



FARINGDON PEACE GROUP

JUNE 2021

Newsletter 15

WHY DO THE PEOPLE OF GAZA NEED OUR SUPPORT?

Gaza has been the world's "largest prison" for over 14 years. The economy has been crippled. The global pandemic has only made the situation for Palestinians living in Gaza even worse.

- **47% of the population is unemployed.** (it's worse for young people (64%) and women (70%).)
- **53% of the population live below the poverty line.**
- **68% of the population are food insecure** meaning they don't know where their next meal is coming from.

Hardly surprising, then, that the current violence has arisen.

TRASH 'N TREASURE GIVEAWAY SATURDAY 19th JUNE from 9.30am until its gone!

People are asked to clear out their lofts and garages and put them outside their homes for others to take away free. If you would like a stall please let Dave Headey know, or if you would like to add any items to Braithwaite's stall in Coxwell Road Faringdon, please do, but with the proviso that if things are not taken, they will be returned to you, or binned - no clothes or shoes, and of course, no items too large for me to carry!

Come by and see what you can find for yourself, without costing the planet. Nearer the time, there will be a map showing participating houses.

There is a poster on the last page. If you are able to print and display, please do.

This is organised by Churches Together Earth & Faith Group, with the climate in mind, to reduce waste, especially perhaps plastic

FARINGDON PEACE GROUP

MONTHLY MEETING

WEDNESDAY 2nd JUNE at 7.30pm

GRAPPLING WITH THE PAST TO BUILD A PEACEFUL FUTURE

Speaker JOHN COOPER

Director of the Fellowship of Reconciliation.

He has worked, previously, for agencies that help churches engage in advocacy and action to help shape the world into something more just, including Christian Aid and the Joint Public Issues Team.

In 2020, he travelled to Fiji with the World Council of Churches to learn about Britain's history of nuclear testing in the Pacific Region. (AND - he grew up in Faringdon!)

John will talk about the heritage of Britain's Nuclear Testing in the Pacific Region (recently covered in BBC One's "Call the Midwife"). Having explored the health and environmental concerns, he'll then pose a question. If we believe black lives matter, does that mean recognising the real impact of the nuclear testing when calling for a nuclear free future? So - definitely a meeting not to be missed.

Zoom link has been sent to Peace Group regulars, but if you would like to come for the first time, please ask Sjoerd for the link.

The Zoom meeting will be open from 7.15pm - to give us time for pre-meeting chat.

FARINGDON FOOD BANK

Churches Together will resume running the Foodbank. During lockdown, Faringdon Town Council has had responsibility for this. Contributions are still required. Please check what is currently needed.



Sending a flotilla bristling with weapons to the South China Sea will only escalate global tensions. The HMS Queen Elizabeth, Britain's new hi-tech aircraft carrier, is leading the biggest air and sea deployment since the Falklands War.

Departing Portsmouth on 23 May, visiting trouble spots around the world, the flotilla will end its journey with war games with Japan. The intention: to project to the world that Britain is global power to be reckoned with.

At a time when the NHS is at breaking point and public services are suffering from years of austerity, the Tory government has chosen to spend tens of billions on a military display to pursue a post-colonial fantasy and show support for the US's cold war with China.

Petition available on Stop the War website

BURMA

Timber and gems exports from Burma are worth billions of dollars a year, and now that the military have seized government departments at gunpoint, that money will be going to the military.

Together we succeeded in persuading the European Union to impose sanctions on military owned companies. This is a big success, but it doesn't mean the job is done. We need to keep finding ways to cut revenue going to the military, as that revenue is paying for the bullets fired at protestors and the bombs being dropped on ethnic civilians. 700 hundred people have been killed since the coup so far, and the death toll keeps rising.

The European Union should be doing everything it can to make sure European companies are not helping to finance the military

Please email EU governments today calling on them to sanction state owned timber and gems companies, and to ban the import of timber and gems into the EU.

URGENT ACTION IS REQUIRED TO PREVENT A WAVE OF AVOIDABLE DEATHS IN GAZA OVER THE COMING WEEKS AND MONTHS.

As of this week, there have been 90,088 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Gaza and 761 deaths, with over 300 patients currently requiring high dependency or intensive care support. With just 1% of Gaza's population vaccinated, the UK variant of COVID-19 has been spreading fast. The surge in patients coming to Gaza's hospitals is putting an unbearable pressure on doctors, nurses and allied health workers as they struggle to cope with this unprecedented demand.

At Medical Aid for Palestinians, we have staff working in Gaza to help provide hospitals with the drugs and medical items they desperately need. Our team is confident that we are one of the quickest and most efficient international aid responders in Gaza; with your support we can ensure that hospitals receive lifesaving supplies when they need them most.

We have recently provided drugs and medical items to help care for patients with severe COVID-19 disease, including antibiotics, steroids, fluids, clot prevention/treatment drugs, sedatives and anaesthetic agents. Thank you for the support you have previously given to help make this all possible.

Now we need your support to do more.

MAP, right now, is urgently supplying Gaza's hospitals with the following items:

- Enoxaparin - to prevent and treat life threatening blood clots
- Colistin - antibiotic for life threatening chest infections
- Oxygen cylinders – needed when moving seriously ill patients and when oxygen generators fail or are overwhelmed by demand
- Full facial masks for Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP) devices
- Nasal masks for CPAP devices
- High flow nasal cannulae
- Non-sterile latex gloves (disposable)

In order to supply these items we need to raise US\$100,000. Please make a donation today to help us reach our target.

(Go to their website to see how)

DIEGO GARCIA

"How the U.S. Stole an Island"

Watch on YouTube

<https://youtu.be/e1EymGBTI-A>

PALESTINE – FROM HEBREW BIBLE TO THE PRESENT

Richard Seaford, professor of Ancient Greek at Exeter University, joined Faringdon Peace Group in May with a stimulating and controversial talk about history and myth in the Holy Land and how it has shaped more recent events in the area. The talk preceded the latest escalation of violence in Israel/Palestine. As an activist and supporter of Palestinian rights, he wondered how it was possible that we were complicit in a military superpower (Israel) displacing defenceless people (Palestinians) in defiance of international law. The factors he thought were at play were the historical suffering of the Jews culminating in the Holocaust, the media, the slurs of anti-semitism against those who criticise Israel and finally the story of the Jewish people being expelled from their homeland in 79 AD and returning to it in the 20th century. It was this final factor which his talk centred on.

Richard is currently engaged in a project comparing the two surviving ancient cultures from the western asian/mediterranean area - Ancient Greek and Judaism. He strongly believes that the very distant past really matters to us today and claims that for too long those with a vested interest have used historical and archaeological investigations merely to confirm their existing theories and beliefs and justify their actions in the present day. He believes academics and historians must stand back and see all sides of the story, and that applies to Israel/Palestine as much as any other issue.

Richard talked about myths, which are often important and meaningful and may have some element of truth or memory in them but are not historical facts. Myths allow us to reshape the past depending on our interests in the present and are valuable in what they tell us about the society and culture of the ancient past. Homer's description of the Trojan wars, for example, was long believed to be historically accurate but not any more. Similarly, though many still believe in the literal truth of the Hebrew bible, Richard claimed that historical and archaeological findings now show that many of the characters and events within it, though meaningful, are not based on historical reality.

Richard concentrated on two myths, as he called them, which have shaped the recent history of Palestine/Israel. These are firstly, that Jews were the only people living in the land God gave them and secondly, that all Jews were expelled from their homeland in the exodus of 79 AD. These 'myths' justify the establishment of Israel as a Jewish homeland in the 20th century. He believes the evidence points to wide racial and cultural diversity in historical Israel with many different ethnicities and nationalities living alongside Jews. All were subject to similar levels of military violence. While some Jews may have been killed or expelled in the first century AD, many stayed in the country as is evidenced by Jewish temples of the 2nd, 3rd and 4th century.

Another myth Richard described was that of kinship or race, the idea that all share a common ancestor. While there is inevitably some biological continuity, there were more Jews living around the Mediterranean than inside historical Israel and many had converted to Judaism rather than been born into it. Judaism is a culture, not a race, therefore not all Jews can claim descent from people who were possessors of the land of Palestine. It could even be that many Palestinian Arabs are descended from Jews who converted to Islam in the Arab invasion of 638AD.

History is always messier than we would like it to be, Richard admitted, and he did not claim to have all the answers, but as these two myths, as he sees them, are central in maintaining the oppression of Palestinians and furthering Zionist ideals, he thought they ought to at least be under discussion. He hoped his talk would provoke open and honest debate on the issues.

Karen Vogt

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HMS Queen Elizabeth carrier group departs UK – Saturday 22nd May. Have a look.

https://twitter.com/ForcesNews?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor
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THE LAST FEW WEEKS

We've been watching the tensions, then horrors of the past few weeks slowly unfold. The latest violence started with forced expulsion orders in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood of Jerusalem. From there, attacks on Palestinians spread to the worshippers at Al Aqsa mosque and, over the last week, there has been unspeakable devastation and loss of innocent lives in Gaza. More than a third of those lives lost were children.

From the Palestinian citizens of Israel, who have long expressed that they are treated as second-class citizens, to the rural communities in the West Bank living under military occupation, we are seeing a grassroots uprising of people who feel that their lives, freedoms and right to dignity don't matter to the international community. This is evidenced by the impunity with which the Israeli state is allowed to act in contravention to international law and numerous UN resolutions.

Our suppliers, friends and family in Palestine are telling us that they don't feel safe to travel between cities in their own country, without risking being targeted by armed settlers, who receive full protection from the army. We have heard media reports of the killing of a child and first-hand accounts of the destruction of property and crops near the Nablus villages of Burin and Madama, as well as around Jenin.

Recently, our supplier of olive oil, almonds and grains, had some of their wheat fields torched in confrontations with the Israeli army near the Al Jalameh checkpoint. Fortunately, the farmers managed to plough around the fire and save the crop of landrace wheat varieties. As you know, the producers and suppliers we work with face immense struggles as they strive to build sustainable livelihoods, producing exceptional products under extreme circumstances.

Out of the ashes and rubble, Palestinians are rising up, more steadfast, resilient and united than ever, resolutely building on the momentum of the movement that's now in progress – demanding equality, justice, dignity and freedom. Only then can a lasting peace truly flourish.

They are risking their safety and livelihoods by doing so and are asking the world to join them

in their call for justice. At this time, when world attention is on Palestine, our solidarity can make a big difference.

Here's what you can do:

Inform yourselves, follow and repost using these Palestinian hashtags

#SaveSheikhJarrah #GazaUnderAttack #Free Palestine

- Donate to MAP who are fundraising to provide medical equipment urgently needed in Gaza
- Write to your MP and to the FCDO
- Support Palestinian livelihoods by buying their products #BuyPalestinian
- Vote for our oil in the upcoming BOOM awards to raise the profile of Palestinian olive oil and its incredible producers.

Thank you to Karen, for forwarding this. She adds that Zaytoun olive oil, dates, almonds, zataar, freekeh and cous cous are available from the Mustard Seed in the Market Place

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It has long been widely accepted as orthodoxy that the world was saved from nuclear war during the Cuban Missile Crisis because of the wisdom of John F. Kennedy and the diplomatic backchannel his aides had with Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev. But this is only half true. The Soviet sources that have emerged since the end of the Cold war as well as recently declassified KGB archives suggest that, more than anything, we were saved from nuclear annihilation by sheer luck. Could such a close-shave unfold today? The recent shift in how Britain is to manage its nuclear arsenal suggests lessons have not been learnt from the Sixties. While nuclear technology has advanced phenomenally in the last few decades, the command and control system can always be a victim of human fallibility. The Spectator 22nd May 2021

<https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/a-nuclear-crisis-is-closer-than-you-think>

'A JEWISH CASE FOR PALESTINIAN REFUGEE RETURN' by Peter Beinart

Too long to print and too detailed to summarise, but here's the link: <https://theguardian.com/news/2021/may/18/a-jewish-case-for-palestinian-refugee-return>

Southbound nuclear warhead convoy A34 Oxford 4.45pm Friday 14th May 2021



1. Oxford CND nukewatcher with peace flag convoy breakdown vehicle visible.
2. Nuclear warhead carrier No 3 in southbound convoy

The convoy left RNAD Coulport yesterday and travelled south through Scotland.

Today it travelled south through England and returned to AWE Burghfield at 6.00pm.

The convoy was tracked and monitored by nukewatchers. In the picture is Margaret of Oxford CND, who some of you might know.

This is the most deadly cargo on our roads
(If you are thinking that you've already seen this in a previous newsletter, you have! That's because these convoys travel with scary frequency on our roads)

And, since these pics were taken, there has been another convoy (21st May)

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War is not inevitable!

MOVEMENT FOR THE ABOLITION OF WAR - OUR AIMS:-

1. Spread the belief that the abolition of war is both desirable and possible.
 2. Raise awareness of constructive alternatives to war for resolving national and international disputes.
 3. Develop research-based materials and strategies to educate pupils, students, the general public and members of local and national government.
 4. Work with other people and organisations who are already active in the creation of alternatives to war .
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Taking On the Israeli War Machine

Readers of this article will doubtless have come across 'Elbit Systems' in some newspaper or other. Elbit Systems is an Israeli firm with factories in England, producing weapons for the Israeli war-machine.

The campaign group 'Palestine Action' is a newcomer launched in July 2020, and comprises several groups protesting against Israel's colonisation of Palestine and the consequent apartheid state. Elbit Systems have 5 weapons factories, together with 5 non-manufacturing sites in England, including three R.A.F.. bases. The R.A.F. allows Elbit Systems to use the three bases to test the drones before they are sent to Israel, presumably to bomb Gaza. This is another example of the British government's complicity in Israel's repression of the Palestinians.

Palestine Action has targeted all 5 factories for occupation and blockades, temporarily halting production on several occasions. The factories are in Leicester, Oldham in Greater Manchester, Shenstone and Tamworth in Staffordshire, and in East Kent. An estimated loss to Elbit of these actions varies from £50,000 to £80,000 per day. Another aim of the group is to alert communities around the five factories to their role in supplying the Israeli war machine. This direct action along with work in the local area has been successful. The appalling situation in Palestine meant that the Leicester roof-top occupation attracted international attention with coverage on broadcast networks in India, Russia and even the BBC, but also in the Arabic TV network Al Jazeera. On Wednesday 20 May the police called the Fire Brigade to assist at a protest in Leicester to ensure the safety of those involved in the action. Having done that the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) decided to withdraw, supporting the right to protest, and in solidarity with the Palestinians. In the longer term Palestine Action wants to see Elbit systems forced out of Britain whether by the rather unlikely actions of the government or else by making the factories so uneconomic they are forced to close. What an inspiring challenge! How can we help them? *Phil*

More details can be found online at
info@palestineaction.org

This article is based on one by Peter Lazenby published in the 'Morning Star' on 22nd May.

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COMING TO AN AIRFIELD NEAR YOU

from the Wilts and Gloucestershire Standard via Oxford CND

Nearly £300 million will be invested into the United States military base at RAF Fairford over the next few years, while there will also be an increase in the number of flights.

While the level of growth is smaller than anticipated, following the news last year that the RC-135 Rivet Joint aircraft would no longer be moving to Fairford, £295 million will still be spent on a variety of projects.

At a recent virtual briefing held for civic leaders, commander of RAF Fairford Lt Col Joseph Knothe explained that work has already started on a multi-purpose hanger. Plans have now been revealed for a bomber maintenance hanger for B-52s, a munitions storage facility, a deployable air base system, a rapid airfield damage repair facility and various upgrades and renovations.

RAF Fairford is a forward operating base used by United States Air Force aircraft. Air activity is expected to increase between now and 2024 as more aircraft are deployed.

While there are no plans for any aircraft to be based at Fairford permanently, it is anticipated that at least one aircraft will be at the base every day of the year from now on.

The base's population is also expected to more than double by 2024, rising from 561 to 1,144. Around 400 US family members will move to the base as the emphasis switches from deployed personnel to posted airmen who are allowed to bring their families with them.

There will be an increased demand for housing and schooling in the area and Fairford personnel say they are working with the relevant authorities to facilitate this. Around 100 people, families of personnel who actually work at RAF Brize Norton, will leave during this period.

There will be also be 300 new roles, mostly military, with some jobs available for local residents.

Reacting to the news Chris Roberts, former mayor of Fairford, said: "When the military personnel left Fairford a few years ago, a lot of people thought that was the end of RAF Fairford as an active base, but I believe there will always be a need for an air force base here due its prime strategic location. "Activities at the base have long been an important part of Fairford town life and it is really encouraging to hear that there will be further growth planned over the next few years including new jobs available for local residents . . . The personnel at RAF Fairford have always been good neighbours and try to integrate into their temporary home here as much as possible. The increased activity at the base is all good news for the local economy with our guests from America using our shops and hospitality outlets plus a forecast increase in demand for housing.

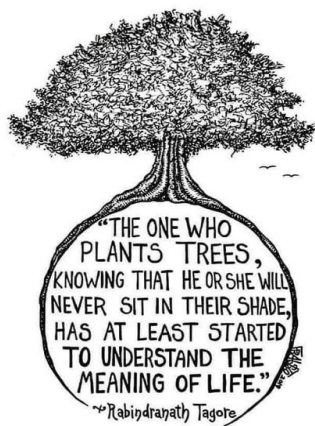
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INCREDIBLE PHOTOS AT RAF BRIZE NORTON



TREE PLANTING *sometime in November*

It is planned to buy-in (or get free) a lot of saplings to plant in Faringdon - in both private gardens and open spaces. Maybe you would like to assist by potting up some self-seeded (or, squirrel seeded) saplings from your own gardens *now*, to distribute later. Dates and details to follow.



NEWSLETTER

The next newsletter will cover the months of JULY and AUGUST

I try to include all the articles that you send me, so inevitably opinions in this newsletter do not necessarily coincide with my views! But please continue to send your contributions to: jennyridd@yahoo.co.uk by 24th June latest...

NB If you seem to have no reaction when you click to register, the request probably *has* worked – it's just not a very efficient website. I tapped a couple of times thinking it had not worked - and got two invitations.

If you think we can't change the world, it just means you're not one of those that will.
Jacque Fresco

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY - JUNE 2021

Meetings and Events organised by Faringdon Peace Group as well as by other groups.

For further information please contact Jennie
Tel: 01367 710308 or castle@myphone.coop

WEDNESDAY 2ND JUNE 7.30pm

Monthly Meeting via Zoom. 7.30pm
John Cooper, Director, Fellowship Of Reconciliation (FOR). 'Grappling with the Past to build a Peaceful Future'

WEDNESDAY 9th JUNE 6-7.30pm

'How to talk about Hiroshima'
with Milan Rai, Peace News editor.
Improve your skills and your knowledge 6.0-7.30pm. tinyurl.com/talking-Hiroshima or 020 7278 3344 (Hiroshima workshop)

SAT 26th JUNE 12 noon

People's Assembly Demo.
'After Covid, demand a new normal'.
Join the CND 'Nurses Not Nukes' bloc.
Assemble noon Portland Place, London W1.
Contact information @cnduk.org
also

SAT 26th JUNE Resist Armed Forces Day
www.ppu.org.uk/events

SAT 3rd JULY Watch this space!

WED 7th JULY FPG Monthly Meeting.
Subject TBA.

THURS 8th JULY Oxfordshire Peace Campaign meeting. 2pm online.

FRI 6th AUG Hiroshima Day

MON 9th AUG Nagasaki Day. (Why did they 'need' to drop two atomic bombs on Japan?)

'Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world: indeed, it's the only thing that ever has'.
Margaret Mead.

FASLANE NORTH GATE

Three people
locked on
to big
planters with
lovely flowers
and the
words
SAFE
GREEN
FUTURE.



MIDSUMMER

TRASH 'N TREASURE

GIVEAWAY

SATURDAY 19th JUNE

**Outside lots of
houses in Faringdon**

*Come and find something useful to
take away; clear out your attic and
offer to take part yourself*

See us on Facebook for details

To be included on our map, email: trashandtreasure@btinternet.com

Re-use and recycle

Organised by Earth & Faith Group