



# Feminist Peace Playbook

A GUIDE TO TRANSFORMING U.S. FOREIGN POLICY



**Feminist Peace Playbook**  
**A Guide to Transforming U.S. Foreign Policy**  
© March 2025

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# Key Strategies for Building Feminist Peace

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## Strategy 1

### Increase Public Awareness of Militarism

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#### Play 1:

Strengthen Research and Education on Militarism, War, and Alternatives

#### Play 2:

Amplify and Advance Feminist Peace Narratives in U.S. Media

## Strategy 2

### Redefine National Security Through Community Safety, Dignity, and Wellbeing

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#### Play 1:

Adopt the Divest to Invest Framework

#### Play 2:

Advance Mutual Aid, Collective Care, and Safety

The Feminist Peace Playbook is a comprehensive guide designed to challenge and transform U.S. foreign policy by advancing a feminist peace framework. Through four interconnected strategies, we outline specific plays for movements, researchers, policymakers, philanthropy, and media professionals to collaborate on, along with recommendations for each sector to work towards shifting U.S. foreign policy away from violence and domination toward a safer, more secure, and abundant future.

### Strategy 3

## Bridge Divides to Build Power Across Movements

#### Play 1:

Coalesce Feminist Peace Synergies  
Across Social Movements

#### Play 2:

Create Spaces to Coordinate  
Across Tactics

#### Play 3:

Align Philanthropy to Sustain and Grow  
Movements

### Strategy 4

## Ground Policymaking in Movements to Advance Feminist Peace

#### Play 1:

Build On-Ramps and Tools to  
Bring Feminist Peace Analysis and  
Movement Power into Policy Spaces

#### Play 2:

Strengthen and Utilize Oversight  
Mechanisms and International Law to  
Restrain Militarized U.S. Foreign Policy



GGJ members perform "Un violador en tu camino / A rapist in your path" in front of the Federal Building and Courthouse during the "Dream Beyond Bars and Borders" action in Oakland, CA, on October 6, 2022. Photo by Brooke Anderson, @movementphotographer

## Part I.

# Meeting This Moment

How do we build a movement of scale that is capable of transforming the politics of the nation so that redirecting military resources is a real possibility instead of a pipe dream?”

— Linda Burnham, Project 2050<sup>1</sup>

We enter the second Trump administration at a moment of intersecting and overlapping global crises: devastating conflicts and genocide; climate peril; increasing inequality; empowered racism, sexism, transphobia, and homophobia; and emboldened authoritarians and oligarchs. In the United States, policymakers cite “competition” with countries named as our adversaries — especially China, Russia, and North Korea — to justify massive military buildup and preparations for impending confrontation.

Just weeks into Trump’s second term, it is clear that the stakes have changed dramatically. We face an unprecedented crisis of democracy and the dismantling of human rights, international law, and national and multilateral institutions that have served as bulwarks against fascist consolidation and global catastrophe. Now more than ever, we need to radically shift our approach to peace and security and mobilize together against the authoritarian threat. To meet this moment, we cannot only be reactive: we must redefine what truly makes

us and our communities safe for the survival of people and all life on our shared planet. In this playbook, we focus on the need to break militarism’s grip on U.S. foreign policy and advance a feminist peace alternative to Trump’s “peace through strength” — a strategy that we know will imperil lives.

This playbook also comes at a time of backlash against decades of progress on equality and justice. The moment demands a transformative vision for U.S. foreign policy: one that challenges the bipartisan consensus that militarism is necessary for security, that security is zero-sum, and that U.S. primacy must be defended at all costs. Instead, we need a fundamentally different approach — one that defines strength through our ability to build peace.

### What are we up against?

Militarism extends beyond battlefields; it normalizes military solutions and prioritizes force as the default response to global challenges. Thus, it shapes budgets,

politics, culture, and everyday life — from having military recruiters in high schools to deploying military personnel to arrest migrants and patrol the southern border. Militarism promotes violence over care, domination over collaboration. It relies upon destructive narratives that label some people as disposable or dangerous because of their nationality, sexuality, religion, or race while creating conditions that erode safety and care for everyone.

Deeply rooted militarism in U.S. foreign policy exacerbates insecurity in the U.S. and around the world. U.S. post-9/11 wars in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Syria, and Yemen have killed an estimated 4.7 million people — directly and indirectly — which is far more than most Americans realize.<sup>2</sup> More than 38 million people have fled their homes due to the violent wars the United States has waged in Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia, the Philippines, Libya, and Syria. Millions more have fled their home countries in Central and South America due to insecurity stemming from neoliberal economic policies and U.S.-backed military coups, both overt and covert. The U.S. military is the largest energy consumer in the country and the largest institutional carbon emitter in the world, accelerating climate change that threatens our collective security and survival.<sup>3</sup>

To meet this moment, we cannot only be reactive: **we must redefine what truly makes us and our communities safe** for the survival of people and all life on our shared planet.

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Meanwhile, spending on militarism siphons funds away from programs that support urgent human needs. Since 2001, the U.S. has spent \$21 trillion on wars and homeland security — \$7.2 trillion for military contracts alone. In contrast, \$4.5 trillion could fully decarbonize the U.S. electrical grid.<sup>4</sup> The U.S. spends \$16 on the Pentagon for every \$1 spent on diplomacy and humanitarian aid.<sup>5</sup> The modern U.S. capitalist economy is deeply reliant on militarism, which sustains itself by raiding social safety nets. This limits the economic and social outcomes of current and future generations.

This militarized mindset underpins Washington's current approach to foreign policy. A bipartisan Washington consensus views China as the greatest threat to U.S. primacy and security, making conflict with Beijing



seem inevitable in trade, military preparedness, and global influence. In response, the U.S. has embarked on an “offensive defense,”<sup>6</sup> positioning military assets that could strike the Chinese mainland, boosting military and political support for Taiwan, and investing nearly \$2 trillion in nuclear modernization. This aggressive stance has triggered an arms race and worsening relations.<sup>7</sup> Instead of preparing for a war that would be mutually destructive, the U.S. should cooperate with China on shared interests, such as confronting climate change, especially given that both are top carbon emitters and tech powerhouses.

Another bipartisan assumption driving U.S. foreign policy is that terrorism poses an existential threat to U.S. security. Since 9/11, counter-terror measures have killed millions around the globe and further embedded militarism at home — from militarized borders and police to the broad surveillance powers enabled by the Patriot Act. This “national security architecture”

People attend the “People’s March on Washington” ahead of the inauguration of President-elect Donald Trump in Washington, DC, on Jan. 18, 2025. Photo by Bryan Dozer/Getty Images.



has become omnipresent, disproportionately targeting and persecuting Black, Brown, Muslim, and immigrant communities and progressive organizing.<sup>8</sup>

Trump’s orders to deploy troops to the U.S.-Mexico border to assist in Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids and deportations signal a growing use of the military for domestic enforcement — even as it violates the U.S. Constitution. And, as seen in protests for Palestinian human rights and freedom over the past 18 months, militarized forces in cities and on campuses violently suppressed free speech and criminalized community organizing for peace. Yet, we have seen repeatedly that racialized policing of our communities does not improve safety; instead, it creates cycles of dispossession, trauma, and death.

### Our Approach

A feminist peace approach provides an antidote to militarized U.S. policy by offering alternative path-

ways for building a safer, more secure, and abundant future. This Feminist Peace Playbook lays out this approach.

A feminist peace approach rejects the foundational assumption in mainstream policymaking that force and militarized violence are the best ways to guarantee our safety. Instead, we join with other international feminists and progressives to advance an agenda to confront rising authoritarianism, war, and climate devastation. Our playbook outlines four strategies that build toward the goal of feminist peace:

1. Increasing public awareness of the impact of militarism on our lives
2. Redefining national security through a lens of community safety, dignity, and wellbeing
3. Bridging divides to build power across movements
4. Grounding policymaking in movements

While this playbook primarily focuses on U.S. foreign policy, we also recognize the deep interconnections between foreign and domestic policy and the need for social movements to bridge this false binary.

The work in front of us is massive, but radically transforming U.S. foreign policy toward peace, justice, and sustainability is both possible and necessary. Unless we take bold and systemic action now, the trajectory we are on will lead to collective annihilation.

We're not alone in this knowledge and in our hunger for change. There are already signs of the political consequences of advocating for a military-first approach to foreign policy and ignoring popular demands for peace, such as when many voters rejected the Biden-Harris administration's support for genocide in Gaza. According to a recent poll, nearly a third of 2020 Biden voters who didn't vote for Harris attributed their decision to her refusal to change course on "ending Israel's violence in Gaza."<sup>9,10</sup>

Recognizing this, even President Trump came to office with the promise of ending war and labeled himself a "peacemaker." This posturing reflects no true commitment to peace, given Trump's alignment with ongoing U.S. political and financial commitments to war profiteering, U.S. primacy, and policies that enrich him and other billionaires. This was exemplified when he used a fragile ceasefire as a precursor to his blatant, illegal call for the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from Gaza, to pave the way for "the Riviera of the Middle East."<sup>11</sup> Trump's rhetoric simply exploits public frustration with endless wars. As feminist peace champions, we offer a fundamentally different — and more effective — route to the genuine peace people urgently seek.

## Who Are We?

Since 2020, the Feminist Peace Initiative — comprising MADRE, Grassroots Global Justice Alliance (GGJ), and Women Cross DMZ — has convened feminist organizers, grassroots leaders, scholars, advocates, philanthropists, and communications experts to reorient U.S. foreign policy toward justice, peace, and collective security. Our framework document, *A Vision for a Feminist Peace*, presents an analysis of U.S. militarism and outlines strategic approaches for building a more peaceful future.<sup>12</sup>

In 2024, in partnership with the Inclusive Global Leadership Initiative at the University of Denver, we hosted the Feminist Peace Summit, bringing together more than 250 participants for two and a half days of plenaries, breakout sessions, and workshops aimed at articulating a vision of feminist peace. We grounded this work in concrete goals to address militarism and

**Militarism relies upon destructive narratives that label some people as disposable or dangerous** because of their nationality, sexuality, religion, or race while creating conditions that erode safety and care for everyone.

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repair historical harms, bridge domestic and foreign policy divides, and ground policymaking in movements committed to the well-being of people and planet. This summit helped to guide the drafting of this playbook, and many participants served in the writing and consultation process.

## Who Is This Playbook For?

This playbook offers practical how-to's for those who want deeper analysis and concrete guidance on collaborative strategies to achieve feminist peace and a safer, more abundant future. It's designed for people working in movements, research, policy, philanthropy, and media who are seeking to collaborate to disrupt militarism and build peace.

Our work is interconnected, and we must cultivate these connections to have real impact. For example, grassroots mobilizations generate urgency that can advance the legislative agenda of advocacy groups. Storytelling and documentation by human rights and social justice organizations fuel public education to build a larger base for just policymaking. Academic research can provide clear evidence to inform grassroots advocacy campaigns, along with safe harbors and institutional support for activists to convene. Philanthropy is essential in supporting all of these sectors to help shift paradigms and build social, cultural, economic, and governing power. Media is an essential partner in every step of the process, exposing wrongdoing and amplifying movement demands. The safety and success of each sector is ultimately buoyed by the connections and shared strategies across our movements.

This document aims to unify and guide these diverse groups toward our common goals, offering concrete recommendations for moving forward together.

## What Do We Mean by Feminist Peace?

A feminist peace approach offers a pathway for building a more secure and abundant future for all — without force or hegemony. It embraces feminism as a political



Linda Burnham of Project 2050 (center) speaks at a session on intergenerational organizing at the 2024 Feminist Peace Summit. Photo by Green Lion Images

project to dismantle all forms of oppression and harm, helping us to see how gender intersects with race, class, and other forms of discrimination.

A feminist peace approach to U.S. foreign policymaking is grounded in these core values and commitments:

- **Intersectionality:** Analyze and evaluate policies through the understanding that gender is inherently connected with race, class, ethnicity, religion, gender identity, sexuality, ability, and other forms of difference, shaping insights, opportunities, and obstacles.
- **Decolonize Knowledge and Center Those Most Impacted:** Affirm the need to decolonize knowledge and expertise, centering the leadership of historically marginalized groups and those most impacted by militarized policy choices, including women, LGBTQI+ people, gender-diverse people, Black and Indigenous Peoples, Arab and Muslim communities, diasporas, and communities of color.
- **Beyond Inclusion:** Move beyond simply including people from marginalized groups — including women — into positions of power in unjust systems, which is not sufficient for peace and can be a means of legitimizing and upholding those systems. We need feminist leadership that is responsive to the

A feminist peace framework offers a stronger foundation for mobilizing alongside **anti-war, abolitionist, migrant justice, economic justice, queer and transgender justice**, and other intersecting struggles while embracing a transformed vision of our shared future.

demands of marginalized communities, intentionally integrates the priorities of women and LGBTQI+ people, and affirms feminist peace values like collaboration, decolonization, care and solidarity.

- **Security as Shared Well-Being:** Understand that true security depends on ensuring all people have the conditions and resources they need to thrive and be safe.
- **Interdependence with All Life:** Recognize the need for policies that restore right relations among all life forms, as Indigenous Peoples have long advocated, as an essential counter to norms that justify extraction and produce violence.



From left to right: Kitzia Esteva, Grassroots Global Justice Alliance; Janene Yazzie, NDN Collective; Nana Gyamfi, Black Alliance for Just Immigration; Diana Lopez, Southwest Workers Union; Xochtil Larios, Communities United for Restorative Youth Justice at the 2024 Feminist Peace Summit. Photo by Green Lion Images

- **Care and Repair:** Prioritize care and reparative practices as essential, recognizing our mutual reliance and accountability and our shared responsibility for collective well-being.
- **Grassroots Power:** Draw solutions, build power, and gain guidance from grassroots, people-powered movements with lived experience of U.S. policy impacts.
- **Trust and Connection:** Build strong relationships based on trust and connection — rather than suspicion, isolation, and competition — to foster collaboration and coherence across diverse people, organizations, movements, institutions, and states.
- **Democracy, Diplomacy, and Decolonized Human Rights:** Advance true democratic governance, diplomatic solutions beyond elite politics, and a decolonized international human rights system to create policies that return resources to and build political power alongside the most marginalized.
- **New Internationalism:** Embrace an internationalism that values just, cooperative solutions and shared interests and pushes back on nationalist, isolationist, corporate-dominated, and imperial approaches.

## What Sets Feminist Peace Apart from Other Progressive Approaches?

A feminist peace approach aligns with broader progressive efforts to transform policymaking, contributing to this ecosystem while maintaining a specific focus on the role of gender and feminist values in our analysis, organizing, and recommendations.

We embrace grassroots feminisms, which acknowledge the plural, historical, and present contribution of several feminist traditions, rooted in Indigenous, Black, diasporic, third world, and queer feminisms. As expressed in a definition developed by GGJ, “Grassroots feminism is explicitly and unwaveringly anti-patriarchal, anti-racist, anti-capitalist, and anti-imperialist. We believe in solidarity across identities and borders, and in the joy of collective struggle.”<sup>13</sup>

Gender has played a significant role in shaping recent policy frameworks at national and international levels, such as the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda<sup>14</sup> as well as the growing movement for Feminist Foreign Policy. A feminist peace approach aligns with these efforts in its commitment to addressing gendered insecurity and promoting gender-equitable policymaking, but it moves beyond them by directly challenging militarism and advocating for divestment from militarized systems. We further affirm that a militarized economy is not a feminist economy.

This approach also moves beyond inclusionary efforts, which, while important, remain insufficient for systemic transformation. We have seen how authoritarian regimes weaponize the inclusion of women as a façade for political legitimacy while maintaining oppressive systems — from Rwanda and Tanzania to Singapore and Saudi Arabia.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, liberal forces have leveraged women’s participation in foreign policy to uphold militarized interventions and state violence.<sup>16</sup> For instance, during the Obama administration, cabinet members Hillary Clinton, Samantha Power, and Susan Rice were key champions of the disastrous 2011 U.S. invasion of Libya, and during the Biden administration, the U.S. Ambassador to the UN, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, repeatedly vetoed resolutions calling for a ceasefire in Gaza.

A feminist peace framework offers a stronger foundation for mobilizing alongside anti-war, abolitionist, migrant justice, economic justice, queer and transgender justice, and other intersecting struggles while embracing a transformed vision of our shared future.

## Part II.

# Feminist Peace Strategies to Transform U.S. Foreign Policy

We offer the following four strategies, generated at the 2024 Feminist Peace Summit and through collective experience and conversations in the feminist peace movement:

1. Increase public awareness of the impact of militarism on our lives
2. Redefine national security through a lens of community safety, dignity, and wellbeing
3. Bridge divides to build power across movements
4. Ground policymaking in movements

Along with each strategy, we propose specific “plays” to enact them. We recognize that this is not an exhaustive list of approaches, but our priority is to provide practical steps for immediate action.

### Strategy 1. Increase Public Awareness of Militarism

As feminist peace practitioners, we must disrupt militarism as the default approach to security. This requires us to be visionary and proactive, reimagining cultural, political, and economic norms to end current wars and prevent future conflicts. Central to this is making visible U.S. militarized foreign policy. As novelist Viet

Thanh Nguyen reminds us, U.S. militarism isn’t episodic but “a continuous production of the American war machine and its long history.”<sup>17</sup>

The following plays offer a holistic approach needed to meet this historic moment of great danger – but also of opportunity to challenge authoritarian narratives, expose the fallacies of militarized logics, and usher in a transition to a feminist peace.

#### Play 1: Strengthen Research and Education on Militarism, War, and Alternatives

*“Militarism always takes an alliance of ‘diverse’ masculinities – tech bros, managers, entrepreneurs, bullies, and the Rambo types – that all need each other. The Trump alliance of misogynist masculinities is a mutually serving alliance.” – Cynthia Enloe, Professor, Clark University<sup>18</sup>*

We have an unprecedented political opening as Americans are more weary of war than ever.<sup>19</sup> From the Vietnam War<sup>20</sup> to the War on Terror,<sup>21</sup> U.S. public opinion has shifted from initial support to a majority calling these wars a mistake. After the U.S. withdrew from Iraq and Afghanistan, confidence in the military has steadily declined.<sup>22</sup> By 2019, 62 percent of Americans believed the Iraq War was not worth fighting.<sup>23</sup>

GGJ members join a multiracial, multi-faith coalition for a mass mobilization in Washington, DC, to demand a ceasefire in Gaza on October 20, 2023. Photo by Eman Mohammed, Survival Media Agency



According to ReThink Media, younger generations are especially disillusioned with militarized U.S. foreign policy.<sup>24</sup> In 2023, the Chicago Council found that both Millennials and Gen Z are less supportive of military approaches than previous generations, with majorities believing the Pentagon budget should be reduced and that military-first foreign policy is overused.<sup>25</sup>

We must seize this moment to educate the public — and our own movements — on militarism’s far-reaching impacts on all aspects of our lives, from undermining democracy at home to impeding struggles for decolonization and sovereignty abroad. We must also expose militarism’s “boomerang effects,”<sup>26</sup> where short-term U.S. national security objectives devastate communities in ways that breed resentment and anger, ultimately undermining our actual safety in the long run.

The Costs of War Project at Brown University and the National Priorities Project at the Institute for Policy Studies provide invaluable analyses on how U.S. militarism and wars drive casualties, environmental devastation, migration, federal budgets, and trade-offs in military spending. The Nuclear Information Project at the Federation of American Scientists and the Doomsday Clock at the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists are similarly important projects aimed at increasing public understanding of the risks of militarism and nuclear weapons proliferation.

However, more work is needed to research and expose militarism’s links to gender inequality, climate change, mental health, sexual violence, family violence,

We have an unprecedented political opening as **Americans are more weary of war than ever.**

intergenerational trauma, substance abuse, and public health. Better forecasting is necessary to assess the risks of maintaining current levels of military engagement and spending. Additionally, more research is needed to bolster the existing evidence for the harms of the present strategy of “deterrence,” a common justification for increased military spending and action, and to lend weight to alternatives.<sup>27</sup> We must develop conversion pathways for U.S. military bases, industries supporting the military (including working-class jobs), and military personnel. We also need research on environmental remediation for communities impacted by military facilities, land grabs, and weapons manufacturing. We need to investigate the military-industrial complex as a driver of economic inequality and hyper-concentration of wealth.

Critically, we need spaces to exchange and share findings from this research across disciplinary silos and disseminate findings widely. Feminist peace groups have already provided strong models for how to amplify these findings through creative education and organizing strategies. Since 9/11, Incite: Women of Color

Against Violence has challenged patriarchal violence in prisons, colonization, and war. The International Women's Network Against Militarism has resisted ongoing U.S. military occupation across the Pacific and Asia through a gender justice framework. And the Women of Color Resource Center produced the popular event Fashioning Resistance to Militarism, exposing how militarism has seeped into our homes, closets, and minds. Each initiative reached new audiences and amplified the messages of the movement.

## Recommendations

### Movements:

Integrate research into advocacy; consider creative and interdisciplinary education and outreach strategies to galvanize public support.

Build community spaces that can serve as social, political, and mutual aid hubs for communities to engage in political education and resource sharing. These spaces, which today are often faith-based centers, schools, town halls, and recurring community events, can serve as long-term political homes that serve individuals across movements and identities.

Build relationships with artists, cultural influencers, and pop media outlets that promote feminist peace values and push back on militarism.

### Research:

Strengthen research and analysis on how U.S. militarism and wars affect instability, climate change, migration, racial and gendered insecurity, and more, and quantify long-term risks.

Invest in more research to identify alternatives to militarism and strategies to guide conversion of bases and industries.

Build cross-disciplinary spaces for disseminating research findings that capture the harms of militarism and its alternatives.

Create convening spaces to exchange best practices with movement organizers for up-to-date research questions and recommendations.

Host public forums on impacts of militarism in communities in and around academic centers, inviting veterans, refugee communities, and

others in the area to share their insights and exchange impact stories.

### Philanthropy:

Fund research, popular education, and communication initiatives that reveal the costs of militarism and highlight alternative ways of building security.

Proactively connect organizations working on similar issue areas to identify allies, and support a coordinated communications strategy to amplify their findings to the public.

Incorporate research on militarism, war, and feminist alternatives into institutional logics, theory of changes, and decision-making processes.

### Policy:

Use credible research on the true costs of military engagement to inform legislation and budget decisions.

Request Government Accountability Office (GAO) reports on the impacts of militarized foreign policy for your constituency, including disaggregated data on past and anticipated Pentagon spending and cuts to social services.

## Play 2: Amplify and Advance Feminist Peace Narratives in U.S. Media

Feminist peace media literacy and communications skills are urgent given the dangers of militarism and the historic opening in which Americans are rejecting the militarized status quo. To seize this moment, the feminist peace movement must strategically shift narratives, tell the untold stories of militarism's impact, and build the communication infrastructure necessary to challenge dominant frames.

Central to amplifying the impacts of militarism is centering the stories of individuals and communities here and around the world that have been most harmed by U.S. militarism. This is particularly important as Trump's xenophobic and racist rhetoric dominates the news cycle. We see an opportunity to explain how U.S.-backed coups and military dictatorships during the Cold War and post-9/11 wars resulted in the displacement, imprisonment, and death of millions today. We also see the importance of drawing links between ongoing climate crises and the role of the U.S. military as a leading environmental polluter and carbon emitter. In addition, there is a need to expose the intergeneration-

al health consequences of militarism and extraction, such as the impact of Agent Orange in Vietnam, toxic munitions in Iraq, or nuclear weapons development and testing on Indigenous lands in the southwestern U.S. and in the Marshall Islands.<sup>28</sup> We also need to center the experiences of anti-war veterans groups, who offer powerful analysis of the ways their military service shaped their lives. By uplifting these stories, we have a strategic opportunity to reframe current crises within the broader context of militarism's enduring legacy of eroding safety for our communities, rather than securing it.

To seize this moment, the feminist peace movement must **strategically shift narratives, tell the untold stories of militarism's impact, and build the communication infrastructure** necessary to challenge dominant frames.

Effectively telling these stories requires the development of communication skills and media relationships. In an increasingly fractured media landscape, small and resource-strapped organizations struggle to advance a comprehensive media strategy. Organizations like ReThink Media and the Women's Media Center fill this gap by providing media training to activists, connecting them to journalists, and pitching their work to media. This moment also emphasizes the importance of decentralized media, which often has lower barriers of entry for activists and movements, though it tends to reach a smaller audience than legacy media.

## Recommendations

### Movements:

Prioritize ongoing media training for new and existing spokespeople, including public speaking and op-ed pitching.

Build long-term relationships with journalists who cover your issues and generously refer those journalists to partner organizations as needed.

Coordinate with aligned movements, particularly on domestic welfare issues, to exchange key messages on militarism, safety, and community well-being.

### Research:

Conduct narrative research and messaging surveys on how dominant militarized paradigms take hold — and where feminist peace messaging can effectively break through with various audiences.

### Philanthropy:

Invest in progressive media and communications organizations to help activists, academics, and policymakers sharpen their messaging and secure coverage in mainstream and alternative media outlets.

Fund movements to develop media impact plans within all major initiatives.

Invest in robust communications infrastructure for grantees that includes the necessary expertise and tools to effectively reach audiences and maximize media impact.

Connect grantees (especially those from targeted communities) with media outlets and journalists to elevate grantees as expert voices on foreign policy and national security.

Platform and share grantee stories and content to reach new and wider audiences.

### Media:

Invest in coverage that humanizes and contextualizes issues like “the migration crisis,” and spotlight stories that reveal the long-term health and socio-economic impacts of war and militarization.

Develop and defend editorial standards that challenge dominant pro-militarism narratives, including through targeted training of media professionals.

Diversify sources away from spokespeople who represent this status quo (military officials, policymakers, and think tank pundits representing the military-industrial complex) and toward researchers and advocates with lived experience and ties to grassroots peace movements.

## Strategy 2. Redefine National Security Through Community Safety, Dignity, and Wellbeing

Across the world, people share a universal desire for security: access to necessities like food, water, housing, healthcare, good jobs, a clean environment, and freedom from oppression or harm. But U.S. notions of security are almost always cast in such a way that the security of some comes at the expense of others. For example, nationalist and xenophobic platforms promote the false narrative that Americans cannot thrive if China does, and that white communities cannot thrive if immigrants of color do. Politicians across partisan lines exploit this false binary by calling for more militarization and policing to create more “security.”

For decades, feminists have rejected notions of security that feed on these fears, which have resulted in border walls, inhumane detention, and mass deportations. Instead, a feminist peace approach envisions human security as rooted in meeting people’s basic needs: access to affordable housing, healthcare, education, clean energy, climate change mitigation, and a regenerative economy.

A feminist peace framework also understands that struggles for gender, racial, and economic justice are inseparable from security. While equality is essential to feminist peace, feminist peace is also foundational to gender, racial, and economic justice. That’s because militarism erodes the social safety net, and marginalized communities are the first to feel the impacts when care infrastructures are weakened or destroyed by conflict, with women’s gendered labor often filling the breach.

### Play 1: Adopt the Divest to Invest Framework

To advance this redefined vision of security, we must build working-class solidarity among those harmed by militarism and neoliberal economic policies. Central to this effort is the Divest to Invest framework, which calls for withdrawing resources from militarism and reallocating them toward policies that strengthen individual and community well-being.

Our tax dollars are publicly generated, and we should all have a say in how they are spent. A budget is a moral document, shaping not only the present but also the opportunities and conditions for future generations.

If we spend less on the Pentagon each year and other forms of militarism within and at our borders each year — and invest more in justice- and peace-centered diplomacy, climate repair and resilience, and a care-based economy<sup>29</sup> — we could:

For decades, feminists have rejected notions of security that feed on these fears, which have resulted in border walls, inhumane detention, and mass deportations. Instead, **a feminist peace approach envisions human security as rooted in meeting people’s basic needs:** access to affordable housing, healthcare, education, clean energy, climate change mitigation, and a regenerative economy.

- **Strengthen** collaboration with communities and governments across the world, helping to find mutual solutions to our shared needs and crises.
- **Build** a regenerative economy that takes care of workers, protects the environment, and allows for ethical transitions away from industries that harm people and the planet.
- **Secure** the safety and dignity of our communities by helping people pay off their medical and education debt, improving access to life-saving care, developing alternatives to incarceration, ending childhood poverty and hunger, and guaranteeing housing for all.

Momentum is already building through organizations and networks using this framework. Groups in the Grassroots Global Justice Alliance co-created A People’s Orientation to a Regenerative Economy, mapping out principles and channels to guide this transition. Muslims for Just Futures released a policy agenda calling for divestment from criminalization (including abolishing the “War on Terror”) and investment into communities of care. The Movement for Black Lives calls for a 50 percent cut to military spending to fund education and well-being in Black communities. The People Over Pentagon coalition has advanced legislation demonstrating that the U.S. could cut \$100 billion annually from military spending without compromising national security. Dissenters, a national movement organization, is building local teams of young people through their campaigns Divest From Death, Recruiters Off Campus, and Cops Off Campus. The Poor

GGJ members take to the streets to amplify the call to divest from systems of harm and invest in healing, wellness, and community-controlled grassroots power in Oakland, CA, on October 6, 2022. Photo by Brooke Anderson, @movmentphotographer



People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival has mobilized thousands to challenge systemic racism, poverty, ecological devastation, the war economy, and militarism.

These efforts represent powerful sectors of progressive, peace, and social justice movements with diverse, organized grassroots constituencies.

## Recommendations

### Movements:

Develop and connect across initiatives advancing the Divest to Invest framework to build a united front to coordinate multi-year education, advocacy, and organizing plans.

Center the leadership of marginalized and diaspora-led communities advancing this framework and work to prevent duplication of existing efforts.

Assess existing campaign plans to determine where to adopt divest-invest language to de-

scribe the trade-offs of a status quo that promotes violence instead of care and community to achieve safety.

### Research:

Conduct research on the political and economic interests that resist calls for divestment and benefit from military spending, as well as how reallocated social welfare funding can enhance community safety.

### Philanthropy:

Provide funding to support campaigning and coordination across multiple sectors.

Invest in organizing and movements that are demanding the reprioritization of resources and moving them to alternatives in the care economy.

Divest from harm-producing industries like weapons or fossil fuels.

Seek to understand decolonizing wealth, question internal grant-making practices, and increase giving beyond 5 percent (see the Decolonizing Wealth Project for resources).

#### Policy:

Translate movement-driven Divest to Invest demand into policy vehicles aimed to cut the Pentagon budget and boost social spending.

Coordinate with movements on policy language and strategies to block spending bills that contravene these aims.

#### Media:

Use the Divest to Invest framework to generate public support for long-term strategies that prioritize community well-being as a core component of security.

Scrutinize and question Pentagon spending, expose harm-producing logics, and interrogate how spending makes Americans safe.

Our tax dollars are publicly generated, and we should all have a say in how they are spent.

**A budget is a moral document,** shaping not only the present but also the opportunities and conditions for future generations.

### Play 2: Advance Mutual Aid, Collective Care, and Safety

*“We’re not just fighting systems — we are ultimately in a spiritual battle against a culture of violence. The antidote to that is a culture of care.” — Janene Yazzie, NDN Collective*

As attacks on activists and organizations mount, our movements must strengthen mutual aid, collective care, and safety — both to survive the current assaults and to chart new ways of organizing. These practices help to protect us from militarized crackdowns on protests and organizing and from the real threat that many in our communities could face deportation or carceral detention.

There is a long tradition of mutual aid in U.S. history, from the Black Panther Party’s free breakfast programs to clandestine abortion networks, to the community kitchens and libraries central to movements like Occupy and Standing Rock. Mutual aid isn’t just volunteerism; it’s an invitation to collective action at the local level, where crises emerge and are solved by community members.<sup>30</sup> In recent years, we’ve seen a proliferation of mutual aid efforts in response to specific situations:

- **COVID-19**, when communities created food pantries and shared essential resources like masks
- **Racial justice uprisings**, when medics provided care to activists harmed by police and right-wing vigilantes
- **Military-related accidents**, such as the U.S. Navy’s Red Hill jet fuel contamination of an aquifer in Hawai‘i,<sup>31</sup> when activists delivered bottled water to victims of the jet fuel contamination
- **Climate disasters**, such as hurricanes, when the Pansy Collective, a queer mutual aid group, distributed essential items to remote areas after Hurricane Helene, or when Boricua’s food sovereignty and agroecology mutual aid projects did so after Hurricane María

Collective care is vital at every stage of feminist peace work, recognizing our shared vulnerabilities as an antidote to the competitive, individualistic values that underscore neoliberalism. Care goes beyond “care work” (for children, the ill, the elderly, and others) to embrace a political commitment to “the nurturing of all that is necessary for the welfare and flourishing of life.”<sup>32</sup> That means centering care — for ourselves, our communities, and our planet — in everything we do.

As efforts to criminalize dissent and marginalized communities increase, we call for strengthening mutual aid strategies and collective care in feminist peace work. Feminist peace advocates worldwide face extraordinary repression that includes online harassment, defamation, censorship, arbitrary detention, and even targeted killings. In shaping campaigns, we must prioritize those most vulnerable, recognizing our varying levels of privilege and protection. We also need actionable safeguards like digital security, Feminist Holistic Protection strategies,<sup>33</sup> physical risk mitigation, psychosocial support, respite spaces, and clear protection plans. In addition, coalitions should proactively organize in ways that reduce risk for their most vulnerable members.

## Recommendations

### Movements:

Integrate mutual aid and collective care practices into all organizing.

Incorporate digital safety practices into your work at a reasonable pace. Simple places to start include (1) separating your personal email from your organization's email, (2) moving internal communications onto an encrypted messaging app like Signal, and (3) setting up a password manager. Explore more resources at the Digital Defense Fund.

Create training and mentorship programs to help individuals to turn existing social communities, such as faith-based centers, friend groups, and homeshares, into long-term political bases and hubs for resource sharing, safe social connection, climate resilience, and ongoing political education.

Train grassroots organizers on how to document, report, bring public attention to, and stop human rights violations, drawing on best practices in documentation by global human rights defenders.

Intentionally create space for celebration, food, art, music, and dance to foster community resilience to ongoing attacks as a reminder that we aren't just fighting for survival but for abundance, healing, and joy.

Conduct risk assessments and create resources and plans for the protection and civil defense of movement leaders who might experience repression in the form of criminalization, detention, deportation or other forms of state violence. Draw on resources like Feminist Holistic Protection strategies and holistic digital security frameworks.

### Research:

Support network-building between activists and scholars to facilitate the exchange of knowledge, host critical information, and provide protection during periods of crises. Draw on resources from the Scholars at Risk network.

Conduct research, with movement allies, aimed at anticipating and countering threats, including

by documenting networks aimed at undermining feminist peace work.

Work with academic institutions and funders to create opportunities for rigorous assessment of, and learning from, movements in other contexts and countries that have navigated periods of authoritarian backsliding and repression.

Create academic fellowships and support systems for students, staff, and faculty whose organizing has made them targets of university- and state-sanctioned repression to allow them to continue their political work.

Create solidarity networks for students, faculty, and community members targeted by backlash to pool resources and create institution-specific campaigns to protect academic freedom and the right to protest.

### Philanthropy:

Fund digital safety training and infrastructure (such as guidance on integrating Signal for secure communications or DeleteMe services to scrub personal information).

Fund respite spaces where activists can rest, recharge, and reconvene after difficult work or periods of backlash.

Fund physical safety infrastructure, including safe houses, emergency travel, medical services, and legal aid funds for movement leaders.

Develop rapid response resources to support people and organizations who experience backlash, such as vandalism, doxxing, harassment, or threats, as a counter to organized and resourced efforts to dismantle civil society and people's institutions.

### Policy:

Proactively address, intercept, and aggressively undermine legislative attempts to disrupt the infrastructure of grassroots movements, including attacks on 501c3 status and the digital and physical privacy of movement staff and volunteers.

Build stronger protections for grassroots organizing by fortifying the right to protest, petition the government, and freedom of expression.

### Strategy 3. Bridge Divides to Build Power Across Movements

*“The empire works hard to separate people of color struggles and to ensure that we do not connect the domestic and the global, that we act as if Palestinians are a people far away stuck in an ancient religious war, disconnected from people’s movements in Oakland or Chicago.”— Nadine Naber, Professor, University of Illinois, Chicago<sup>34</sup>*

At this moment, our peace and justice movements are being pushed to the brink by a concerted effort described in Project 2025 and enacted by the Trump administration, MAGA forces, and tech oligarchs. As we collectively resist through a Block and Build strategy,<sup>35</sup> we want to offer direction to movements to advance our feminist peace vision. In this section, we ask: How can we bridge divides among movements to build the power needed for feminist peace?

#### Play 1: Coalesce Feminist Peace Synergies Across Social Movements

To build the power needed to actualize a movement

To build the power needed to actualize a movement for feminist peace, it is critical to **coalesce strategies between feminist peace champions** and their allies across movements.

for feminist peace, it is critical to coalesce strategies between feminist peace champions and their allies across movements. Building relationships with activists and organizations working to dismantle violent and oppressive systems while advancing more caring and just alternatives will be key to building the constituent power needed to influence policymaking. Our efforts to challenge militarized U.S. foreign policy will be most effective when aligned with others who share our vision.

Below, we highlight several movements with particular opportunities for coalition-building and collaborative work, while recognizing that many others expand this potential further.



### Abolition Movements

In our work to transform militarized U.S. foreign policy, we must understand and deepen the intersections between movements for feminist peace and abolitionist movements working to end policing, prisons, borders, and militaries.<sup>36</sup>

Abolitionist feminists have long advocated for the dismantling of systems of state violence<sup>37</sup> and have worked to transform the societal conditions and structures that make these systems appear necessary. Black feminist abolitionists, in particular, have led efforts to challenge the narrative that the criminal legal system and the prison industrial complex can resolve conflict, criminality, and violence. Abolitionist feminism confronts the reality that the prison system is designed to maintain capitalist exploitation and a racially marginalized labor pool that is denied fundamental rights and labor protections — such as using prison laborers to control wildfires who are paid less than minimum wage and put at risk of long-term health damage. These scholars and movement leaders also envision an alternative future in which everyone can thrive.<sup>38</sup>

Feminists and abolitionists understand that safety and security are defined by “relationality”: the

safety and security of any individual, community, or country are interdependent. Feminist abolitionists and peace activists similarly recognize that traditional security institutions — the military-industrial complex and the criminal legal system — don’t make us more safe.<sup>39</sup> Instead, we must dismantle these interconnected systems of violence and shift to community-based safety grounded in reparative, restorative, and transformative justice.<sup>40</sup> Groups like Critical Resistance, Love & Protect, Project NIA, Survived & Punished and the Transgender Law Center are doing essential work in this space. We must unite calls for divestment from war, violence, policing, and militarism and invest in structures that foster genuine human security at home and abroad.

### Anti-War Veterans

*“We begrudge the poor for the pennies we give them to eat and survive but cheer for the nearly \$900 Billion annually we spend on ‘defense.’ The Military-Industrial Complex is corporate greed weaponized.”* —Brittany Ramos DeBarros, Organizing Director, *About Face: Veterans Against the War*

Brittany Ramos DeBarros of About Face with Rep. Cori Bush during a Veterans Day weekend press conference calling for a ceasefire in Gaza, Nov. 9, 2023. Photo courtesy of About Face: Veterans Against the War





Lara Kiswani of the Arab Resource & Organizing Center at the 2024 Feminist Peace Summit. Photo by Green Lion Images

Among those most impacted by U.S. militarism and wars are veterans who have been deployed for combat. The U.S. military recruits in poor communities, especially targeting Indigenous people and communities of color, with the promise of college, employment, travel, and respect, while omitting the violence they will inflict on others and endure themselves. Approximately 14 to 16 percent of U.S. veterans who deployed to Afghanistan and Iraq have been impacted by post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or depression, as well as high rates of suicide, traumatic brain injury, substance abuse, and interpersonal violence.<sup>42</sup> Anti-war veterans play a central role in truth-telling about the harms of U.S. militarism.

Several long-time anti-war organizations provide much-needed analysis on the multiple impacts of U.S. wars and militarism, organize progressive anti-war veterans, and mobilize for changes in recruitment, veterans' care and treatment, and policies such as ending sexual violence in the military. These are some of the most important groups fighting for these structural changes and working to end the U.S. forever wars: Vet-

erans for Peace, About Face: Veterans Against the War, The Military Law Task Force, and Service Women's Action Network.

### Climate Justice

The movement to counter climate change is one of the strongest and most global of the 21st century, confronting climate devastation driven by the engines of colonialism, imperialism, and militarism. Climate justice activists have long highlighted how extractive industries and the military worsen the climate crisis – exposing the Pentagon as the world's largest institutional consumer of fossil fuels, the U.S. military's relentless drive toward wars for oil and rare earth minerals, and the relationship between climate catastrophes and increasing global migration. U.S. wars and militarization have contributed massive amounts of pollution, burning through the planetary limits we must stay within to prevent catastrophic climate change and leaving behind destructive toxins that poison communities. Meanwhile, military emissions remain exempt from global emissions reporting requirements and reduction goals.

Movements have long underscored how demilitarization and climate justice are tied together. Climate justice movements are strategizing and building coalitions to shape how the U.S. economy can transition from extractive industries like fossil fuels to a regenerative economy. For this transition to be just, it must do more than ensure decent jobs for workers; it will require acting in solidarity with frontline communities to combat environmental racism.<sup>43</sup>

While plans like the Green New Deal provide frameworks for this shift, the urgency of climate breakdown calls for replacing systems of extractive, war-making capitalism. We must also reallocate resources consumed by the Pentagon budget to a just transition to a regenerative economy. Indigenous groups, which have been at the forefront of climate justice, have long fought for an Indigenous Just Transition<sup>44</sup> and also produced the Red Deal,<sup>45</sup> a manifesto to liberate all peoples and our planet. Many feminist climate justice organizers — like the Women’s Environment & Development Organization, Women’s Earth & Climate Action Network, M4BL’s Black Hive, and The Chisholm Legacy Project — have integrated a racial justice and anti-militarist analysis into their work to transform climate policy.<sup>46 47 48 49</sup> Feminist peace groups can learn from this work to advance similarly rigorous policies to transition away from militarism.

### **Diaspora-Led Peace Movements**

A new generation of progressive, pro-peace diaspora groups has emerged as a crucial grassroots constituency that can collectively influence U.S. foreign policy. Diaspora organizations, leaders, and scholars provide crucial insight into how U.S. foreign policy impacts their homelands, as well as how these policies fuel violence and discrimination against diaspora communities in the U.S. Their experiences, networks, and expertise can sharpen feminist peace analysis and inform campaigns to change U.S. foreign policymaking.

Organizations rooted in diaspora communities, such as the US Campaign for Palestinian Rights, Women Cross DMZ, the National Iranian American Council, Afghans for a Better Tomorrow, Legacies of War, and Justice is Global, offer deep insights into how militarized U.S. foreign policy has harmed their communities and homeland countries. These groups challenge state narratives that justify militarism and wars, and they contest the discriminatory belief that foreign policy should be shaped by a small group of Beltway elites with military, Ivy League, and national security backgrounds. By correcting these biases, they expose how U.S. foreign policy is often militarized, patriarchal, and unaccountable for its impacts.

In addition, these groups link U.S. foreign policy to racialized discrimination and violence at home. The Palestinian diaspora, for example, has long organized to show how Palestinian liberation intersects with social, racial, gender, and economic justice. Lara Kiswani, executive director of the Arab Resource & Organizing Center, explains that the experience of Palestinians “organically draws us to struggles against militarism, fascism, and exploitation” as well as “for Indigenous sovereignty, climate justice, abolition, worker power, and democracy.” She argues that the same diasporic communities harmed and displaced by imperialism and colonization “will almost always play a critical role in the anti-colonial struggles of their people and land.”<sup>50</sup>

As bipartisan U.S. administrations set the stage for confrontation with China, Chinese Americans have drawn connections between intensified geopolitical tensions and anti-Asian violence in the U.S. When Trump called COVID-19 the “Wuhan virus” and “kung flu,” his rhetoric fueled a wave of anti-Asian hate crimes. Jessica Chen Weiss of Johns Hopkins University calls for a new approach for managing U.S.-China relations. She’s part of a new cohort called the “competitive co-existers”<sup>51</sup> that acknowledges the U.S.-China competition but advocates for peaceful co-existence among the two superpowers through more engagement instead of a more punitive approach: “Those who take that fatalistic approach have to ask themselves what kind of world they see. I think it’s too catastrophic not to test the proposition that there is an alternative.”

### **Migrant Justice**

Aligning with the migrant justice movement is key to our work to demilitarize U.S. foreign policy. U.S. wars and militarism not only drive migration by displacing millions but also fortify U.S. borders to keep out those affected by these policies. Additionally, the war industry profits from the securitization and criminalization of migration, reinforcing militarization both abroad and at home.

For decades, immigrant rights movements have pushed back against racist rhetoric, authoritarian policies, and the economic interests behind these punitive laws. These movements have fought to end mass detention, the detention of minors, family separation, and local law enforcement recruitment into unconstitutional federal racial profiling and detention programs. Organizations like Puente Movement for Migrant Justice spent a decade working to repeal Arizona SB 1070, one of the harshest anti-immigration laws in the country, passed in 2010. Migrant commu-

nities also played a critical role in holding ex-Sheriff Joe Arpaio of Maricopa County accountable, securing a landmark ruling that found he engaged in racial profiling and illegal detentions.<sup>52</sup>

Migrant justice organizers have also successfully challenged federal immigration enforcement programs, including the Obama-era programs Secure Communities and 287(g), which funneled immigrants into detention and deportation pipelines. These activists created local and state laws that safeguarded due process for all, provided relief for crime victims, and helped establish policies that better serve migrant communities.<sup>53</sup> In May 2019, a federal judge in California ruled Secure Communities unconstitutional, affirming that it violated due process rights.<sup>54</sup> But these hard-won protections are now being targeted by President Trump, who has vowed to reinstate mass raids and eliminate federal grants to sanctuary cities and funding for social services. Meanwhile, in Florida, immigrant rights groups are organizing to repeal SB 1710, a draconian anti-immigration law pushed by Governor Ron DeSantis to assist Trump's mass deportation efforts.<sup>55</sup> These attempts to weaponize immigration enforcement

underscore how deeply militarism, xenophobia, and racism are intertwined.

As Harsha Walia notes, mass migration is not a crisis in itself; it is “the outcome of the actual crises of capitalism, conquest, and climate change.”<sup>56</sup> U.S.-led interventions and invasions across the Americas, Vietnam, Korea, Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere have displaced millions — many of whom seek refuge in the United States, where an immigration regime often immobilizes them, criminalizes them, and denies them access to rights.

At the same time, securitizing migration in the United States strengthens militarism. The world's biggest arms producers — Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, and Boeing — have been key players in shaping border policy and have also profited massively from the U.S. government's expanded budgets for border militarization.<sup>57</sup> These same defense contractors have developed new technologies for border surveillance — such as drones and autonomous surveillance towers — that can also be used for counterinsurgency overseas. Meanwhile, the mass detention and deportation of migrants further enriches both defense contractors and the private prison industry.<sup>58</sup>



During GGJ's Divest-Invest Assembly in April 2024, members participate in a mystica to ground in political context, connect to movement ancestors, and challenge power and oppression. Photo by @capturedbytabia

## Recommendations

### Movements:

Invite allied movements to participate in cross-sectoral organizing efforts and campaigns. Build bridges between movements to strengthen collective power.

Analyze how militarism contributes to harms across movements and adopt demilitarization strategies; recognize militarism as an issue that affects people as directly as attacks on health-care and education.

Connect across abolitionist, anti-war, immigrant rights, feminist, and other demilitarization movements with an internationalist perspective, in particular by drawing lessons from feminist peace allies across borders.

Learn from social movements across borders about how they have advanced accountability and repair, including through transitional justice processes, monetary reparations, symbolic tribunals, and formal apologies.

### Research:

Provide convening opportunities in academic centers where movement activists can access research and identify shared root causes of systemic harms. Programs like The Inclusive Global Leadership Initiative at the University of Denver offer models for collaboration between activists and researchers.

Share institutional and university resources generously with movement actors and human rights defenders, including meeting space, translation support, reading materials, and printing services.

Create academic fellowships to provide funding and institutional support for activists to develop public education resources and materials for broader impact; offer opportunities for activists and movement leaders to share their expertise.

Develop curriculum in partnership with human rights defenders and organizers to document specific organizing lessons of past movements and proliferate that curriculum in coordination with movements and media.

We can **remain rooted in the feminist peace values** that undergird our work to demilitarize U.S. foreign policy — and achieve this via a multitude of approaches and more grace with each other.

### Philanthropy:

Invest in movement-led convening spaces where organizers and advocates can connect, learn from each other, and strategize together, building long-term structural and systemic change.

Prioritize moving resources toward organizations and movement leaders facing higher risks in retaliation for their ongoing organizing.

Work with grantees to devise more flexible measures to evaluate impact.

Resource through multi-year support the building of this feminist peace movement, including how these intersecting movements can apply joint strategies at the state and local levels.

### Play 2: Create Spaces to Coordinate Across Tactics

Not every group will approach the question of how to transform militarized U.S. foreign policy in the same way, which can sometimes create friction. For example, one grassroots organization may engage in disruptive direct action that limits their access to elected officials, while an advocacy organization might prioritize direct engagement with elected officials, whom grassroots activists may distrust.

Yet, if we are going to meet the profound threats presented by this moment and effect the changes needed to achieve feminist peace, we must avoid self-defeating approaches that are characterized by insularity, inaccessible language, division, purity politics, and political litmus tests. We can remain rooted in the feminist peace values that undergird our work to demilitarize U.S. foreign policy — and achieve this via a multitude of approaches and more grace with each other.



Cathi Choi, Women Cross DMZ, speaks at a session on intergenerational organizing at the 2024 Feminist Peace Summit. Photo by Green Lion Images

We need an ecosystems approach, recognizing that a diversity of tactics — when coordinated effectively — can create pressure and drive systemic change. For example, grassroots direct action generates urgency and compels policymakers to respond. Advocacy organizations can translate that urgency into legislative action, crafting policy solutions.

Coordinating these tactics and building shared campaigns or coalitions requires strong relationships and a commitment to shared power with others — rather than power over others. This work depends on creating spaces for visioning, coordinating, strategizing, and planning together, ensuring alignment across multiple movements and sectors.

Effective coordination requires us to continually return to our core feminist peace values, including the need to assess how gender shapes our work, commit to decolonizing expertise, place impacted people at the center of leadership, model transparency and openness, approach criticism with curiosity, and build accountability with movement partners. Together, these practices create an active learning environment that fosters innovation, experimentation, and adaptation. This process — embracing both successes and failures — allows our feminist peace work to evolve, incorporate feedback, and respond effectively to systemic, institutional, and interpersonal attacks on human rights and human rights defenders.

## Recommendations

### Movements:

Convene across multiple identifiers, including issue-based convenings, geographic convenings,

cross-sectoral alliances and cross-faith convenings to bridge divides through common ground and shared resources.

Recognize that different organizations face varying levels of risk — some can afford bold actions, while others are under attack for their bold actions and need cover and solidarity in this period. Strategically leverage these differences to advance shared goals.

### Research:

Host convenings to facilitate coordination across movements, such as modeled by the 2024 Feminist Peace Summit.

Provide training and learning spaces for activists and organizers to develop strategic approaches in collaboration with researchers.

### Philanthropy:

Be responsive to movement requests to fund convenings that bring together activists, academics, policymakers, and others to align strategies and strengthen collaboration.

Strengthen investments in convening spaces that are affordable and accessible.

### Play 3: Align Philanthropy to Sustain and Grow Movements

Empowering a feminist peace movement to contend with U.S. militarism will require a crucial ingredient: funding. Lack of resources has been a fundamental

Christine Ahn, Women Cross DMZ, with members of the Korea Peace Now! Grassroots Network at a Capitol Hill briefing on the 70th anniversary of the Korean Armistice, with Rep. Barbara Lee, July 27, 2023. Photo by Constance Faulk



barrier to the movement's ability to grow in numbers, networks, capacity, and impact. In contrast, since the 1980s, right-wing philanthropy has successfully supported massive structural change and the dissemination of regressive ideas by investing in strong institutions and individual leaders.<sup>39</sup> Funders must help feminist peace advocates counter this well-resourced opposition by closing the funding gap.

Peace funders have identified several obstacles to greater investment: competing priorities amid multiple global crises, a lack of familiarity with U.S. militarism and its wide-ranging impacts, and difficulty commit-

ting to long-term funding strategies.

Despite these challenges, funders across diverse sectors are increasingly recognizing U.S. militarism as a threat to their core objectives, whether they focus on democracy, human rights, economic progress, genuine security, or climate justice. This presents an opportunity for philanthropy to collaborate, share knowledge, learn from grassroots movements, and pool resources for greater impact.

Rather than relying on short-term, restrictive grants, funders should adopt a long-term perspective. Flexible, trust-based, sustained funding — including general op-



erating grants — enables organizations to build power, sustain organizing and advocacy efforts, and remain adaptable in an unpredictable political landscape. Funders must also prioritize dedicating resources to communities directly impacted by militarism, which possess expertise that can drive feminist peace policies and movements.

Arash Azzada of *Afghans for a Better Tomorrow* notes that many community organizations are “over-worked and under capacity.” Instead, funders need to support “long-arc strategies to allow us to do real community organizing work focused on political education,

Funders across diverse sectors are increasingly **recognizing U.S. militarism as a threat to their core objectives**, whether they focus on democracy, human rights, economic progress, genuine security, or climate justice.

persuasion, and base-building.<sup>760</sup> This requires funding individual organizations and investing in the infrastructure that allows them to coordinate, strategize, and amplify their work. Kelsey Coolidge of the War Prevention Initiative of the Jubitz Family Foundation further calls for funders to “embrace decolonized and equitable grant-making that reflects the values of feminist peace.”<sup>761</sup>

For decades, regional and international feminist funds have experimented with methods to make their grants more transparent and accessible in order to deepen and expand their grassroots grantee networks. These feminist funds — like MADRE, Global Fund for Women, and Urgent Action Fund — support others in philanthropy by connecting them to local feminist peace organizations and transferring their best trust-based and transparent funding practices.

## Recommendations

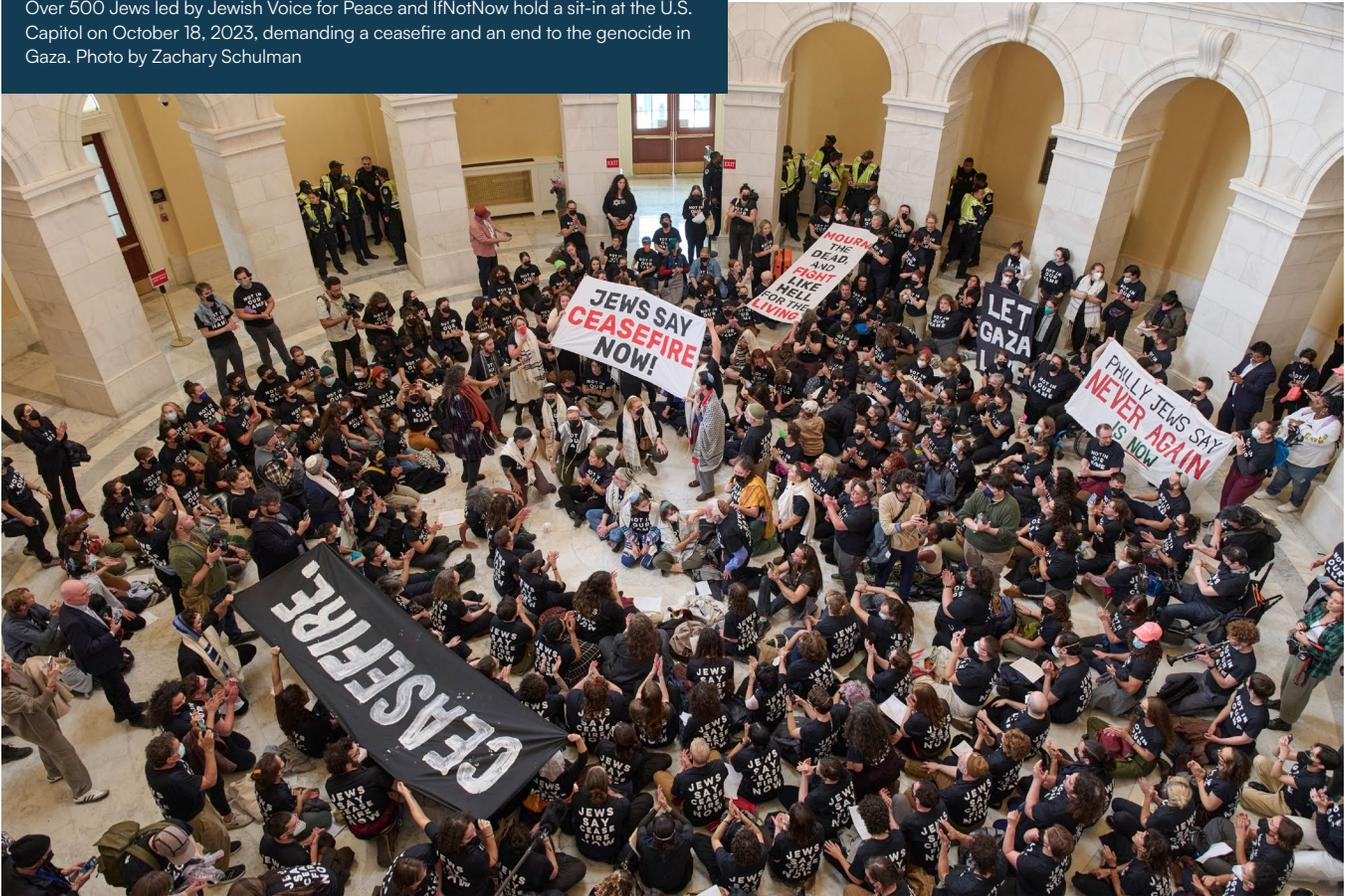
### Philanthropy:

Fund feminist leadership in this work, which will include allocating funding for feminist infrastructure — including accommodating childcare and other caregiving responsibilities, as movement-building work and often invisible reproductive labor.

Fund movements and feminist peace work as a long-term investment. Prioritize sustained funding through general operating funds.

Develop flexible, trust-based funding, prioritizing infrastructure for movement building, training and resources for impacted people, and base building that allows grassroots organizations to organize with gender-oppressed racially and economically marginalized people impacted by militarism.

Over 500 Jews led by Jewish Voice for Peace and IfNotNow hold a sit-in at the U.S. Capitol on October 18, 2023, demanding a ceasefire and an end to the genocide in Gaza. Photo by Zachary Schulman



Support coalitions, convenings, mentorship networks, and research hubs to build synergy between and across movements, policymakers, academia, media, and philanthropy.

Democratize access to funding: simplify application processes and make funding more accessible to grassroots organizations.

Learn from feminist funds and connect with local feminist peace organizations.

Learn about decolonizing wealth and incorporate lessons into internal decision-making and grant-making.

Consider collective and participatory grantmaking principles to transform internal decision-making processes into less hierarchical processes and empower grantees as decision-makers.

Give beyond 5 percent.<sup>62</sup>

Advocate for grantees and grantees' concerns in policy environments, where applicable (see Bold-er Advocacy for guidelines).

Diversify boards of advisors to include grantee representatives and members from affected communities to inform internal decision-making processes.

Identify ways to “burden share” with grantees or specifically fund activities around reporting requirements, applications, theory of change, or impact assessments.

#### Strategy 4. Ground Policymaking in Movements to Advance Feminist Peace

To date, we have lacked a sufficiently strong, accountable, locally rooted, and transnational constituency to hold U.S. policymakers responsible for the impacts of militarized policy, including their complicity in

Feminist peace advocates are actively challenging the dominance of militarized and patriarchal voices in foreign policy spaces by **ensuring the inclusion of grassroots civil society organizations and global human rights defenders** in the process of shaping U.S. foreign policy.

human rights violations and war crimes. Since the morally awakening work of the Civil Rights Movement and the anti-Vietnam War protests, the U.S.-based peace movement has lost significant political and governing power due to varying degrees of movement criminalization, funding restrictions, and surveillance that fractured the anti-war coalition. Without the leverage of well-organized and mobilized movements, advocates are often forced to rely on the goodwill of a relatively small group of political gatekeepers to make even incremental progress. This leaves feminist peace efforts vulnerable to political shifts, as champions rise and fall from power, making progress unsustainable in the long run.

The previous sections explored how to build power to challenge U.S. militarism by strengthening and expanding feminist peace movements. But even strong movements do not automatically lead to policy change. Transforming U.S. foreign policy requires deliberate strategies to bridge grassroots power to policymaking spaces — including by developing political leadership training programs and volunteering in electoral campaigns that advance feminist peace. In this section, we ask: How do we channel movement power into real policy transformation?

### **Play 1: Build On-Ramps and Tools to Bring Feminist Peace Analysis and Movement Power into Policy Spaces**

Who counts as an expert in U.S. foreign policy? Historically, the dominant answer has privileged the perspectives of white, cisgender American men with military service and/or Ivy League credentials. Trump has further privileged expertise from men who em-

body “hegemonic masculinity,” a cultural ideology that normalizes the domination of virile, wealthy white men over women and other marginalized people.<sup>63</sup> This exclusionary understanding of policy expertise limits diverse, community-based perspectives and ensures that decision-makers operate with a dangerously incomplete understanding about the real-world impacts of U.S. foreign policy.<sup>64</sup>

Feminist peace advocates are actively challenging the dominance of militarized and patriarchal voices in foreign policy spaces by ensuring the inclusion of grassroots civil society organizations and global human rights defenders in the process of shaping U.S. foreign policy. By building on-ramps and tools to bring feminist voices and analysis into anti-war and policymaking spaces, these advocates reveal — with clarity and urgency — how militarism endangers communities both at home and abroad.

For example, as Haiti faces increasing violence and governance failures, networks of Haitian feminist organizations created the Policy Framework for an Effective & Equitable Transition. This framework, rooted in Haitian and international law, lays out concrete demands and best practices to advance gender justice and ensure a successful political transition.<sup>65</sup> Recognizing that a just U.S. foreign policy toward Haiti must be informed by those directly affected, U.S.-based advocacy organizations like MADRE played a key role by bridging Haitian feminist movements with policymakers. This has included organizing a virtual press conference, publishing op-eds, and facilitating meetings with U.S. policymakers and Haitian feminist leaders.

Amid stalled U.S.–North Korea negotiations and rising military tensions, Korea Peace Now! brings feminist analysis and grassroots movement power into U.S. policy spaces, advocating for a peace-first approach to end the Korean War and militarization on the peninsula. Through policy advocacy, the Korea Peace Now! Grassroots Network — which consists of over 500 individuals across the United States — successfully secured the support of 53 members of Congress for H.R. 1369, the Peace on the Korean Peninsula Act, which calls for a formal peace agreement. Their efforts, including Korea Peace Advocacy Week, have engaged hundreds of participants nationwide, including multigenerational Korean Americans, faith leaders, veterans, humanitarian workers, and activists. By combining legislative advocacy, grassroots organizing, and public education, they highlight the human costs of the U.S.’s oldest “forever war” while redefining security through a feminist lens, centered on

Rep. Rashida Tlaib speaks at a press conference with other members of Congress and activists calling for a ceasefire in Gaza at the Capitol in Washington, DC, on December 14, 2023. Photo by Annabelle Gordon/CNP/ABACAPRESS.COM



basic human needs and ecological sustainability. They also build broad-based coalitions with other anti-war, feminist, and climate justice groups, and reinforce the notion that a peace agreement — not continued sanctions, isolation, and pressure — is the only viable path to denuclearization and lasting peace.

These examples offer models for how feminist peace advocates can build long-term political power alongside the communities that have been systematically excluded from shaping the policies that most impact their lives. This requires creating intentional pathways to prioritize the expertise, lived experiences, and demands of those directly impacted by U.S. policies — recognizing that those who have survived harmful policies are often the most powerful advocates for change.

## Recommendations

### Movements:

Bring domestic and global grassroots civil society leaders into formal and informal briefing spaces, including committee hearings, caucus briefings, and meetings with policymakers, where they can be elevated as experts.

Create tools to share the expertise and policy demands of grassroots communities that respond to people's urgency, capacity, and interests and that are adaptable to meet language, mobility, and other accessibility needs. Provide training that goes beyond positioning impacted people as spokespeople, but also as strategic leaders in policy.

Map our expertise and capacity and build alliances with progressive policymakers and opportunities to exercise power for transformative change.

Leverage the power of social media to correct the record of the impacts of U.S. foreign policy in real time.

Regularly draft civil society letters in partnership with movements, human rights defenders, and diaspora leaders from the country impacted by the relevant policy.

Co-produce op-eds, articles, blogs, and podcasts covering foreign policy topics with civil society leaders from communities most directly impacted.

Organize congressional delegations to meet with civil society leaders directly in impacted communities to show the consequences of U.S. foreign policy.

Incorporate feminist peace principles and policy demands into educational materials and candidate assessments before, during, and after elections, including in recruitment and training pipelines for prospective elected officials.

#### **Philanthropy:**

Review proposals for practices inclusive of global grassroots human rights defenders and feminist peace movements.

Robustly fund language translation to reach key audiences.

Value and integrate the strategic voices of impacted people and communities, not just those typically put forward as “experts.”

#### **Policy:**

Engage directly with grassroots communities, through a variety of methods, including in the halls of Congress or in congressional delegation visits. Proactively consult with civil society movements on an ongoing basis around issue portfolios to build the relationships for rapid-response campaign coordination and legislative and broader political messaging.

Introduce resolutions and policy frameworks that articulate and advance feminist peace principles, ensuring coordination with movement leadership. Policymakers should actively engage with feminist peace advocates and impacted communities to develop policies that prioritize community safety, international cooperation, and demilitarization.

Include feminist peace advocates in campaign and public education materials, hearings, policy reports, civil society sign-on letters, media advisories, and press releases.

Appropriate funds to establish an ongoing resource for simultaneous interpretation in hearings, briefings, and lobby meetings, as needed, to ensure broad consultation and language accessibility.

Vote against and actively campaign against “lawfare” or other attempts to limit non-profit organizations’ free speech and advocacy efforts.

#### **Media:**

Tell the stories of real-life impacts of U.S. foreign policy on people and communities around the world.

Cover efforts by social movements and civil society to document and transmit their demands for effective policy change as a way to bridge that expertise into policy spaces.

Interview and incorporate feminist, anti-militarist activists, advocates, academics, and others as “expert” voices on national security. Work with movement contacts to develop a database of feminist peace experts who can be called on to provide context and commentary.

Audit media institutions for inclusion of diverse perspectives in foreign policy topics, looking at authors, quoted experts, and guest experts invited to speak on a range of foreign policy topics.

Ensure translation capabilities in foreign policy beats to enable broad outreach to directly impacted communities.

### **Play 2: Strengthen and Utilize Oversight Mechanisms and International Law to Restrain Militarized U.S. Foreign Policy**

The U.S. has multiple oversight mechanisms and legal frameworks available to push back against militarized policymaking. For example, the Constitution grants Congress sole authority to declare war, limiting the President’s use of force to immediate threats or the protection of Americans abroad and requiring congressional approval for sustained military action. International obligations, including the Geneva Conventions, set the rules of warfare and are incorporated into U.S. military law, while the Genocide Convention Implementation Act mandates the prevention and prosecution of genocide. Despite these safeguards, the U.S. routinely violates both domestic and international laws governing warfare, with policymakers starting and waging wars with impunity — often not because of a lack of mechanisms to stop them but because of a lack of political will to use what standards and mechanisms do exist. As a result, public-led campaigns are necessary to compel compliance and demand accountability.

ty. A feminist peace movement can play a critical role in these efforts. There are several tactics that feminist peace advocates can pursue.

**Forcing a congressional vote.** Some legislative vehicles allow Members to force debate and vote on the congressional floor even without the approval of leadership. This includes the War Powers Resolution, which provides an expedited mechanism for Members to force a debate and vote on directing the President to remove U.S. forces from abroad that have been improperly deployed without congressional authorization.

Anti-militarism movements have utilized these mechanisms to force Congress to take up urgent questions. In 2018, a War Powers Resolution passed both chambers of Congress for the first time, aiming to end U.S. military involvement in the Saudi-led coalition's war on Yemen. This followed a coordinated campaign that brought together Yemeni human rights defenders, diaspora organizers, humanitarian organizations, and U.S.-based anti-war organizers. Yemeni human rights defenders and diaspora communities in the U.S. played a critical role in documenting war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by the Saudi-led coalition with U.S. weapons, while U.S. anti-war organizers and humanitarian organizations working alongside Yemeni diaspora organizers brought those stories to Congress as proof of repeated violations of U.S. and international law. Despite Trump's veto of the War Powers Resolution, this campaign serves as a valuable case study for feminist peace organizers.

Other examples include Senator Bernie Sanders forcing the Senate to vote on a 502(b) resolution and Joint Resolutions of Disapproval interrogating U.S. arms support to Israel during the Gaza genocide in 2024, and Congress passing a fast-tracked resolution to terminate an emergency declared by President Trump in 2019 to justify rerouting military spending to build up a border wall. In each of these cases, the policy in question was not ended by forcing a vote, but the mechanisms served as strategic tools to force attention and pushback on the harms being caused.

**Pushing debates and votes in must-pass legislation.** Advocates may wish to make a push to add feminist peace initiatives to what is called "must pass legislation." There are some bills that Congress is certain to pass as a matter of law or custom no matter what, like funding the continued operations of the government or authorizing the military. Advocates can make a push to add provisions into these bills as a way to force de-

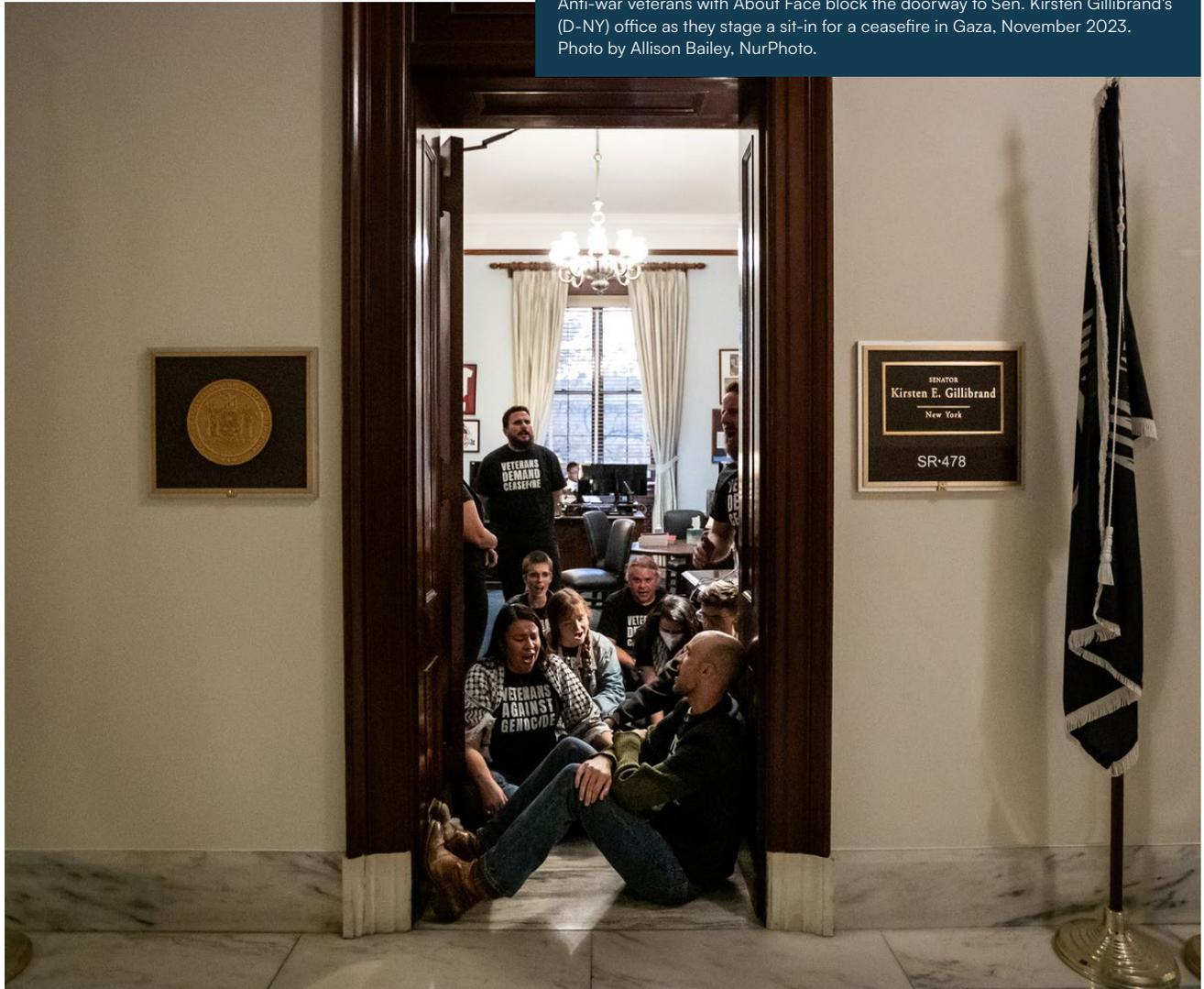
The U.S. routinely violates both domestic and international laws governing warfare, with policymakers starting and waging wars with impunity — often **not because of a lack of mechanisms to stop them but because of a lack of political will to use what standards and mechanisms do exist.** As a result, public-led campaigns are necessary to compel compliance and demand accountability.

bate and vote on the issue and, if successful, to ensure its passage as part of the bigger package of legislation that is sure to become law. The annual National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) offers just such an opportunity, as advocates frequently work with Members to submit amendments to be taken up in conjunction with the bill that would cut Pentagon spending, end wars, halt weapons transfers, and promote other anti-militarism priorities.<sup>66</sup>

**Getting Members of Congress to use their platforms.** Feminist peace advocates can also push elected officials to use their platforms to make demands of the executive branch or to amplify an important anti-militarist message.<sup>67</sup> Members of Congress often have big audiences on social media, appear frequently in the media and at major events, and have their remarks livestreamed via C-SPAN. Getting a Member to tell a particular story on behalf of grassroots activists, or amplify a message, or otherwise use their platform to shine a light on the feminist peace agenda can help build momentum toward policy change. Further, Members have a number of tactics available to move the needle, such as sending open letters to the executive branch, holding official hearings investigating certain topics or less official "shadow" hearings, and inviting feminist peace storytellers to testify.

**People-led oversight.** Feminist peace activists can also flex their own oversight and accountability mus-

Anti-war veterans with About Face block the doorway to Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand's (D-NY) office as they stage a sit-in for a ceasefire in Gaza, November 2023. Photo by Allison Bailey, NurPhoto.



cles. If those who control congressional hearings will not schedule one on abuses of the U.S. military state, advocates can organize and publicize a “shadow hearing” with their own witnesses. Movements can issue damning human right reports and scorecards identifying wrongdoers and proposing solutions. Elected officials can be invited to participate in or amplify these proceedings, and media can be leveraged to cover such efforts.

**Litigation.** Anti-war organizers and human rights defenders have often used strategic litigation to rein in U.S. militarism. The Alien Tort Statute, for example, allows non-U.S. citizens or nationals to sue for violations of international law in U.S. courts (although the Supreme Court has narrowed the opportunities to use this provision). International Right Advocates (IRA) is

currently litigating a case on behalf of Yemeni survivors of Saudi bombings that, among other things, demands damages from U.S. weapons manufacturers for aiding and abetting war crimes. IRA also used the ATS to secure a historic win against banana growers Chiquita for funding atrocities in Colombia and to force the corporation to pay damages to victims<sup>68</sup>

In 2023, in response to the U.S. selling arms to the Israeli government as it committed a genocide in Gaza, the Center for Constitutional Rights filed a federal lawsuit, *Defense for Children International – Palestine, et al. v. Biden, et al.*,<sup>69</sup> on behalf of Palestinian human rights organizations and individuals. The lawsuit argues that President Biden, Secretary of State Blinken, and Defense Secretary Austin violated both international law and U.S. law, including the Genocide Convention Implementation Act, by failing to prevent genocide

GGJ members, frontline leaders, and organizers hold a mass action to demand “A Free Palestine and End to All Cop Cities,” in Atlanta, Georgia, April 19, 2024. Photo by @capturedbytabia



and were complicit in the genocide of Palestinians. Although this case was ultimately dismissed from the courts, legal actions like this build on the international human rights system's moral and legal authority, documenting policy harms while increasing political pressure for accountability and justice.

## Recommendations

### Movements:

Improve movement fluency in the use of strategic litigation by documenting, learning from, and building on past advocacy efforts that used legal and legislative tools to challenge U.S. militarism, including through convenings, guest lectures, internal movement-directed briefings, and other forums.

Consult with and, where necessary, hire movement-aligned lawyers to explore strategic litigation opportunities to challenge policies that erode oversight laws for arms sales and human rights legal commitments, and hold individual actors responsible for actions that violate and

undermine existing U.S. commitments to arms control and advancing human rights.

Create public education initiatives to increase awareness of legal frameworks and tools that can be leveraged by grassroots activists and popular mobilization campaigns to hold U.S. policymakers accountable for human rights violations.

### Research:

Support legal cases and other advocacy campaigns through expert statements and case background work.

Engage in documentation research that supports movement efforts to hold policymakers accountable.

### Media:

Invest in coverage that affirms the critical importance of international frameworks and law and remind the public when these agreements are broken.



GGJ members attend the “Dream Beyond Bars and Borders Action” in front of Oakland City Hall at Oscar Grant Plaza on October 6, 2022. Photo by Brooke Anderson. @movementphotographer

## Conclusion

The recommendations outlined in this playbook provide a roadmap for demilitarizing U.S. foreign policy and advancing a feminist peace vision. However, real transformation requires not only resisting harmful policies but also expanding our collective imagination of what is possible. To build a just and sustainable future, we must mobilize bold, forward-looking policymaking that reflects feminist peace principles.

Advocates of feminist peace are often dismissed as idealistic or impractical. Meanwhile, we are expected to accept as rational the expansion of fossil fuels despite the certainty of climate catastrophe, the relentless march toward nuclear midnight, and the endless cycle of war. We must reject this flawed logic and instead embrace our feminist imagination of what policy can and should be. As science fiction writer Ursula K. Le Guin once said, we must be “realists of a larger reality.”<sup>70</sup>

Feminist peace allies in movement, academic, philanthropic, media, and policy spaces must seize this moment — even in this time of frightening backsliding on a generation’s worth of progressive gains and catastrophic policy plans being implemented by the Trump administration — to hold the line and advance our vision. By mobilizing to increase public awareness of militarism’s impact on our lives, redefining security through community safety, bridging divides to build

power across movements, and grounding policymaking in movements, we can shift U.S. policymaking away from militarism and toward a feminist peace framework that prioritizes the well-being of all people and the planet.

The work ahead is urgent, and while the challenges are great, they are not insurmountable. By organizing, strategizing, and refusing to accept the status quo, we can move toward a future where peace is not just possible, but inevitable.

### Acknowledgements

This playbook was drafted in community. The core author team included Christine Ahn, Marie Berry, and Diana Duarte, with significant contributions by Kate Alexander, Cathi Choi, Kitzia Esteva, and Carly Paul. We are grateful to many others who contributed and reviewed the playbook. In particular, we’d like to thank:

Arash Azizzada  
Elizabeth Beavers  
Linda Burnham  
Cynthia Conti-Cook  
Kelsey Coolidge  
Patricia Cooper  
Max Elbaum  
Mac Hamilton

Lindsay Khoshgarian  
Ramon Mejia  
Khury Petersen-Smith  
Kathleen Richards  
Adrien Salazar  
Yifat Susskind  
Cindy Wiesner



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  - 67 Members of Congress can, for example, use the War Powers Resolution to call for the withdrawal of U.S. military forces that have been improperly deployed without congressional authorization. They can also reintroduce and pass the Restricting First Use of Nuclear Weapons Act (S.1186 and H.R.669), which would prohibit the President from launching a nuclear first strike absent a declaration of war by Congress. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/senate-bill/1186/text>
  - 68 International Rights Advocates, “Justice Served: Chiquita Brands International Found Liable for Financing Colombian Death Squads in Historic Verdict,” IRA, June 10, 2024. <https://www.internationalrightsadvocates.org/cases/chiquita>
  - 69 See Center for Constitutional Rights, <https://ccrjustice.org/DCIP-v-Biden>.
  - 70 Ursula K. Le Guin, “Speech in Acceptance of the National Book Foundation Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters,” November 19, 2014, <https://www.ursulaklequin.com/nbf-medal>.

