

## Right to Life as the World Sees It

Right to life proponents might be interested in the genuine article, so here it is. On July 1, the United Nations Human Rights Committee met in Geneva to discuss both nuclear weapons and climate change as violations of the right to life as stipulated in Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The keynote speakers were experts in international law from the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Switzerland. What follows immediately below is an outline of the UNHRC meeting, written before it convened:

In 2018, the UN Human Rights Committee affirmed in General Comment 36 that the threat or use of nuclear weapons is a violation of the Right to Life (Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights). The committee also affirmed that climate change threatens the Right to Life.

The event will discuss ways to implement General Comment 36 with respect to nuclear weapons and climate change, including through the Universal Periodic Review of the human rights obligations of states parties. In this cycle, the co-sponsoring organizations have submitted questions and recommendations on the policies and practices of the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

Coming at a time when Russia has made nuclear threats to the USA and NATO if they intervene in the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the submissions are a reminder of the importance to address the risks of nuclear deterrence policies, and that Russia is not the only country that possesses nuclear weapons and maintains options to initiate nuclear war.

On the climate change front, recent figures from the International Energy Agency indicate that carbon emissions continue to climb, reaching a colossal 36.3 gigatonnes in 2021.

Current actions by governments are insufficient to address these two threats to humanity and the violations of existing policies and practices to the human rights of current and future generations.

So goes the outline.

As if to underscore the Geneva meeting, on June 30, the US Supreme Court issued a ruling in *West Virginia v. EPA* which guts the EPA's ability to regulate greenhouse gas emissions. Shortly before the Court's decision, the Senate Armed Services Committee proposed a \$45 billion increase over the Pentagon's projected \$813 outlay, which was already 40 percent higher than the military budget was at the start of president Obama's second term.

And on June 25, The New York Times reported that Canadian special forces are inside the Ukraine to train Ukrainian troops, along with US special forces there. Ironically enough, that report calls into question president Biden's statement that US troops would not intervene in Ukraine. On its own, the Times report suggests that proxy war between the US/NATO and Russia has already begun in the Ukraine, and strengthens Vladimir Putin's argument for

continuing the war there, with all the suffering and the risk of escalation into nuclear conflict further combat involves.

It looks like the ostriches both in Washington DC and Moscow have their heads in the sand, along with the wraiths who love the cold embrace of death. Thus ignorant armies clash by night, with innocent civilians doing most of the dying.

As both this piece and previous columns in this series have observed, people around the world are beginning to object. Breathe deeply, keep calm, and carry on.