

# PSYCHOLOGISTS FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

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## Who Benefits from Global Violence?

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Military, economic, and environmental violence in the era of globalization cause immense suffering and ultimately threaten the existence of life as we know it. We seem to struggle endlessly, and sometimes even effectively, over whether a particular war should be continued or ended, whether some displaced victims of globalization will be fed and treated humanely, whether modest measures--less than what is needed--will be adopted to save our increasingly warmer and more toxic environment, whether some scandalous rip-off by one or another contractor will end.

As citizens we have negligible power, however, to bring certain crucial items to the public agenda: Can we prevent--rather than merely respond to--the heart-wrenching suffering that surrounds us? Should war and military preparedness continue? Should all people have the right to derive resources from their own communities sufficient to sustain healthy lives before wealthy conglomerates are permitted to usurp those resources? Will electoral and legislative processes be made free from the influence of big money? Could the vast resources used to promote enmity be used to promote empathy instead?

The absence of these items from the larger public agenda is not an accident. It is a product of a human-built social order in which some people and institutions control most of the resources and make the decisions that necessitate violence, while operating with minimal accountability. As we fight our immediate struggles, the hidden levers of this larger system continue to turn. The common root of war, poverty, and environmental destruction is a system inordinately influenced by a small, interconnected group of corporate, military, and government leaders. They have the power to instill fear, to protect and to increase their excessive fortunes, and to restrict information, particularly about their own clandestine dealings. Yet such people, beneath their cloaks, are a part of the larger human community with different and more inclusive realities. Psychology can help speak for the universal need for security for all people.

Psychologists for Social Responsibility is committed to examining just what must change if mass violence and global destruction are to end. Recurring direct and structural violence flows mainly from the daily workings of an identifiable corporate power elite. By controlling and limiting the public agenda, they obstruct efforts aimed at eliminating poverty, moving seriously toward disarmament, or protecting our ravaged environment. At the same time, they ensure that their own power to exploit people and planet and to control legislative and electoral practices remains undiminished. But they can be influenced by public pressure and by appeals to our common humanity. Creating a better and more peaceful future depends upon understanding and confronting these forces and upon promoting (in ways large and small) the voices for peace, justice, sustainability and freedom from the scourge of poverty and war.

*Psychologists for Social Responsibility seeks to bring greater psychological knowledge and public awareness to the issues highlighted in this brief overview. For more information, please contact us at [info@psysr.org](mailto:info@psysr.org). We encourage new PsySR members to join in these efforts. Media inquiries are also welcome.*

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