



Canadian Friends Service Committee E-Newsletter

January, 2017

Canada's involvement in the arms trade



*Image of a May 2015 air strike by Saudi Arabia in Sana'a, Yemen –
CC-BY Ibrahem Qasim*

“We note with sadness that arms sales are an increasingly lucrative industry for Canada, which has become the second largest supplier of arms to the Middle East,” starts a new Canadian Yearly Meeting (CYM) minute. “Canada is arming countries that make a regular practice of violating basic human rights and human dignity.” The examples of Saudi Arabia and Israel are offered. The minute calls for increasing transparency through signing and ratifying the *UN Arms Trade Treaty*. Find a link to the full minute at <http://quakerservice.ca/ArmsTrade>

Year end appeal update

We're happy to report that many people gave generously at year end and our funding situation is on track for this time of year. In the month of December CFSC raised about \$53,000. We need to raise another \$50,000 between now and our fiscal year end of March 31st to meet our budget. This is ambitious but is similar to what we raised in the same three months last year. Our heartfelt thanks for all of your donations to date and welcome your continued support! To donate to CFSC visit <http://quakerservice.ca/support>

CFSC makes submission on national security

An election promise of the current government was to make significant amendments to the *Anti-Terrorism Act, 2015* (Bill C-51). Stating its desire for feedback from Canadians, the government launched online and in-person consultations on national security. Following calls from civil society, the government has said it will publicly release all submissions to the consultations.

CFSC made a submission to the online consultation, which challenges many of the claims put forward about national security. It calls for a shift from the failed and inherently unwinnable “war on terror” approach. Read more at: <http://quakerservice.ca/news/national-security/>

These are very significant issues and ones that have been of concern to Friends since 2001. We saw then that existing criminal law was already sufficient to deal with terrorism yet major new

powers were given to Canada's national security agencies. Since 2001, much chilling evidence of abuse of powers by these agencies has emerged.

UN debates gene drives

Gene drives are created through extreme genetic engineering. They try to foil evolution by forcing a trait through an entire population (or even an entire species). Claims are being made that gene drives will offer a quick fix for diseases like Zika and malaria, without having to address the complex social dimensions of the spread of these diseases (poverty, gender inequality, under-resourced health systems, health education, etc.) The fact that research on gene drives may be used for any other purpose including military purposes is not generally discussed.

There is no regulation of gene drives. Companies, governments, universities, and philanthropists are investing in research and pushing for field trials, seemingly hoping for the best with no meaningful plan about how to respond should something go wrong. CFSC recently joined a global call for a moratorium (<http://quakerservice.ca/news/groups-call-moratorium-gene-drives/>).

While countries did not agree to the moratorium, the call has put gene drives onto the UN's agenda, and the issue of regulation is now being discussed for the first time. Canada was one of four countries trying to stop this discussion. Many African countries, who face the bulk of the world's malaria, were among those pushing for it. Mauritania wanted to see very strong language about “the potential irreversible harm on populations, species and ecosystems, caused by gene drives.”

Learn more about gene drives and other applications of synthetic biology in our non-technical updates: <http://quakerservice.ca/SBUpdate2016-2>

Grassy Narrows seeking federal government support

Friends have been concerned about the mercury poisoning of the People of Grassy Narrows since the 1970s. The province of Ontario still has not taken necessary and promised actions to clean up the Wabigoon-English River system and stop further poisoning. Chief Simon Fobister is now asking the federal government to step in and help with the cleanup: <https://tgam.ca/2iAYEg0>

Study tour of the European Union

June 24-July 1, 2017 the Quaker Council for European Affairs is organizing a study tour to Brussels, Belgium and Strasbourg, France. The tour will offer unique insights into the functioning of the European Union and how Quakers work on issues of concern within the EU. Learn more at <http://www.qcea.org/home/events/study-tours/>



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