

WE LIVE IN A DANGEROUS TIME

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YOUTH PEACE
SUMMIT - THE HAGUE,
JUNE 23+24 2025
DELIVERING A
MANIFESTO FOR PEACE

We live in a dangerous time. In 2020 a global **pandemic** broke out and we realized how fragile our health can be and how connected our world is. On February 22nd, 2022 my mentor, colleague and friend Veronica Pelicarić left this world, and two days later the **war** between Russia and Ukraine broke out. Six months earlier I had become a mother. Veronica questioned whether it made sense to bring new humans into this world. I rebelliously called my daughter life, Zoi.

We live in a dangerous time. In October 2023 Hamas carried out a **terrorist attack** on Israel, breaking the siege of Gaza by blowing up the fence and killing > 700 civilians, including an unknown number by Israel's own army, and around 250 people were taken hostage. What could have been resolved in a few weeks has been dragging on for over 1.5 years. Israel completely destroyed Gaza, **bombed hospitals** and food distribution points, blocked humanitarian aid and displaced people several times. They bombed Lebanon, Syria, as well as Iran.

We live in a dangerous time. Iran retaliated and now the US bombed Iran yesterday. We may be at the brink of a **third world war**. In Dutch we say: "Ik houd mijn hart vast," literally "I hold my heart", perhaps best translated as "I hold my breath," but going a bit further than just a moment of fear. Yes, I feel afraid. AND my heart is also filled with **hope**.

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We live in a dangerous time, where violence is abound. Security is a very legitimate concern. For true security, we need to **break the cycle of violence**. Working with young people on navigating conflicts nonviolently, I know that war isn't necessary. Conflicts can be navigated without violence, with a lot more skill. Instead of the twisted logic of "pre-emptive attacks", retaliation, "just wars," and increasing military spending, we have to invest in learning how to put out fires... Unarmed Civil Protection organisations are doing this work. They put out fires by **calming the nerves** and **changing the focus**. Peace organisations are working on building bridges, to counter the increasing polarization. We Build bridges by finding **commonalities**, formulating **shared interests** and **creative problem-solving**. These practices needs to become more wide spread. We need Peaceful Warriors, who do not take up weapons, but learn to wage peace.



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We live in a dangerous time. And as my friend Rivera Sun wrote: "When fear is used to control us, love is how we rebel!" It is not enough to only want peace; we must also know *how* to build peace and develop the skills to do it. Peaceful Rebels must learn to transform the battlefield, rather than to defeat an enemy. Peaceful Rebels do not only see knowledge as power, but also strive for wisdom, truth, empathy and compassion.

We live in a dangerous time. And we need to make our world safe again. Martin Luther King said: "We have guided missiles and misguided men." All the nuclear weapons can destroy our world over ten times! In the West we consume so much, that if everyone'd do that, we'd need six planets! Our behaviors will lead to a slow, collective suicide.



My heart is filled with **hope**, because I see so many **young people** here. Will you join **The Great Turning**, as Joanna Macy calls it, or what the Dalai Lama calls the **Revolution of Compassion**? With intention, practice, and courage, everyone can make a conscious choice for a peaceful world. A world where conflicts are resolved without violence. A society with institutions that support peace, in which nonviolence is embedded in the culture. A world in which humanity treats this planet earth and all our fellow inhabitants with respect. Our future is at stake.

Let's work together for a future worth living. Let's work together for a **peaceful future** where we do not just survive, but in which the whole Earth can **thrive**.

