28 June 2014

On this day 100 years ago, Archduke Ferdinand of Austria and his wife were assassinated in Sarajevo in an action that led to the First World War. Unchecked militarism in Europe was also a major factor.

Today is also Armed Forces Day, one of the clearest indications of the re-militarisation of British society. Established in 2009 to increase public support for the forces, there are over 200 public events, many billed as 'family fun days'. This week also saw Uniform to Work Day promoting the reserve forces and 'Camo Day' in schools.

Behind this PR offensive is a raft of policy that is embedding 'public support' for the military within our civilian institutions - from the promotion of 'military ethos' in schools, to the Armed Forces Community Covenant and Corporate Covenant that aim to enlist every local authority and major business to support the armed forces and aid recruitment.

Over 453 UK service personnel have died in Afghanistan; 34 were just 18 or 19 years old. Thousands more have to cope with long-term physical and mental problems. With so many military casualties - not to mention uncounted numbers of civilians deaths - and new security threats that waging war has created, surely it is time to reflect on the longer-term impact of our military culture and to ask what steps we might take to prevent war itself.

Signed by:

- Philip Austin, Northern Friends Peace Board
- Richard Bickle, Fellowship of Reconciliation (England)
- Hannah Brock, War Resisters' International
- Kevin Burr, National Justice and Peace Network
- Pat Gaffney, Pax Christi UK
- Ben Griffin, Veterans for Peace UK
- Bruce Kent, Movement for the Abolition of War
- Jan Melichar, Peace Pledge Union
- Lorraine Mirham, UK Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
- Emma Sangster, Forces Watch