

Lest we Forget – Statement from the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), Yearly Meeting of Aotearoa New Zealand, Te Hāhi Tūhauwiri, May 2014

On the eve of commemorations of World War I, Quakers in Aotearoa New Zealand are concerned that history is not reinvented to glorify war.

We remember the loss of life, the destruction of the environment, the courage of soldiers, dissenters and conscientious objectors; we remember all those who still suffer the ongoing trauma of war.

We also note the increasing use of scarce resources for war. In Aotearoa New Zealand over ten million dollars a day is being spent to maintain our armed forces in a state of ‘combat readiness’ (1).

We actively support alternative processes for resolving conflict and violence both within and between nations.

We reaffirm our words of 1987:

“We totally oppose all wars, all preparation for war, all use of weapons and coercion by force, and all military alliances; no end could ever justify such means.

We equally and actively oppose all that leads to violence among people and nations, and violence to other species and to our planet. This has been our testimony to the whole world for over three centuries.

The primary reason for this stand is our conviction that there is that of God in every one which makes each person too precious to damage or destroy.

Refusal to fight with weapons is not surrender. We are not passive when threatened by the greedy, the cruel, the tyrant, the unjust.

We may disagree with the views and actions of the politician or the soldier who opts for a military solution, but we still respect and cherish the person.

What we call for in this statement is a commitment to make the building of peace a priority and to make opposition to war absolute.

We challenge New Zealanders to stand up and be counted on what is no less than the affirmation of life and the destiny of humankind.”

(From Yearly Meeting of Aotearoa New Zealand, Statement on Peace, 1987)

(1) ‘Some comparative facts and figures from the 2014 Budget’, Peace Movement Aotearoa, 16 May 2014