

Dear Members of Congress,

Feb. 2, 2022

The undersigned Christian scholars and leaders unite in our commitment to human flourishing and ecological care as well as the cultivation of a sustainable just peace. In turn, we express our strong opposition to the current sky-high Pentagon budget and recent National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) top-line of \$768 billion. *We urge Congress to reduce Pentagon spending in the appropriations bills for FY 2022 and set a trajectory of practical reductions in this area, as well as reductions in nuclear weapons.*

Pouring billions more into the military, \$25 billion beyond even the level requested by President Biden, sends exactly the wrong message at this moment in history. The bulk of this extra money is [going to military contractors](#) and the Pentagon is yet to pass an audit. We are struggling to end a deadly pandemic, deal with the looming climate crisis, confront racial injustice, prevent violence in our own streets, secure badly-needed relief for working people all over the country, address mental health challenges, and care for those living in poverty. Yet we are consistently told that limited resources are available for these and asked how we will pay for such efforts even as there always appears to be plenty of money to buy new weapons, project military threat, maintain ongoing bombing campaigns, and prepare for the next potential major war. We already spend more on our military than [the next 10 countries combined](#), and nearly three times as much as China. We have about [20 aircraft carriers](#) while China has 3.

We urgently need to shift our security and foreign policy strategy to focus on a policy framework of 1) cultivating the habits and skills of constructive conflict, 2) breaking cycles of violence, and 3) building a more sustainable peace. These 3 strategic foci draw us to invest in peacebuilding, nonviolent resistance movements, diplomacy, and development programs. Some of the norms embedded in this framework to guide our actions and policies include education and training in key nonviolent skills, participatory processes, re-humanization in our language and narratives, conflict transformation such as trauma-healing, acknowledging responsibility for harm such as restorative justice, nonviolent direct action, reconciliation, robust civil society, human dignity and rights, ecological sustainability, economic and racial justice.

A first step would be to redirect the extra \$25 billion toward accounts like the Complex Crisis Fund, Prevention and Stabilization Fund, UN Peacebuilding Fund, as well as the U.S. Institute of Peace and Unarmed Civilian Protection programs. A second-step should be decreasing overall spending away from weapons development, including nuclear weapons, and toward initiatives to address climate change, which will be a major driver of potential violent conflict and refugee crises, and the ever-growing economic inequality in the United States.

“Let us unambiguously urge that arms be set aside and **military spending reduced, in order to provide for humanitarian needs**, and that instruments of death be turned into instruments of

life.” Pope Francis, [International Meeting for Peace](#), Oct. 7, 2021

"I am convinced that...we as a nation must undergo a radical revolution of values...A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death. America, **the richest and most powerful nation in the world, can well lead the way in this revolution of values.** There is nothing except a tragic death wish to prevent us from reordering our priorities so that the pursuit of peace will take precedence over the pursuit of war." Martin Luther King Jr., "[Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence](#)," April 4, 1967.

“And there are many nay-sayers who worry about us shifting funds from the military to social programs. They claim that a strong military keeps us safe in a dangerous world...**Our spending on war and violence is arresting our ability to provide true security and well-being at home...**[we need to] transform society and enact a moral agenda that puts people first and challenges the intersecting injustices of systemic racism, poverty, ecological devastation, militarism and the war economy...” Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II and Rev. Dr. Liz Theoharis, Co-Chairs, *Poor People’s Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival*, “Foreword,” [Executive Summary: Poor People’s Moral Budget: Everybody Has The Right to Live](#), June 2019

“Everyone talks about peace”...“everyone claims to want it, but unfortunately the proliferation of weapons of every type leads in the opposite direction. The arms trade has the effect of complicating and distancing us from a solution to conflicts...Therefore I consider that...we can unite our voices in expressing hope that the international community may make **new, concerted and courageous efforts against the proliferation of weapons and to promote their reduction.**” Pope Francis, [Address to 7 New Ambassadors](#), Mar. 1, 2014

“It is high time, then, that governments develop economic policies aimed at **inverting the proportion of public funds spent on education and on weaponry.**” Pope Francis, [Dialogue Between Generations](#), Jan. 1, 2022

“In the light of Christ’s peace, we see one another as brothers and sisters. God did not create us to be enemies of each other, but rather as members of one human family, all God’s children, sharing this beautiful common home. We need not threaten anyone, anywhere, any longer with nuclear warfare. We must **take concrete steps to begin the process of nuclear disarmament:** to dismantle our weapons, to clean up our land, and **to spend those enormous resources on structures of international nonviolent conflict resolution.**” U.S. Catholic Bishop, John Wester, New Mexico, [“Living the Light of Peace”](#) Jan. 11, 2022

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