

# WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR PEACE & FREEDOM



## WILPF Aotearoa newsletter November 2024

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### New Aotearoa Section constitution

Our new draft Section constitution has been sent to all members for feedback. Ngā mihi nui to those who have sent their thoughts. If you have yet to do this or cannot find the draft, let us know and we will send it to you again. We must have your feedback by 10 December.

In January we will have a Special General Meeting to discuss and agree the draft, then we will adopt the new constitution at our 2025 AGM.

### WILPF Aotearoa activities:

#### Celine Kearney reports:

A small group of us stand outside the townhall in the Waikato town of Cambridge for an hour each Saturday morning, waving Palestinian flags, chanting and reciting the statistics of Palestinians killed that week by the Israeli Occupation Forces. I always feel acutely aware that this is the raupatu or confiscated land, over a million acres summarily taken in the 1860s. So, while I carry the Palestinian flag, I also carry the tino

rangatiritanga flag, a symbol of Māori independence. This acknowledges the battles that took place at Ōrakau, Rangiaowhia and Rangiriri, and the ongoing intergenerational trauma of the consequences of the enormous loss of land, culture, and particularly language. Now there is the struggle against the Treaty Principles Bill. In colonial settler states like New Zealand and Australia, democracy does not work for Indigenous peoples so we, as WILPF members need to campaign hard to express our opposition to the bill. In the face of the threat of that bill, the former Maori King Tuuheitia, called the Kiingitanga movement together and invited all iwi around the motu to Turangawaewae to strategise a way forward. There he also offered the cloak of kotahitanga/unity to all people who support Te Tiriti.



Photo courtesy Celine Kearney

Though I can't change the historical injustice, as a Tangata Tiriti, I can accept that cloak of Kotahitanga, of unity, generously offered, and be an ally for Treaty justice in Aotearoa. With that foundation I can also stand for the rights of Palestine to exist and for Palestinian people to live

on their own lands. For one hour on Saturday, I challenge our community to wake up and see the violence in Gaza for what it is: genocide, and challenge our government to back the ruling of the International Court of Justice and the decades of UN resolutions which have supported the rights of Palestinian people.

## Wellington branch

Wellington WILPF co-hosted Peace Movement Aotearoa's 2024 Disarmament Week online forum on 30 October, with Sian Troath, Postdoctoral Researcher at ANU, to discuss Australia's accelerating level of militarisation, and how that relates to us here.

As New Zealand's only formal military ally, the massive rapid expansion of Australia's military-industrial complex, fuelled further by the AUKUS alliance, is sucking Aotearoa further into the vortex of increasing militarisation of the Pacific. At the same time, New Zealand armed forces are becoming more deeply integrated into Australian and other armed forces, and together these raise serious concerns about the growing gap between New Zealand's disarmament policy and its military links. There was a good level of interest in the forum with more than 40 registrations, and a great discussion around raising more public awareness with accurate information about the scale and extent of increasing militarisation by both Australia and New Zealand.

*Disarmament Week marks the week between UN Day on 24 October, and the anniversary of UNSCR 1325 (Women, Peace and Security) on 31 October.*

*Edwina Hughes*

## Protesting the Russian war in Ukraine



*Photo courtesy Sheryn Elborn*

It has been 128 Wednesdays outside the Russian Embassy in Wellington now, rain or shine, protesting against the invasion of Ukraine by Russia. Such a long time for those at the receiving end of the dreadful and unnecessary violence of war.

We started on 2 March 2022, the same day the police evicted the protesters from parliament grounds. They may have been a bit anxious about protesting as they paid the Embassy a visit and saw one elderly woman standing there with her two banners – “Peace” and “stop the war” – with her knitting, lunch and a camp chair. They came and spoke to me and were very nice and polite as I was to them.

The following week my sister Colleen joined me. The Embassy cars came and went from the front gates as they went about their daily business. Opportunities to tell them how we felt about the invasion.

During the week I had made a recording of some of our chants – kids want peace, don't bomb the babies, stop the war, etc – and asked friends to join me in the recording. When I played over my speaker outside the Embassy the following week, it sounded as if many of us were there. Just Colleen and me!

Slowly and surely the numbers grew – word of mouth. Colleen and I were adamant that it was to be a peaceful rally and we were to be kind and polite to each other. We are, and to the Russians. We also came to realise that it was safe just to keep our focus on telling the Russians that we wanted peace, rather than get into discussions with each other about other conflicts or whether a war is a “good” war or a “justified” war and whether those who fight in wars are heroes. We are all clear that we want this war to stop, and telling the Russians that is our Kaupapa. Ukrainian people are part of our group and teach us Ukrainian songs. Our singing is getting much better. Sue, with her ukulele, is very helpful in improving our tunefulness. Along with Ukrainian waiata, we sing Māori waiata and a range of old protest songs, “where have all the flowers gone” etc.

We often talk about the number of deaths and injuries sustained during this madness. Hard to tell, some say 500,000 needless casualties. We

often stand in silence overwhelmed with the destruction of it all.

The Russians, we have concluded, do not like protests. Initially they would call the police quite regularly and we would have visits from them. During the last visit the one in charge said he had not seen such a peaceful protest for ages! So, the police stopped coming and the Russians employed a security guard who attends each week, takes notes on us, what we say, who is there and sometimes takes photos of us and then reports all this back to the Russians. Not sure the Russians would be interested in who has had hip replacements, bunions, cataracts, a flat tyre on their car, fundraisers we are involved in and what is on special at the local op shop where one of us volunteers. We don't know what other information is given. Apparently because we are on public property, he can do this.

Matt Robson, an Alliance MP, in fact Minister visited the Embassy one day. He rang the bell at the Embassy gate and waited quite some time for someone to address his needs. He was lunching with the Russian Ambassador he told us. Matt told us that it was a civil war and that Ukraine was Russian. He thought Nato was the most corrupt organisation ever, and Ukraine was not far behind. He saw nothing wrong with the war. We reminded him that those that suffer most in wars, civil or other, were children and if he could use any influence he has with the Russians, to remind them of that, we would appreciate it. How long will we be there? We don't know. Personally, I look forward to releasing blue and yellow helium balloons in the air (I know, environmentally unsound, but just this once) when Putin says enough is enough.

Sheryn Elborn



Photo courtesy Sheryn Elborn

Sheryn reports that each week at the vigil, Trevor Lloyd, who has supported the vigil for many months, (or someone else) reads his poem below:

### **The Dimensions of the Meaning of “War” and “Peace”. For Ukraine.**

Trevor Lloyd

*(The dimensions of meaning are regions of the brain, known to neuroscience, that represent aspects of our experience of the world around us. They take us inside words: they are the universal alphabet of the meanings of all words in all languages).*

How can we make sense of war? What is the dark matter of the meaning of this word with its face of tears and blood?

War is *material* – it is made of impact, wounds, corpses and ruins.

War is *immaterial, mental* – it is the hunger of the minds of the hollow men: it is the valour of the victims.

War is *specific* – one war, two wars, three wars – is there no end to the counting of wars? Wars begin and end, but loss and graves are permanent.

War is *spatial* – it stretches across the vastness of steppes, its rises in the lethal yes-fly zone, it goes down to basements and undergrounds, a crater ten metres deep in a back garden.

War is *temporal* – in war time burns, the future falls before us.

War is *activity* – intense activity with random disintegrations, conflagrations, elimination of lives.

War is the *manipulation of materials* – its machinery manufactures nothingness.

War is *physical intimacy* – enemy and victim in a deadly embrace.

War is *dislocation* – lives and nations thrown out of their orbits.

War is *loss and gain* – loss of what was possessed and gain of the shadow of what was lost.

War is *emptiness* where there was *fullness*, a nation bled of its life; and war is the *fullness* of the victor poisoned by stolen spoils.

War is *existential* – a rupture in the fabric of becoming.

But the dimensions of meaning are also the dimensions of “peace”: *spatiality, temporality, activity, physical intimacy, productive manipulation of materials, normality, affordance of benefit, an emptiness that has the capacity to contain multitudes, existential value.*

## Te Wai Pounamu branch

Members are helping to organise the Disarmament and Security Centre/World Without War series of talks on AUKUS.

You can register for these online sessions here:  
<https://www.disarmsecure.org/events/disarm-korero-20>



**DISARM KŌRERO #20  
AUKUS 3-PART SERIES**

**Session 1: Friday November 22nd, 1pm**  
Title: *Joining AUKUS Pillar 2 - In Aotearoa New Zealand's Interests?*

Speakers: Dr Sian Troath, Australian National University  
Dr Damien Rogers, Massey University

**Session 2: Friday November 29th, 1pm**  
Title: *AUKUS Pillar 2 - What does it involve?  
How does it affect Aotearoa / NZ?*

Speakers: Dr Marco de Jong, Auckland Institute of Technology  
Speaker 2 - TBC

**Session 3: Friday December 6th, 1pm**  
Title: *AUKUS agreement - how are our neighbours reacting?*

Speakers: Dr Marianne Hanson, University of Queensland  
Speaker 2 - TBC

All sessions will be held on Zoom.  
Please register here: <https://tinyurl.com/yeyds6ua>

## Tāmaki Makaurau branch

Each week branch members rally in central Auckland to protest the genocide in Gaza.

Members were also at the stopping off places of the Hīkoi mō te Tiriti.



Lorri Mackness (left) and Kathy Ross in Tāmaki Makaurau.  
Photo: Kathy Ross



Tunatahi Dargaville. Photo: Megan Hutching

## WILPF Peace Rose Craft stall

Kathy Ross has organised this stall at the Rose Festival in Parnell for many years. She writes:

I really wanted to convey my thanks to the WILPF helpers, without which none of it could have happened.

In particular to thank Ruth, Tamsin, Jude and Elif (Elif, honorary WILPF member for the day representing Turkey) for their work with the children, and Anna and Lorri who held the ground for the WILPF activist outreach. I should add that

PSNA's Adam helped us with set up and with the clean-up.

It was a full-on day for all.



Photos: Kathy Ross

## Disarmament

*In August several WILPF Aotearoa members joined a zoom discussion, facilitated by the Australian-based Pacific Peace Network: Suzanne Loughlin our current president, Liz Remmerswaal in her role with World Beyond War, Edwina Hughes representing Peace Movement Aotearoa also wearing many other hats, and Celine Kearney*

*as the current Asia Pacific Alternate on WILPF's International Board.*

I came away feeling shocked and powerless at the experience of people all around the Pacific. Guam, already a strategic US military base, faces having the development of a missile defence system at 20 points around the island. Testing and using these weapons will poison ground water, coastal fishing grounds and the fish. The Philippines, where US military bases were closed in the early 1990's, now has nine agreed locations for US military bases, making the country one big military base. I saw the consequences of US sailors and their rest and recreation practices on Filipino women in 1987, when I was there for a Nuclear Free and Independent Hui in Manila. It can only be worse with an increase in the number of bases. There will be a joint US/Australian 600-hectare military facility in the former US base at Subic Bay which will also provide facilities for NATO forces. There are plans for military project in Belau also. So, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, the Philippines, Okinawa, in southern Japan, and Hawaii will be first strike communities. The north of Australia hosts a US military base, along with B52 fighter planes and Stealth bombers, supporting the AUKUS agreement which also entails 300 billion dollars for nuclear submarines. Aotearoa is a member of the Five-Eyes electronic communications network: the US, the UK, Canada, Australia and Aotearoa, so we are not separate from this military build-up. Our navy vessels and personnel take part in the RIMPAC military manoeuvres around Hawaii, which involves bombing one of the sacred Hawaiian Islands. Our semblance of an independent foreign policy which saw us dropped from ANZUS in the 1980's, over our refusal to host US nuclear military vessels, is long gone. And our government is neglecting following through on our opposition to the French nuclear tests in Tahiti Polynesia, by supporting local people's requests for financial support from the colonial government for those with cancers and health consequences as a legacy of the nuclear tests. WILPF Aotearoa has work to do. There are plans for a poster highlighting the need for an independent Pacific voice.

In late August there was also a meeting of the WILPF regional Asia Pacific network. From that has come plans for a zoom later this year, drawing together WILPF members from Japan, Aotearoa and Australia to share our experiences of common regional issues: including nuclear issues, militarisation, colonisation and decolonisation. And to strategize how we can respond. Watch out for the invitation to join.

Celine Kearney

## Protecting the Environment



Photo: Tessa Crisp

The [Spring 2024 issue](#) of the AA Directions magazine has an article about our vice president Pauline Tangiora's environmental activism. In the article, Pauline says:

*'Most indigenous people live on coasts, rivers or lakes, particularly in New Zealand. For many, it's where they get their food. If we destroy those, we're going to have no kaimoana. Not just for the local people, but for the world.'*

### COP29

WILPF members attended COP29 recently held in Baku, Azerbaijan. You can read about how militarism and climate finance are inseparable issues that demand urgent attention [here](#).



Image credit: WILPF

## Other news

### WILPF website

A new section has been added to the website: 'WILPF women speak'. These are recordings about the reasons the women interviewed became involved in WILPF.

You can listen here:

<https://www.wilpf.nz/wilpf-women.html>

### Submissions on Principles of the Treaty of Waitangi Bill

We will be making a submission on behalf of the Section but really encourage you to make a personal submission, too. It's easy! Go [here](#) for more information.

To help you, we will be sending some ideas for submissions in the next few days.

Submissions close on **6 January**.

## WILPF Aotearoa

### President

Suzanne Loughlin

### Vice presidents

Pauline Tangiora and Celine Kearney

### Treasurer

Barry Lee

### Section Co-ordinators

Megan Hutching

Edwina Hughes

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