

MacBride Peace Prize Laudation to Prof Noam Chomsky

By Irene Gendzier (Professor Emeritus, Boston University)

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I am deeply grateful to Joseph Gerson for inviting me to join you in an event whose importance is lost on none who dare to think of our future and that which we leave for the next generation, if indeed, their members will survive the indifference to climate change and nuclear politics that may yet be our legacy.

Such indifference is not only anathema to those who are here today, it is a condition impossible to sustain in the presence of their knowledge, experience and history of struggle for peace and nuclear disarmament.

Although he is not among us, Sean MacBride's spirit is very much present. No more so today than in his persistent work for peace and, I quote: "the prohibition of nuclear weapons as a first step towards the ultimate goal of General and Complete Disarmament" the appeal by Lawyers Against Nuclear War that he launched in 1987.

Among those whose voices have resonated with that appeal, the appeal for disarmament and the elimination of nuclear weapons, is the just recipient of the Sean MacBride Peace Prize, Prof Noam Chomsky, who has consistently called for the elimination of all nuclear weapons, and who has consistently reminded the world, as does the 2018 Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists Doomsday Clock, "it is very possible to take away the nuclear threat to mankind and human survival."

In the present context, it is useful to remember that current US policy towards Iran cannot permit us to forget the world wide relief, as Prof Chomsky described it, at the time of the negotiation the Iran Deal between Iran and the 5 veto holding members of the UN SC and Germany.

As he pointed out, the US Arms Control Association held the position that "the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action establishes a strong and effective formula for blocking all of the pathways by which Iran could acquire material for nuclear weapons for more than a generation and a verification system to promptly deter possible efforts by Iran to covertly pursue weapons that will last indefinitely."

Prof Chomsky did not fail to recognize that those who opposed such a policy included the U.S., and notably the Republican Party, as well US allies in the Middle East, Israel and Saudi Arabia.

He also did not fail to point out that some regarded this agreement as inadequate and called for a Nuclear Free Zone in the Middle East in keeping with the NPT, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the "most important arms control treaty of all," that was blocked by The US, Canada and Great Britain in order to protect Israel's nuclear monopoly in the region.

It is possible, however, that Washington's effort to nix the Iran Deal will backfire and inspire Washington's European allies to adopt a less sycophantic policy towards the US, and inspire a more critical policy towards Israel among its long time US supporters.

Considering the potential consequences of these blockages makes it all the more urgent to reconsider US policy in the Middle East and the human and political debris that is its Middle East legacy.

In a world long saturated with *'fake news'* Noam Chomsky has been the pioneer of exposing the truths at the root of US (foreign) policies, systematically revealing their origins and purpose, *not in an act of speaking truth to power*, but as a commitment to raising public consciousness about policies and the deception that masks them, including those stemming from the so-called 'war on terror,' that has virtually guaranteed permanent war. The purpose of such consciousness raising is "to create mass resistance," as Chomsky wrote paraphrasing Bertand Russell's declaration in 1967 at the time of the 2nd session of the International War Crimes Tribunal.

Prof Chomsky's call to raise public awareness has been heard throughout the world, where it has resonated across lines of race, class and gender to reach those held in contempt by elites, be they political, professional or academic in nature.

Those who listen have not turned away from Prof. Chomsky's repeated condemnations of American imperialism and accompanying wars and foreign interventions. As a result, they have often been forced to reconsider what they have long accepted without question, and in the process, begun to see the world of US policy as others have experienced it.

Recall Chomsky's anti-war activism, which he never fails to tell us, began very modestly against the war in Vietnam and Southeast Asia, before it marked a generation that did not forget.

Recall his decades long struggle against US supported authoritarian regimes across Central America, Argentina, Chile, and his support of popular movements as in Guatemala, Nicaragua, el Salvador, and Columbia.

Recall his increasingly vocal opposition to US policy and intervention in the Middle East, as he denounced Washington's fraudulent claims of Iraq's possession of weapons of mass destruction, the justification for the US led war on Iraq, which decimated the country.

Recall Prof. Chomsky's categorical denunciations of Washington's overt and covert support for Israel's expansion and continued control of Occupied Palestinian territory and Israel's repeated massacres in Gaza that continue to evoke complicit support in Washington.

Recall Prof. Chomsky's repeated denunciations of US supported Israeli wars on Lebanon, and his visits to the Sabra and Chattila Refugee Camp as well as the Khiyam Prison, far from the front page and the official tour site.

In a conflict that has long been labelled as a permanent trademark of the 'perpetually troubled Middle East', Prof Chomsky has never ceased decrying such self-serving caricatures, preferring to reaffirm his conviction that in Palestine and Israel, as in the rest of the Middle East, the resolution of such conflicts are not out of reach. They are inseparable from common struggles for peace as well as social justice.

In the 2018 Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists Doomsday Clock, "It is 2 minutes to midnight," editor John Mecklin reminded us not only that "this is a dangerous time," but that it is one "of our own making," and "humankind" has the capacity to control and eliminate it.

This has long been the message behind Prof. Chomsky's urgent wake-up call regarding the risks of nuclear war and the seemingly endless wars that intensify its risks.

For his profound knowledge, his boundless humanity and his persistent hope, we remain forever grateful.