



Friends Committee on National Legislation

A Quaker Lobby in the Public Interest

The Only America We Know Is an America At War

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FCNL Young Fellows, Jan. 2020.

As young adults, we only faintly remember what life was like before Sept. 11, if we remember at all. Since the U.S. invaded Afghanistan, we have made it through elementary, middle, and high school. We've applied to colleges, finished our degrees, moved away from home, and entered the workforce—and the entire time, the U.S. has been carrying out military actions halfway across the world.

The cost has been devastating. The post-9/11 wars have directly killed over [800,000 people](#) — including more than 335,000 civilians—and countless more have been impacted by hunger, disease, and trauma. American military aggression has contributed to the displacement of [21 million people](#) and crippled multiple economies for a generation. The U.S. has spent more than [\\$6.4 trillion](#) and expanded our [unaccountable surveillance state](#) to unprecedented levels.

These are staggering numbers; yet somehow, we have become numb to them. The distance of the violence, the advent of drones and other war technologies, and sheer time elapsed have combined to sanitize war. Instead of being a catastrophic event, war has become an unfortunate reality.

Two decades worth of evidence make it clear—this is who we are as a country.

But it's not who we have to be. With the recent escalation of violence with Iran, fueled by yet another president bypassing Congress to commit an act of war, we have a chance to change the paradigm. And we as young people are the ones who must do it.

From Greta Thunberg admonishing world leaders for their inaction on climate change to Parkland activists putting their foot down on gun violence, we have proven that our generation is hungry for

change and ready to lead. And now, as the president toys with yet another needless conflict abroad, it's time for us to stand up to endless wars.

It will be hard work. We will have to undo years of desensitization and reopen our eyes to the horrors of war. We will have to move beyond Twitter jokes and memes about World War III and make a concentrated effort to humanize and remember those *truly* impacted by American wars abroad.

And above all, we will have to recognize this as a systemic problem. Endless war has become an institutional reality of American politics, so dismantling it will require institutional change. For two decades now, Congress has neglected to limit the president's powers, essentially abdicating its responsibility over war and peace. And all the while, Congress has signed off on ever-growing military budgets while turning its back on the hungry, poor, and sick.

We---and the world as a whole---deserve better. Through letters, phone calls, protests, op-eds, and social media posts, we need to call for a better Congress. A Congress that is willing to repeal outdated Authorizations for the Use of Military Force, which have been unjustly used to wage war in dozens of countries across the globe. A Congress that favors diplomacy over unchecked military spending. A Congress that prioritizes the future of this planet over military gains overseas.

Through our votes and our advocacy, we have more power than we realize. It is on us to take a stand for peace and demand more from our government.

War was not the answer in 2001. War has proven not to be the answer over the course of two decades. And war won't be the answer going forward.

This statement was collectively written by FCNL's 2019-2020 class of young fellows. They are:

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