



Global Peace Services USA

Promoting Global Understanding through Service

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Dear Friend of Global Peace Services USA (GPS),

Violence and potential violence have accounted for daily headlines this year, heightened by the recent eruption of violent conflict in Israel and Gaza.

At the same time, global climate change has disproportionately impacted countries with the least capacity to mitigate or adapt and with the least responsibility for contributing to climate change. Within countries, the poorest and most vulnerable populations are most adversely affected by climate change, which in turn has contributed to forced population displacement and violence in several countries, including in Azerbaijan-Armenia, Sahelian Africa, Sudan, Haiti, Myanmar, Somalia, and Yemen. The war in Ukraine has exacerbated these impacts by breakdowns in fragile arrangements to permit exports of grain and other Ukrainian agricultural products to impoverished countries that depend on them.

Notwithstanding some initial promising signs, the record of the last year has been at best mixed. In Colombia, the prospect for lasting peace with the congressional approval of the "Total Peace Plan" encountered roadblocks to implementation. Two significant rebel factions have yet to agree with the Plan. The *International Crisis Group* observed in an October 2023 report:

Unilateral six-month ceasefires announced by the authorities in the first half of 2023 amounted to tactical gifts to armed and criminal groups, which grew stronger during the respite from military operations. Lower homicide rates in many areas conceal a more sinister reality: that is, armed groups have attained such a stifling hold on daily life that they no longer need to use violence to dispense with rivals or silence critics. Instead, civilians comply out of fear.

In Ethiopia, the implementation of an initially promising peace accord, led by the African Union to bring an end to the violent conflict in Tigray, has encountered roadblocks stemming from divisions within Ethiopia and tensions with Eritrea, while the humanitarian crisis within Tigray continues unabated (Council on Foreign Policy).

In other Andean countries, underlying tensions sporadically erupted in violence in Peru. Ecuador, long-known as a regional "spot of calm," has been recently shaken by political upheaval, economic instability, and drug trafficking-fueled violent crime, particularly in the port city of Guayaquil and adjacent areas, with homicides doubling over the last 3 years (Council on Foreign Policy, Associated Press, UK and U.S. travel advisories).

In this fragile environment, GPS has continued to undertake research, publications and awareness-raising events intended to broaden the adoption of nonviolent approaches to conflict prevention and resolution. As noted in the examples above, systemic violence,

whether overt or simmering beneath the surface, continues to afflict countries in all continents. GPS will have little, if any, direct influence over these situations, but through widespread dissemination of its publications and events, we seek to catalyze the efforts of leaders of government and nongovernment entities to enact and implement nonviolent approaches.

The GPS Newsletter issued in June 2023 (Vol.24, No.1) deals with two examples of ongoing GPS themes: cultural destruction and international efforts to hold aggressors accountable, and the role of official apology in peacebuilding. These themes are overt or under the surface of tensions in Azerbaijan-Armenia, the Andean Countries, Myanmar, Somalia, Sudan, and Yemen. The first article, "Putin Attacks Ukraine's Culture," by GPS Board Member, Dr. Robert Muscat, explores the subject of cultural destruction involving deliberate destruction of religious edifices and other secular structures regarded as central to the identity of the population under attack. The article highlights the example of the brutal attack on Ukraine, that has deliberately targeted many structures of Ukrainian cultural value. The article also notes international efforts to document cultural destruction and to identify and hold the aggressors accountable.

The second article, by John Eriksson, "Indigenous Residential Schools in Canada and the United States: Uncovering the Truth and Pursuing Healing and Reconciliation," compares the 19th and 20th century experiences of Canada and the United States in implementing a strategy designed to forcibly separate Indigenous children from their families and to relocate them in distant Indigenous residential or boarding schools in order to expunge their native languages and cultures and coercively assimilate them with European languages (English or French) and cultures. The physical, mental, and emotional impacts of the strategy on Indigenous children and their families have been severe, long-lasting and intergenerational.

The 21st century has been marked by efforts in both countries to uncover the truth, as well as actions to reverse the former strategy by closing residential schools and supporting education at the community level, including Indigenous language instruction and recognition of other aspects of Indigenous culture. A first step toward healing and reconciliation has been official apology from heads of government and leaders of religious bodies who operated the schools. Official public apology has figured prominently in Canada, from prime ministers to other national and provincial leaders. Other measures include implementation of the "94 Calls to Action" in the report of the 2015 Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission and completion of the U.S. Department of Interior's Federal Boarding School Initiative. Passage of a proposed U.S. Congressional Act to establish a "Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies," would reinforce accountability and nurture reconciliation.

2023 marks the 25th anniversary of Global Peace Services and publication of the *GPS Newsletter*, beginning in 1998. Over this quarter of a century, the Newsletter has published 52 issues, each issue containing two-to-four articles on innovative and newly emerging aspects of nonviolent approaches to peacemaking. To commemorate this milestone, in 2024, we plan to issue a special compilation of the best ten to fifteen articles and essays that have appeared in our newsletter, as judged by a panel of GPS Board Members. In 2024, we plan to publish articles on the following topics, among others: "Peaceful Multicultural Societies" and "From Imagined to Verified Communities:

Truth as Realist Policy.” We also plan to hold a special presentation in early 2024 on “Assessing Climate Change Progress and Challenges.”

For GPS --whose work is accomplished through the commitment of engaged volunteers-- to realize its agenda for 2024 will also require financial resources. With your support, we look forward to furthering our work as catalysts for peacebuilding and peacemaking in the U.S. and in the wider world. Thank you for heeding our call.

Your tax-deductible gift would be a tremendous help toward enabling us to carry our work forward in the coming year. Please complete the enclosed form and mail it with your check for \$25, \$50, \$100, \$250 or another amount to Global Peace Services USA in the enclosed pre-addressed envelope or contribute through PayPal (accessible through our Website - www.globalpeaceservices.org – and go to “DONATE”). In the enclosed form we encourage you to share your ideas, express interest in becoming involved with one of our projects, or suggest topics for our newsletter. We welcome your working with us to expand our program outreach. You can also utilize the form at the “CONTACT” button on our website or reach us by email: globalpeaceservicesusa@gmail.com or by phone at [\(301\) 681-6968](tel:(301)681-6968). We look forward to hearing from you.

Gratefully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John Eriksson".

John Eriksson, President

2023 SUPPORT FOR GLOBAL PEACE SERVICES USA

I would like to make the following contribution to the work of GPS USA in 2024

\$ 25 ___ \$50___ \$100___ \$250___ Other \$_____

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: _____

EMAIL: _____

I would like to offer the following suggestions to support the growth and/or direction of GPS USA in 2024:

I am interested in helping with the following project(s):

- _____Climate Change and Conflict
- _____The Health Professions as Healers and Peacemakers
- _____Engineers and Conflict Resolution
- _____Alternative Approaches to Conflict Resolution and Prevention

I suggest the following topics/news for a future issue of the GPS USA newsletter:

Please share the GPS Newsletter with the following people:

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

EMAIL: _____

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

EMAIL: _____