



FARINGDON PEACE GROUP

MARCH 2021

Newsletter 12

MONTHLY MEETING

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

SATURDAY 13th MARCH

'10 years on from the war on Libya'.
With Jeremy Corbyn, Claudia Webb et al.
Organised by 'Arise'.

WEDNESDAY 7th APRIL

FPG Monthly meeting via Zoom 7.30pm
Speaker: Fabian Hamilton,
Shadow Minister for Peace and Disarmament.

THANK YOU

Thank You to those who have sent in their
contributions for this edition.
Please send items for inclusion next time, to
jennyridd@yahoo.co.uk by 24th March

Wednesday 3rd March at 7.30pm
Where? In the comfort of your own home.
Speaker: Kate Hudson, Gen Sec. CND
The new Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear
Weapons (TPNW). What Next?
What should we do about it.
Zoom link has been sent

THE PLACE, which replaced the Faringdon
Family Centre, has been innovative in
continuing to support families over the past
year. They have linked up with 38 families
online and given support and practical advice,
seeing some real deprivation and need. They
run some of the groups online and have linked
up new Mums and babies at a time that has
been so isolating. Val

SOME GOOD NEWS AT LAST! (from CAAT)

Campaign Against Arms Trade has been nominated for the 2021 Nobel Peace Prize!

A few days ago we got a surprise Zoom call
from The American Friends Service Committee
(AFSC) to let us know we've been nominated
alongside our partner Mwatana for Human
Rights, a grassroots organisation working in
Yemen. As a CAAT supporter, we wanted you
to be the first to hear this incredible news.

The nomination from AFSC and Quaker Peace
& Social Witness (QPSW) aims to draw
attention to CAAT's work to stop the UK
government's sales of arms to Saudi Arabia,
particularly our ongoing legal challenge to UK
arms sales for use in the war in Yemen.

This is also an opportunity to shine a spotlight
on the suffering of the Yemeni people who are
experiencing the world's worst humanitarian
disaster.

Millions are facing starvation as a direct result
of the actions of the Saudi-led coalition.

This is all made possible by weapons supplied
by the UK and sustained by its ongoing military
support. Inspirational Yemeni groups like
Mwatana have shown remarkable dedication in
documenting human rights violations by all
parties to the war and raising the voices of
victims in exceptionally dangerous
circumstances.

We are truly honoured that our campaigning is
being acknowledged in this way. This
nomination is a tribute to all of us. If you have
ever signed a petition, come to a protest or
event, shared on social media, written to your
MP, made a donation, or taken any other
action against the arms trade, you have helped
to make this happen.

If you're as excited as we are, you can share
this news using email or social media. But
really we just wanted to say thank you: this
achievement would not have been possible
without your support.

Share the news! Share the news!

Saudi Arabia

A series of Parliamentary Questions by Emily Thornberry MP revealed that a number of airstrikes in Yemen have not been recorded in its confidential log of alleged breaches of international humanitarian law. Many of these involved civilian casualties. The Observer, 03/01/2021

STOP ARMING SAUDI

Estimating that over 230,000 people have died as a result of the conflict. The arms sales that have fueled the war have been immoral, and we believe they are also illegal. A legal case brought by CAAT saw a temporary halt to new licences in June 2019. This meant hundreds of millions of pounds worth of arms sales being put on hold. However, in July 2020 the Government announced that it was resuming sales. This followed a review claiming that the many war crimes documented by the UN and NGOs on the ground were “isolated incidents” and did not reflect a pattern. This was a whitewash. These “isolated incidents” actually amounted to hundreds of attacks on residential areas, schools, hospitals, civilian gatherings, and agricultural land and facilities. This claim was further undermined in January 2021, when a series of Parliamentary Questions by Emily Thornberry revealed that a number of attacks on civil targets had not been included by the Ministry of Defence on its list of possible war crimes. We have launched a new legal case to challenge the decision. The Government may think that the widespread destruction of schools, hospitals and homes can be dismissed as “isolated incidents” but

we do not.

An investigation by CAAT and the Guardian found that BAE Systems alone had generated £15 billion worth of revenues from sales and services for the Saudi military in the first five years of the conflict.

The bombing has been devastating for Yemen, but it has been lucrative for the arms companies. CAAT estimates that the total value of arms exports to Saudi forces since the war began is at least £18 billion. With a new President in the White House, it is possible that we may see a change to US policy regarding Saudi Arabia. This could have a major impact on other arms-dealing governments like the UK. As this anniversary approaches, it is more important than ever that the war is brought to an end.”

20,000 The number of air strikes by Saudi-led forces since the war began

230,000 The number of people the United Nations estimates have died as a result of the war

£18bn The total value of arms and military services provided for Saudi forces by UK companies. from CAAT News

ARMS SALES TO SAUDI ARABIA

New reports suggest that the US administration has frozen new arms sales to Saudi Arabia and the UAE. This is great news which comes after years of pressure from anti-arms trade groups in the US – and it is an opportunity for us to pressure the UK government to do the same.

Thousands of civilians have been killed in Yemen by air strikes by the Saudi- and UAE-led coalition. These attacks are carried out with weapons supplied by the US and the UK, and sustained by their ongoing military support

This war would not be possible without these arms sales.

Last week, the US Secretary of State, Anthony Blinken, reiterated Biden’s Presidential campaign promise to “end our support for the military

campaign led by Saudi Arabia in Yemen.” In **December, UNICEF warned that “Yemen is teetering on the edge of complete collapse.** Over 80% of people need humanitarian assistance and protection, Including 12 million children.

A political solution is urgently needed.

Hundreds of us have already contacted our MPs to urge the UK government to stop the arms sales, and to work together with the new US Administration to bring an end to this devastating war.

If you agree that the UK should also freeze arms sales to Saudi Arabia, go to the Stop the War website and join the petition to Boris Johnson.

UN court rejects UK claim to Chagos Islands in favour of Mauritius

(taken from the Guardian 29.01.21)

The UK has been urged to end its “unlawful occupation” of the Chagos Islands by the prime minister of Mauritius, after Britain’s claim to sovereignty over the strategically important islands in the Indian Ocean was comprehensively rejected by the United Nation’s special international maritime court in Hamburg.

In 2019 an advisory opinion by the International Court of Justice, endorsed by the UN general assembly, found the UK in breach of international law by seeking to maintain its claim to the archipelago. The UK ignored the ICJ and the UN opinions, dismissing them as advisory, which prompted Mauritius to go to the international maritime court to press its claim. It did so by asking the maritime court to resolve its separate maritime dispute with the Maldives, the other nearest island to the waters around the archipelago.

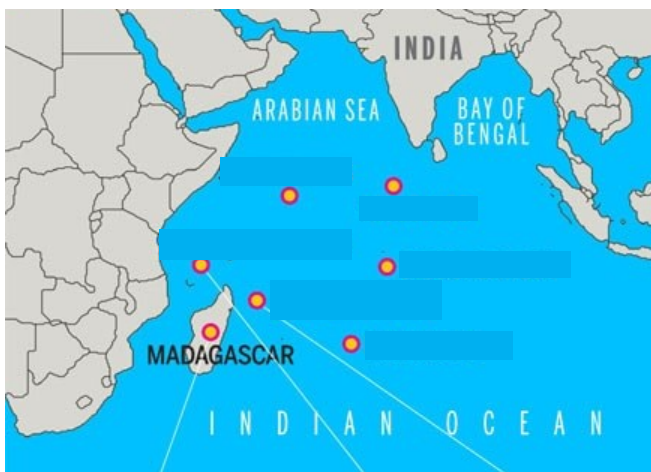
Philippe Sands QC, who represented Mauritius in the case, said: “This judgment is damning. It has said near unanimously there is no basis for the UK claim to the islands. The UK has to go away and reflect on what it intends to do, but its current position is untenable.

“The UK has to abandon its own claims and instead use its endeavours to support a resolution of the maritime dispute between Maldives and Mauritius. Above all, it has to abandon its position that it has held since June 2019 that it still has sovereignty over the islands, despite the ruling of the ICJ. The maritime court has ruled that ICJ judgment is legally depositive.

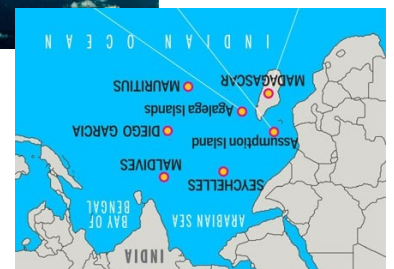
The UK in effect rejected the ruling, saying: “The UK has no doubt as to our sovereignty over the British Indian Ocean Territory, which has been under continuous British sovereignty since 1814. Mauritius has never held sovereignty over the British Indian Ocean Territories and the UK does not recognise its claim.”

And your Quiz question

Which of these dots is the Chagos islands (Diego Garcia) and how many other dots can you name?



ANSWER



NO RETURN TO BLAIR WARS – ONLINE LAUNCH

WITH **LINDSEY GERMAN**
AND **ANDREW MURRAY**
WEDS 10 MARCH – 7PM

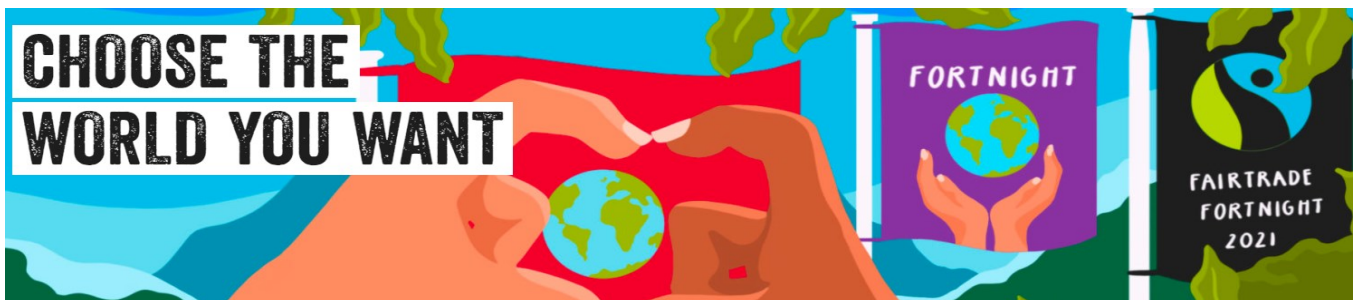


Anti-war opinion is deeply embedded within British society and has been since the disaster of the Iraq War. The desire for a new foreign policy was part of the attraction of Jeremy Corbyn's Labour Party; to distance itself from Corbyn, and the anti-war movement he represents, the Labour leadership has recently endorsed attacks on Stop the War - with accusations that by opposing wars we support dictators.

To rebuke these attacks Lindsey German (Stop the War Convenor) and Andrew Murray (Former Stop the War Chair and Advisor to Jeremy Corbyn) have produced a new pamphlet, [No Return to Blair Wars – A Reply to Open Labour](#), clarifying Stop the War Coalition's anti-imperialist philosophy and setting out the left's foreign policy choices.

As a result of the overwhelming response and debate provoked by the pamphlet we've decided to host an online launch event where you can hear from the authors and put forward your questions on the topics discussed in the pamphlet. We look forward to seeing you there.

Info and to register: office@stopwar.org.uk



This morning I have been to Gaza!! I was visiting the craft workshops of the Atfaluna Society for Deaf Children, which produces beautiful handicrafts for Hadeel, the Edinburgh based shop for fairtrade Palestinian goods. It was the first event in Fairtrade Fortnight's virtual 'Choose the World You Want' Festival which runs until the 8th March. Do check the website below for a great variety of events, linking fairtrade with climate change.

It was not a polished presentation but all the more real for that. Despite technical glitches it was an amazing experience to wander through the different workshops – carpentry, embroidery, weaving, painting, ceramics - with an expert guide showing us how traditional Palestinian crafts are being preserved by people with hearing problems who would otherwise find it very difficult to find work. Atfaluna also provides income for some 250 women embroiderers who work from home. There are additional challenges in obtaining the raw materials and in exporting the finished products, but they source as much as they can locally and recycle waste such as paper to reuse. We finished in the huge and beautiful showroom where the finished articles are displayed – sadly only to those who live in Gaza, as others would need a permit to enter.

Craft sales fund education for 250 deaf children and help more than 5,000 hearing-impaired people and their families annually through speech therapy, audiology clinics and community outreach activities. 55% of the 134 members of staff are hearing-impaired. One woodworker we met was deaf and had also lost his sight. He communicated through sign language, feeling the hands of the person signing.

It was an inspiring visit to an impressive organisation, which does so much in difficult conditions for people who might otherwise be marginalised and stigmatised. It has encouraged me to sign up for a tour of another Hadeel producer in Bethlehem on March 8th. Why not join me?

<https://www.fairtrade.org.uk/choose-the-world-you-want>

<https://www.hadeel.org/> and <https://www.hadeel.org/suppliers/atfaluna/>

Karen

IN PALESTINE, CLASSROOMS ARE NOT IMMUNE FROM THE VIOLENCE CAUSED BY THE OCCUPATION

All around the world, teachers, children, and families are making incredible efforts to adapt to the conditions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic, keeping up invaluable education while also caring for physical and mental health.

In Palestine, however, there is an additional challenge: Israeli occupation. Recently, UN human rights bodies warned that a Palestinian school in the occupied West Bank is under “imminent threat of demolition” by Israeli authorities. The statement added that a total of 53 schools currently have Israeli demolition orders “placed against them”.

In Palestine, there is no safety in schools; classrooms are not immune from the violence caused by the occupation and childhoods are scarred by the trauma of it.

In the West Bank, schoolchildren fear checkpoints, tear gas, and bulldozers. For us growing up in the Gaza Strip, we fear bombs falling from the sky and are ready to jump from our chairs at any time during class. No child should have to feel this way.

As children or young adults, you spend almost the same amount of time in school as you do at home. The connection you develop to school is disrupted, however, when it is where you first experience a bomb exploding nearby, the place where you first scream for your life

Imagine growing up in a place where everyone around you has been exposed to political unrest, where your basic rights are stripped from you as soon as you are born. You soon learn that you live in what feels like an open-air prison. It is a kind of psychological strangulation, a parallel to the Israeli checkpoints and blockade. You doubt the worth of your own existence, when your life has been so determined before you were even born – the marginalisation and stigmatisation produced by colonialism. Eventually you realise that the Palestinian identity becomes one of the most important aspects of your self-identity

Being born into, and growing up within, this reality of oppression and powerlessness leads to divergent consequences in educational settings; a loss of motivation, but at the same time the need to exert control and have agency – thus, education becomes a place of resistance.

Of course, Palestinian teachers are also living with many day-to-day issues. Underpaid and overworked, our teachers ‘have to deal with the trauma themselves just like the children and their families. Nor does the impact of occupation on education stop when we leave school’.

Palestinian universities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip experience a lack of resources and a limited diversity of study choices, with academic exchanges and professional development restricted by the denial of self-determination and inability to control one’s own borders.

Faculty from overseas are denied entry and visas by Israeli officials, while many students are arrested for political activism. Israeli officials have the temerity to accuse our educators of “incitement”. Such accusations are cheap – and dehumanising – diversions. How can Palestinian educators be criminals when they walk into class knowing there could be news that some of their students have been buried? They teach and forge connections with students, even with the reality that any one of those children could be the next victim.

As Malaka Shwaikh wrote in a collection of essays published last year, the struggle of Palestinians against Israeli colonisation “seeks to exercise the fundamental right to represent ourselves with our own voices, language, and words”. Education is one of the most precious contexts for this form of representation, and, in the face of Israel’s demolitions and discrimination, it is pursued with resilience and pride by Palestinian teachers, students, and families.



Source: The Independent , Via Stop the War

NEARLY 250,000 PARENTS FEAR BEING UNABLE TO FEED THEIR CHILDREN IF UNIVERSAL CREDIT CUTS GOES AHEAD

The Trussell Trust report called on the government to keep the weekly £20 rise, issued during the pandemic, which is due to end in April, warning that cutting it would have alarming consequences.

About 40 per cent of people claiming UC, representing more than 2.4 million people across Britain, fear they will be very likely to cut back on food for themselves if the planned cut goes ahead, the foodbank charity's research found.

Worryingly, 13 per cent of parents surveyed — representing more than 220,000 families — think they would be very likely to cut back on food for their children, meaning they simply would not have enough money to cover the basics.

Trussell Trust chief executive Emma Revie said the £20 increase had been vital in protecting tens of thousands of people from being swept into serious financial hardship.

"It's clear that action is needed to ensure our benefits system provides people with enough money to cover the essentials. That's why we're insisting the government turns this situation around.

"Keeping the £20 UC uplift, and extending it to legacy benefits, will provide an anchor from poverty for people who need it most."

Shadow work and pensions secretary Jonathan Reynolds said: "Britain is facing the worst recession of any major economy because of this government's incompetence and indecision — yet they want struggling families to pay the price.

"[Chancellor Rishi Sunak] must offer certainty to families now and secure our economy by cancelling this cut."

Mr Reynolds said that even Work and Pensions Secretary Therese Coffey knows it is irresponsible for the Chancellor to be winding down support.

Ms Coffey advised against replacing the uplift with a one-off payment at yesterday's select committee meeting.

"A one-off payment rather than the extension of the uplift will mean that anyone who needs support after April — when unemployment is set to peak — will fall through the gaps," Mr Reynolds said.

Taken with thanks, and permission, from the Morning Star

A GOOD READ

Even if you were unable to Zoom in to the talk by Commander Robert Forsyth RN (retd) on nuclear submarines at the last Peace Group meeting you could be interested in his book 'Why Trident?' Why? Indeed.

Forsyth's personal journey from being a youthful second-in-command on a Polaris submarine during the cold war through to commanding a nuclear powered attack submarine 'HMS Sceptre' is a compelling story.

From his acceptance of the MAD (Mutually Assured Destruction) policy to his present rejection of that policy and consequent opposition to the renewal of the Trident nuclear weapons system is, I find, heartening. The clear chronology of his reasoned argument with the Ministry of Defence is revealing in itself. The correspondence is fascinating.

What is particularly sinister is the awful and manifestly unfair moral responsibility put on the shoulders of our present nuclear-submarine commanders. They are the ones to 'press the button' to use the common parlance. The

stealthy change of policy of 'no first use' i.e we fire a nuclear weapon only if the enemy fires one first, to 'first use' is what most concerns the author. Remember it was Geoff Hoon, Secretary of State for Defence in Tony Blair's government in 2002 who asserted that a pre-emptive nuclear strike to deter a non- nuclear attack on our forces deployed abroad was a definite possibility.

Since then, of course, the U.N. Treaty of the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) has made any such decision illegal and a war crime if the nuclear weapons system was fired. .. and then there is the myth of Britain's independent nuclear deterrent but don't get me going on that!

However, do get the book. Jennie has a few copies left for sale at £5.50 with any profits going to the Peace Group (01367 710308)

Phil

.....
War will end when people refuse to
go along with it.
.....

DOMINIC RAAB'S CALL FOR A GLOBAL CEASEFIRE IS UNDILUTED HYPOCRISY

The Foreign Secretary's call for a global ceasefire to enable vaccinations is welcome. It is also deeply hypocritical when the UK is a global leader in arms sales, is participating in the world's major hot war and has thousands of troops stationed in war zones around the world.

There are more than 1,000 British Troops in Afghanistan, engaged in a war that has lasted four times longer than World War One. There are more than 1,300 in the Middle East, including in Iraq and Syria. British special forces are participating in the Saudi-led war on Yemen which created a desperate humanitarian catastrophe before anyone had heard of COVID-19.

Yet, without a hint of contrition, chairing a meeting of the UN Security Council on 17 February, Dominic Raab urged members to agree a resolution for negotiated "vaccine ceasefires" so that healthcare workers can vaccinate the 160 million plus people living in war zones against COVID-19.

This call comes only one week after British ministers refused to join the US and suspend its arms sales to Saudi Arabia.

On BBC Radio 4's Today programme, Raab said, "Don't judge me by what I say on the radio, look at what we're doing." Well, let us do just that.

In Raab's statement he claims "we have a moral duty to act" and specifically mentions the war in Yemen as a conflict where a vaccine ceasefire is needed.

He is right – we do have a moral duty. But that duty extends beyond a vaccination ceasefire. If Raab was to show moral responsibility he would stop the UK facilitating the Saudi-led war. He would not only call for a temporary cessation of the war but for its end.

From STOP THE WAR

.....

I know you have all already seen this from Dave, but worth repeating!

The nuclear nine's \$73 billion annual expenditure on nuclear weapons can fund

- 70% of one year's climate finance
- UN disaster response for the next 15 yrs
- UN disaster risk reduction for the next 146 years
- 70% of the needed £100 bn-per-annum for global biodiversity conservation
- WHO at 42bn per annum for the next 37 years
- global pandemic surveillance and control at \$8 bn per annum for the next 9 years
- UN peacekeeping operations at current \$5 per annum for the next 16 years.

<https://transformdefence.org/publication/value-for-money/>

Transform
Defence
for sustainable human safety

TIPPING POINT NORTH SOUTH
A co-operative that supports and initiates creative, campaign-driven projects that advance the global social justice agenda, through its Film Fund and other activities

*Just something
to cheer you!*

