alma Ata Declaration on Health for All had clearly noted that

“An acceptable level of health for all the people of the world by the year 2000 can be attained through a fuller and better use of the world’s resources, a considerable part of which is now spent on armaments and military conflicts. A genuine policy of independence, peace, détente and disarmament could and should release additional resources that could well be devoted to peaceful aims and in particular to the acceleration of social and economic development of which primary healthcare, as an essential part should be allotted its proper share.”
In 1995, people from 92 countries gathered at the People’s Health Assembly in GK Savar, Bangladesh and noted in the People’s Charter for Health that: “War, violence, conflict and natural disaster devastate communities and destroy human dignity. They have a severe impact on the physical and mental health of their members, especially women and children. Increased arms procurement and an aggressive and corrupt international arms trade undermine social, political and economic stability and the allocation of resources to the social sector.”

The charter called on peoples of the world to:

• support campaigns and movements for peace and disarmament.
• support campaigns against aggression and the research production, testing and use of weapons of mass destruction and other arms.
• support people’s initiatives to achieve a just and lasting peace.
• demand that the United Nations and individual states end all kinds of sanctions used as an instrument of aggression, which can damage the health of civilian populations…

As members of a health network; as members of an association and followers of a ‘peacemaker’; what was your response?

Did you join the marches?
Did you e-mail your protest?
Did you talk to your family, your friends, your colleagues, and your associates against war and stimulate them to support peace?

Or

Did you remain passive, uninvolved, disinterested, confused and supported the imminent war through you silence?

To live in peace takes a lot of commitment. To promote a world in which Health for All Now can be a reality, needs all of us to be as anti-war as we are anti disease; as pro-peace as we are pro-health.

Are you going to respond?
Are you going to make your small voice part of a big bang against war?
What is your commitment?
War or peace?
Peace needs you!!

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