



How to peacefully remove violent dictatorships, authoritarian regimes and oppressive foreign occupiers for achieving world peace

By Paul Sinclair (One World One People) 1/3/2022

No matter how brutal and oppressive an autocratic regime is, it cannot hold onto power if no one cooperates with it. Fear, intimidation and violence are normally the means oppressors use to force their will on others and silence any opposition to maintain their control over the populace. People can only take so much suffering caused by an oppressive regime, but when brave individuals and organised groups use violence then they will almost always be choosing to fight against the more numerous and powerful weapons of their oppressors which is never a good idea. Oppressive regimes are always well equipped to use overwhelming violence through greater weapons, logistics and forces. That's why violent uprisings throughout history have often triggered brutal crackdowns that have left already vulnerable populations even more helpless and even worse off than before.

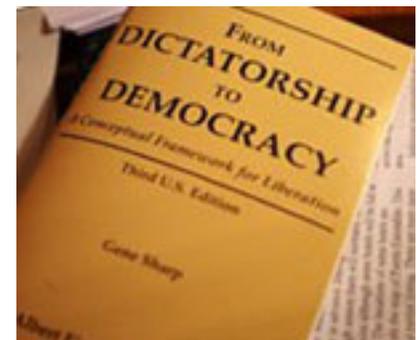


Yet there is another option that is often little known about and even less properly understood. It is the skilful use of individual and organised group non-violence.

As we will see, it is in reality the only means to bring about a lasting, peacefully-lead, democratic society.

'Non-violence in its dynamic condition means conscious suffering. It does not mean meek submission to the will of the evil-doer, but it means putting of one's whole soul against the will of the tyrant. Working under this law of our being, it is possible for a single individual to defy the whole might of an unjust empire to save his honour, his religion, his soul, and lay the foundation for that empire's fall or its regeneration.' – Mahatma Gandhi

In Egypt in 2011, we saw an organised and deliberate effort to use non-violent methods to successfully remove an entrenched Egyptian Leadership and demand widespread reform. Much of that organised effort was inspired by the information from a little known, but highly influential book: *From Dictatorship to Democracy*, by Gene Sharp. Gene Sharp has dedicated his life to the study of non-violence and is a leading world authority on its practical use. We will now give a brief summary of some of the key steps he advocates that were successfully practised in the Middle East: 1



<https://www.aeinstein.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/FDTD.pdf>

Develop a strategy for winning freedom and a vision of the society you want

Using Facebook and other internet social networking sites Egyptian young people helped to carefully organise demonstrations and protest marches trying to keep them as peaceful as possible. Egyptian protestors demanded nothing less than the removal of the President Hosni Mubarak and his deputies to be replaced by civilian rule decided by democratic elections. They also demanded an end to martial law, corruption as well as freedom and justice for all.

Overcome fear by small acts of resistance

In Egypt, we saw protestors occupy Tahrir Square and openly defy orders to leave. That continued occupation — even despite violent efforts to remove them — became a powerful symbolic focal point for their campaign.



Use colours and symbols to demonstrate unity of resistance

When protestors marched on Pearl Square to attempt to re-occupy it after security forces had violently cleared it, they wore white sheets symbolising their readiness for martyrdom; others carried the national flag of Bahrain; others carried flowers and signs that stated they were peaceful. Teenage girls bravely risked being shot by entering ‘no go’ zones in front of armed security forces. They waved flowers above their heads before laying them gently down on the ground in front of the on-looking security forces as a symbolic peace offering. With the eyes of the world watching a short time later the security forces were ordered to leave the area, allowing the protestors to retake Pearl Square without any blood being shed.



Learn from historical examples of the successes of non-violent movements

Mahatma Gandhi famously used non-violence to defeat and overturn unjust laws that oppressed Indians in South Africa; liberate India from British Rule, and peacefully end numerous violent uprisings during the partition of India. Those are but a few of his extraordinary achievements often against seemingly impossible odds. He claimed, ‘I have been practising with scientific precision non-violence and its possibilities for an unbroken period of over fifty years. I have applied it in every walk of life — domestic, institutional, economic and political. I know of no single case in which it has failed.’

His experiments that led him to develop the science of non-violence can be studied in detail in his book: Satyagraha in South Africa which can be read online for free via this link.

https://www.mkgandhi.org/ebks/satyagraha_in_south_africa.pdf

‘The science of non-violence’ as Gandhi often called it, was later used by Martin Luther King Junior to help African Americans in the United States win civil rights. Nelson Mandela also used it to peacefully end apartheid in South Africa. Indeed, history provides plenty of instances when men and women bravely faced violence with non-violence — sometimes even allowing themselves to be slaughtered rather than retaliate. The result on those occasions was often that armed opponents threw down their weapons and fled, shamed and shaken to the core of their being by the sight of brave souls willing to value the lives of others above their own. On other occasions, previously hard-hearted and determined enemies were converted into admirers and friends.



‘In one village a notoriously fierce communal agitator came up to Gandhi in front of hundreds of paralyzed onlookers, put his hands around Gandhi’s slender throat, and began choking the life out of him. Such is the height to which Gandhi had grown that there was not even a flicker of hostility in his eyes, not a word of protest. He yielded himself completely to the flood of love within him, and the man broke down like a little child and fell sobbing at his feet. For those who watched, it seemed a miracle. For Gandhi, who had got used to the “miracles” of love, it only proved for the hundredth time in his own life the depth of the words ... “Hatred does not cease by hatred at any time; hatred ceases by love. This is an unalterable law.” ’ – Eknath Easwaran, *Gandhi the Man: The Story of His Transformation*. 2

Use non-violent “weapons”

The book *From Dictatorship to Democracy* lists 198 non-violent “weapons”. Some of the obvious ones used in Egypt included demonstrations, marches, labour strikes and various acts of civil disobedience. Any actions that weaken a regime and strengthen and unify the populace can be considered as effective non-violent “weapons”. In Egypt not only did the majority of protestors march peacefully, some even picked up rubbish and cleaned the streets as they went. Others organised volunteer groups to carry out civil duties like local street cleaning, all of which demonstrated that they were not violent, disorganised protestors intent on causing trouble and destroying things; but the very opposite. They showed they were people of good character who had only the highest interests of their society at heart. They showed they could therefore be trusted by the populace who then supported them in decisive numbers.



Identify the dictatorship’s pillars of support and develop a strategy for undermining each one

When the Egyptian authorities mobilised the army, tanks entered the streets of Cairo. Identifying the Egyptian army as the central pillar of support for the regime, protestors soon set about embracing the soldiers as their own. With the resulting growing sympathy and support amongst soldiers for the protestors, the army soon became the key defender of the protestors. Generally speaking, it is far easier for military forces to carry out orders to crack down violently on angry protestors who show hostility toward them than it is to attack peaceful protestors who openly embrace them as friends.

Use oppressive or brutal acts by the regime as a recruiting tool for your movement

Any use of violence by a regime against peaceful protestors should be reported truthfully and publicised as much as possible. Nothing outrages people and stirs them to action faster than seeing grave injustices carried out against peaceful, un-armed, innocent people. But remember: for a peaceful movement to be successful, it must be able to seize the moral high ground and hold on to it with resolute determination. Any desire for revenge must be inwardly extinguished.

In Egypt, when Hosni Mubarak announced publicly he would not be standing down even after thirteen days of continuous protests in which many had been killed and injured, many began to lose heart. Then Google Executive Wael Ghonim — who had just been released from police custody after twelve days for protesting — was invited to speak on TV. He had been a key figure in using Facebook to help organise the protests from the start. In an emotional interview in which he spoke from his heart and shed tears for those injured and killed in the protests, he humbly urged non-violence, unity and courage. His interview re-energised the protest and hundreds of thousands of people returned to the streets of Cairo to protest the following day.



Isolate or remove from the movement people who use or advocate violence

Organised groups of volunteers searched protestors who were trying to enter Tahrir Square and confiscated any weapons they found on them. Even when anti-government protestors came under attack from stone-throwing pro-government supporters and some began to throw stones back; other brave souls deliberately put themselves in the line of fire to try to stop them.

Practice peace in thought, word and deed

Peaceful behaviour comes from keeping a close watch over our thoughts and keeping our minds free from the mind-numbing poison of hatred and the explosive fires of anger. Someone can beat drums and scream and yell angry messages and all they will achieve is the creation of an atmosphere around them that disturbs everyone's peace. A truly peaceful protest must be welcoming and inclusive. The true test of a peaceful protest is that it must create an atmosphere where even frail elderly people and children who want to participate will feel safe.

For more detailed, practical information on organising non-violent opposition to oppressive dictatorships, authoritarian regimes and unwanted foreign occupiers *From Dictatorship to Democracy* can be viewed and downloaded online for free and is available in many languages:

<https://www.aeinstein.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/FDTD.pdf>

How to help those living under oppressive regimes, and also to help bring about world peace

All of the information above will be of limited use if the will of the people is overwhelmingly paralysed by fear. Furthermore, real non-violence cannot be practiced on mass by people who have become drugged by the poison of anger, hatred and the desire for vengeance. What can be done to overcome these dangers?

For non-violence to be most effective it needs to be applied to not just our actions, but to our thoughts and words as well. Mahatma Gandhi taught that to wrestle with and against evil in the world we must overcome it within ourselves first. Having won the inner battle a person can then help overcome it in the world. For example, a person may campaign for peace, yet display so much anger in their “peace demonstrations” that all they achieve in the end is the disruption of everybody's peace, including their own. This is why Gandhi would tell people to first be the change they want to see in others.



A dedicated practitioner of peace must always fight an inner war against anger, hatred, fear, greed, envy, vice and so on. It is these inner thieves that will rob us of our precious jewels of inner peace and happiness and keep us blindly chained as slaves to pain and suffering. One who takes up the inner struggle against them soon learns to become a master of self-control. Through keeping a careful watch over the mind any inner thieves that arise are quickly identified, arrested and evicted. The more we faithfully do that, the more it becomes a habit, the weaker those thoughts and feelings become and the stronger we grow on the inside. In this way, rather than being enslaved by our emotions we calmly and effortlessly learn to channel our emotions into wise, constructive actions. Steadfastly marching toward inner freedom and happiness we slowly gather an army of good habits and qualities which eagerly join the battle. Victory is at hand when we begin to lose all fear of losing our mortal body as we start to experience our true nature as an immortal soul. As Gandhi himself once said, ‘A man who fears no one on earth would consider it too troublesome even to summon up anger against one who is vainly trying to injure him.’

One sign of a true spiritual warrior is that they have no problem forgiving those who wrong them. They know that the key to genuinely forgiving others is always to first separate people from their actions:

‘Hate the sin and not the sinner’ is a precept which, though easy enough to understand, is rarely practiced, and that is why the poison of hatred spreads in the world. – *Mahatma Gandhi*

Forgiveness does not mean allowing wrongdoers to escape from the consequences of their wrong actions. Nor does it mean freeing them from their responsibilities to make amends for those wrong actions. It just means that one who successfully forgives another effectively renounces all desire for revenge and all feelings of anger and hatred toward the wrongdoer. Anger and hatred stress the nervous system and poison the mind. They bring only suffering to whoever harbours them in their consciousness as well as to others they interact with. Forgiveness is holiness, it is the might of the mightiest. Forgiveness is the sign of civilised person; it is the divinely-inspired human force that prevents humanity from destroying itself.

Meditation: the greatest weapon of all for winning inner struggles

Since ancient times, meditation has been used as the most effective means to turn the searchlight of the senses inwards to experience the soul. Meditation practice is used to elicit higher states of consciousness and to facilitate progressive, authentic spiritual growth as evidenced by increasing inner happiness and contentment. Regular daily meditation also provides a vital means for all those involved in non-violent struggle to temporarily escape from the world and all its problems to rest in the inner peace of the soul kingdom within. Recharged and refreshed, with soul calmness and clarified awareness, they are then able to carry out their vital tasks and duties more effectively and efficiently. Ever deeper meditation also unfolds soul qualities. Evidence of innate soul qualities includes humility, radiance of character, fearlessness, purity of heart, self-discipline, wisdom, straightforwardness, truthfulness, gentleness, compassion for all, peacefulness, freedom from anger, hatred and revenge; absence of conceit; diminishing desires to possess worldly things and more. All are the qualities of the true spiritual warriors the world needs to win not just freedom and justice for all, but the holy grail of long-lasting world peace.



For more information on meditation please visit: <http://csa-davis.org/sites/meditation>

If you or your family and friends live in a place where the internet and information are restricted please save and preserve the PDF versions of the books recommended in this article in case these resources become unavailable.

How to help those living under oppressive regimes, and also to help bring about world peace

1. This resource has been written in the hope of helping people to successfully gain their freedom from oppressive regimes with a minimum of bloodshed. It is also humbly offered as a means to empower those who desire world peace for themselves and their loved ones. In order to help spread accurate knowledge of non-violent resistance where it is most needed please share it with others.
2. As a service to others and the planet endeavour to live consciously by making regular, honest efforts to observe your own thoughts and behaviour. Change what you don't like and be the change you want to see in others.
3. As a service to others please use the link above on how to meditate and endeavour to make meditation into a regular spiritual habit. Meditate to cultivate inner happiness so that even when the storms of life's trials are howling all around you, you will remain calm and undisturbed — centred in the bliss of soul awareness. You will then be much more able to make clear-headed, wise decisions and skilfully take efficient and effective actions to overcome whatever difficulties you are facing. You will also become much more successful at whatever worthwhile endeavours you decide to undertake and in this way you will find lasting happiness and fulfil the purposes of life itself.

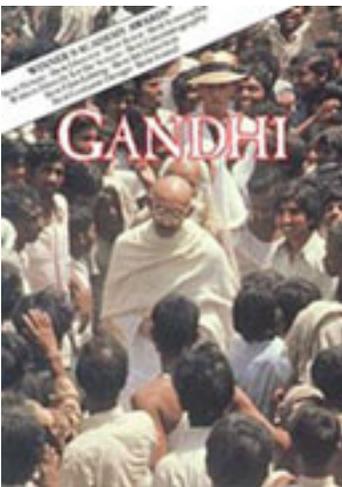


Further reading:

<https://www.oneworldonepeople.org/Gandhi-Satyagraha.htm>

<https://www.oneworldonepeople.org/Book.html> (Coming soon: the second edition of our charity book to teach children and young people about the power of non-violence and forgiveness.)

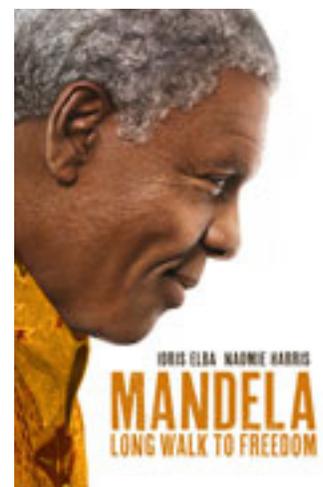
Films for education and inspiration:



Gandhi (1982)



Selma (2014)



Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom (2013)

References:

1. Ruaridh Arrow, Gene Sharp: Author of the nonviolent revolution rulebook, BBC, 21/2/2011.
2. Eknath Easwaran (2001), Gandhi the Man: The Story of His Transformation, 3rd edition, Nilgiri Press.