

## **'Plans for Shannon and Ireland Today and in the Days to Come'**

**We should expand on this title – we are no longer alone – the challenges are not just about Shannon, or Ireland or even Europe, the challenges are global, but Shannon and Ireland represent the local symptoms of the diseases that are wars, human rights abuses, and environmental destruction, all driven by short-sighted human greed.**

**This weekend I am multi-tasking in a big way. In addition to setting up an overnight peace camp at Shannon airport, on Friday night and Saturday morning I was minding three of my grandchildren, 3 mischievous healthy boys. The contrast between the wellbeing of my grandchildren and suffering of millions of children in the Middle East is huge, so I want to make children the theme of my short talk and the theme of our peace rally at Shannon airport this afternoon.**

**Why children? They are the future of humanity, if they are to have a future.**

**Ireland, by allowing US military to use Shannon airport, is actively complicit in the deaths of up to one million children due to Middle East Wars since the first Gulf War in 1991. In Iraq alone, during the 1990s over half a million children died due to UN sanctions imposed at the behest of the USA. US Secretary of State Madeline Albright when asked if such a huge human cost was worth it, replied, "Yes it was worth it".**

**Stalin is reputed to have said "one man's death is a tragedy, one million deaths are just statistics".**

**This is a common human response and is partly a psychological protection for our minds – we can cope with individual tragedies but our minds seek to blot out the reality of larger disasters. This is reinforced and abused by cynical public relations by military forces and governments – the killing of civilians is described as COLLATERAL DAMAGE, and as being militarily necessary, rather the truth of unjustified atrocities. Donald Rumsfeld response was "stuff happens".**

**I will just cite one story to emphasise the reality life and death in these Middle East wars.**

**In September 2017 I visited Syria with a group of Irish peace activists. I was on a fact-finding mission connected with our NAMINGTHECHILDREN PROJECT ([www.namingthechildren.com](http://www.namingthechildren.com)).**

**On 15 April 2017, just 6 months previously at least 80 children were killed in a horrific suicide bombing of a bus convoy at al-Rashideen near Aleppo. The buses carried civilian evacuees from the besieged government-controlled towns of al-Fu'ah and Kafriya and were guarded by rebel fighters.**

**The convoy appeared to have been deliberately delayed before entering Government controlled areas. A car stopped near the bus convoy and began distributing sweets and crisps to the children from the busses who had been starving for the previous two years. When they flocked around the car, the driver who was a suicide bomber activated a massive car bomb which contained large quantities of flammable material, killing 80 children and about 46 adults. ISIS claimed responsibility. Six months later, we met a group of survivors from this dreadful bus bombing. One young teenage boy explained how he had lost friends and family members. A grandmother in her 70s who was still obviously traumatised and in tears told us that she had lost 7 members of her immediate family, yet she was thanking us for coming to Syria to hear her story. It was a deeply humbling experience.**

**Those who committed this atrocity were directly or indirectly supported, armed and funded by the US and its European and Middle Eastern Allies in their attempts to overthrow the Government of Syria in gross breach of the UN Charter. Ireland and Shannon airport facilitated, and is still facilitating, this and other war crimes. The US could not commit the war crimes it is committing in the Middle East without the active support and complicity of most European countries including Ireland. If we can take Ireland out of this Axis of Evil, others may follow suit.**

**At Shannon airport we peace activists use a variety of strategies and methods.**

**Our first purpose is as whistle-blowers to inform the Irish people what is happening at Shannon**

**Our next strategy is to do something about it.**

**And our long-term objective is to end US use of Shannon airport and restore genuine Irish neutrality.**

**Our motto must be that in the face of such evil, whatever you do, don't to nothing.**

**All our actions are non-violent peace actions. To do otherwise would be to join the war mongers, or to play into their schemes whereby they could label us as terrorists and justify using violence against us and others.**

**I define violence as injury to persons or other living creatures, and I distinguish violence from damage to inanimate property.**

**Violence is never justified, but damage to property is sometimes necessary and justified in order to prevent people being injured and killed by violence.**

**Usually at Shannon our regular peace vigils are both non-violent and avoid damage to property – and today's peace rally at Shannon will be in that category.**

**On other occasions some of us do what we call arrestable actions. There is a sort of double think in these arrestable actions. The police think they are dragging us through the courts but, in reality, we are dragging the police and the state through the courts to expose gross wrong doing. Such arrestable actions are not for the faint hearted, and we do not expect everyone to do them, although there is no reason why all of you could not do so. If Margaretta D'Arcy in her 80s could negotiate the barricades and bring Shannon airport to a standstill on two occasions by going on the runway, anyone can do it – but not today.**

**Right now we have 6 peace activists before the courts who are dragging the state through the courts, including Tarak Kauff and Ken Mayers, Dave Donnellan and Colm Roddy, Dan Dowling and a guy called Horgan. Some of us are accused of the heinous crime of writing graffiti on the engine of a US war plane. Can you imagine who would do such a terrible thing???**

**And finally, I have here lists of some of the names of the 1,000,000 children who have died as a result of wars in the Middle East. At our peace rally this**

**afternoon we will try and commemorate some of these children in appropriate ways, while also challenging some of those who are facilitating these killings.**

**I don't usually quote the bible which seems to have gone out of fashion in recent times, as also has religion, but basic morality has also been thrown out the window of modern society. "Thou shall not kill" is as valid today as it was in biblical times, or even more so. I recall reading in the new Testament one of the few times when Jesus got really angry. He is reported to have said "Suffer little Children to come onto me ... And everyone who commits an offense against one of these little ones who believe in me, it were profitable for him that a donkey's millstone would be hung around his neck and he be sunk in the depths of the sea".**

**Right now, the European Union including Ireland have deliberately stopped rescuing drowning migrants and refugees in the Mediterranean including thousands of children – ignoring the fact that European countries have actively contributed to the refugee crisis. They choose knowingly to let most of them drown and those few that they pull out of the sea, they sent back to Libya to concentration camps in dreadful conditions.**

**We don't have enough millstones to hang around the necks of such European leaders.**

**Thanks you – see you at the barricades – Resist**

**Edward Horgan, Veterans For Peace Ireland**