



FARINGDON PEACE GROUP

NEWSLETTER 27

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2023

NEW YEAR PARTY

Our new year Gathering will again be at Karen and Sjoerd's, 7 Leamington Drive

WEDNESDAY 4th JANUARY at 7pm

Please bring food to share

REPORT FROM "STOP THE WAR"

2022 kicked off with the news that war criminal Tony Blair was to receive a knighthood. The immediate backlash was overwhelming, with over a million people signing a petition against the award, culminating in a sizable protest outside Windsor Castle on 13th June. Peter Brierley, whose son Lance Corporal Shaun Brierley died in 2003 summed it up:

"To award such a man with the highest honour in the land is a disgrace and will further damage Britain's reputation around the world." At Stop the War we'll continue to do all we can to prevent the establishment glossing over Blair's devastating crimes.

On 24th February our worst fears were confirmed when the Russian invasion of Ukraine began. From the off, Stop the War condemned the movement of Russian forces into Ukraine, urged for immediate withdrawal and pleaded for an end to escalation. We also stressed NATO's role in provoking the conflict with its aggressive expansionist policies since the end of the Cold War.

Within 48 hours of Russian troops entering Ukrainian territory, we took to the streets across the UK, with emergency rallies organised up and down the country. On March 6th in London thousands marched demanding an alternative to war. Our 'No to War in Ukraine' rally at Conway Hall saw crowds spill out into the foyer as the speakers looked at the conflict's origins and the possibilities of de-escalation. We insisted that pumping billions of pounds into military hardware would only result in further atrocity, death and destruction.

contd on p.5

"O LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM" NO WAY TO TREAT A CHILD

A 16-year-old student of the Ramallah Friends School, Shadi Khoury, remains in Israeli custody without charges, a month after police violently arrested him at his home in East Jerusalem. We hold him and his family in the Light. There is a short video of testimonies from his family and the Quaker led "No Way to Treat A Child" campaign.

more follows inside...

WOMEN IN BLACK

On a bright but chill morning the women in Black, supported by some men in black, returned to Faringdon Market square to draw attention to the plight of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories.

At this time of year when many people sing 'O Little Town of Bethlehem' in church or at school or elsewhere, it is sobering to reflect that the Little Town of Bethlehem does not lie still any more. The dreamless sleep is one filled with anxiety, tension and uncertainty for the Arab population and there is much inter-religious tension. Given the profound message of peace and love at this time of year it is important to acknowledge this. An act of witness.

Some people did stop to see what we were doing, take leaflets and sign the petition, and for one it was a positive discovery that the Peace Group existed. An act of witnessing.

Liz Rothschild



NO WAY TO TREAT A CHILD

Shadi Khoury was taken from his family home in East Jerusalem in the middle of the night by the Israeli military, barefoot and blindfolded on 18th October. After six court hearings, he was charged with stone-throwing and attacking police officers, charges he denies.

Each year 500-700 Palestinian children are detained and prosecuted in the Israeli military court system. UNICEF has been raising concerns about their rights with the Israeli authorities since 2013.

The UN also raised concerns last month that Israel is using excessive force against Palestinian children, with at least 26 killed so far this year in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and more than 800 injured.

When the UK government was asked to engage with the Government of Israel to ensure not only Shadi's release, but an end to the military trial and detention of Palestinian children, the Foreign Office replied that they had: "made clear our concern about the continued reports of ill-treatment of Palestinian minors in Israeli military detention." But they said they recognised the legitimate need for Israeli authorities to deploy security measures to address violence and encouraged them to use these in a way which "minimised tension and used appropriate force."

Research by Save the Children found that children in the Israeli military detention system are, like Shadi, routinely taken from their homes at night, blindfolded, with their hands bound behind their backs.

The most common charge is throwing stones, which carries a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison.

Shadi, a student at the 150-year-old Ramallah Friends School, is accused with others of throwing stones at an Israeli family's car during the Sukkot Jewish holiday.

He will not yet be able to return to the school, but his family are relieved to have him home to continue his education remotely and celebrate Christmas together.

His mother Raina Elias said: "The most important thing is he will be with us in our warm home, in the place where he should be, with Aboud (his dog). He will watch the World Cup and follow the matches with us."

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STAND WITH THE PEOPLE OF IRAN

It's shocking - Iranian courts sentenced six people to death over the mass protests that have swept the country. This follows a brutal crackdown that has left hundreds dead, including children, and many more facing torture, and unfair trials. We can't stay silent in a moment like this! Add your voice calling on key world governments to help stop the killings.

Many more people are in immediate danger. Journalists, human rights defenders, university students, women, schoolchildren have been murdered, and many of those arrested face torture, enforced disappearance, and unfair trials.

The regime is not backing down and is now threatening protesters with executions. We must stand with the people in Iran!

Thousands of Iranians continue to protest, and we can help them keep the world's attention on their struggle for freedom and justice. Sign our urgent petition now for world governments to help stop these brutal killings: Go to Avaaz website to do this.

So far, more than 300 demonstrators have been killed by the government's repression -- but the protests are not stopping. More than 1,000 indictments have been issued in Tehran alone, with hundreds more brought against people arrested across the country.

The UN Human Rights Council has just decided to create a new fact-finding mission to investigate alleged human rights violations in the Islamic Republic of Iran related to the protests that began on 16 September 2022.

The US, the EU, the UK, and Canada have all adopted human rights sanctions on Iranian leaders and some institutions, but much more is needed!

Global solidarity is needed to echo the call for freedom, and our support can help show government leaders that the world stands with the people in Iran.

From the brutal crackdowns in Tibet and Burma to the Arab spring, over and over again, our community has stood side by side with pro-democracy movements. Now, let's echo the call from all the brave people in Iran who are being crushed for wanting a government that brings justice, equality, and freedom.

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SOMALIA

In Somalia, 7 million people are in danger of starving - and HALF of all children are severely malnourished. Hospitals are overwhelmed and parents are being forced to make impossible decisions about who to feed.

The country is being devastated by the worst drought in 40 years. Without rain, nothing grows - and aid isn't arriving fast enough.

Somali doctors and aid workers are racing against the clock - but another starving child is admitted to hospital every minute. Resources are running out, and doctors are terrified.

The last famine here killed 250,000 people. We cannot let it happen again.

Avaaz has 70 million members, and if we each give just a bit, we can make a real difference. **Together we'd fund lifesaving medical care and food packages for thousands of people** - and power a massive campaign, pushing governments to unlock urgent aid and slash the carbon pollution that's forcing millions into catastrophe.

Please look at the Avaaz website.



OUR FRIENDS AT DRONE WARS SAY

"The MoD wants to base the UK new 'Protector' armed drones at Waddington in Lincolnshire and open a new centre there to train both RAF crews and other militaries to use armed drones.

Besides the immense harm that armed drones can cause in warfare, they are also inherently dangerous and prone to crash. Drone Wars UK research shows that on average three large military drones crash each month.

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), the UK's airspace regulator, has opened a public consultation on the Ministry of Defence's proposed changes to airspace around RAF Waddington to allow armed drones to take off and land. The Consultation lasts until 30 November.

It is important that the public raises concerns and voices objections! The CAA's consultation is narrowly focused on changes to airspace around Waddington rather than on wider questions of their use in warfare or about the safety and privacy of opening UK airspace to large drones."

Drone Wars UK has written a short guide to completing the CAA's online consultation form at their website www.dronewars.net.

THE BEST CHRISTMAS QUIZ QUESTIONS

1. Which country started the tradition of putting up a Christmas tree?
 2. How many ghosts show up in *A Christmas Carol*?
 3. How many gifts were given in total in 'The Twelve Days of Christmas' song?
 4. How many of Rudolph's fellow reindeers' names start with 'D'?
 5. What is traditionally hidden inside a Christmas pudding?
 6. Which city has been donating Trafalgar Square's Christmas tree every year since 1947?
 7. If you're born on Christmas day, what's your star sign?
 8. What is the best-selling Christmas single of all time?
 9. What decoration do elves traditionally have on their shoes?
 10. When do the 12 days of Christmas start?
 11. What fruit is traditionally put inside a Christmas stocking?
 12. According to tradition, when should you have your Christmas decorations down by?
 13. Traditionally, when should you start making a Christmas pudding?
 14. What gift did Harry Potter receive from the Dursleys during his first Christmas at Hogwarts?
 15. What's type of tree is most commonly used for Christmas trees?
 16. Stollen is a traditional fruit cake in which country?
 17. What is the name of the ballet that takes place at Christmas?
 18. When were gingerbread houses believed to be invented?
 19. In which year was the first Christmas card sent?
 20. What plant is sometimes known as the 'Christmas flower'?
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WAR AND THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY

On Saturday 29th October, members of the Faringdon Peace Group attended a day school in Oxford for Climate and Peace Campaigners. We all felt it very worthwhile.

Information was given from people who are knowledgeable and passionate in their belief that we need to renew our efforts in promoting vital information in the struggle to save our planet.

The day was introduced by Mark Levene and convened by Nuala Young.

The first speaker was Nafeez Ahmed who talked about the 'Russian-Ukraine crisis and system change'.

Stuart Parkinson then presented 'How war in Ukraine is derailing climate action'.

Tim Street spoke on 'Avoiding nuclear war in a volatile world'.

Andrew Simms introduced 'The war as trigger to rapid transition?'

Rebecca Johnson gave a talk on Ecofeminist activism and humanitarian law - how to implement the Nuclear Ban Treaty.

After lunch people attended breakout sessions -

1. One Crisis, One Million Acts of Resistance: Spiralling Bills, Climate Breakdown and War: What we can do' with Larch Maxey.

2. David Gee and Thea McKiggan lead 'Building Resilience in Response to the Climate Crisis and Militarism'

3. Nuala Young guided 'Peace and Climate Movements: How to Combine our Forces.'

This group discussed ideas and hopes for what could happen nationally and locally to further awareness of the link between war and climate change. It was pointed out that many Peace Group members are of the older generation, whereas climate-change groups consist generally of younger people, and it would be a beneficial to combine the two. One to generate publicity would be to establish hubs set in shops loaned by the Council in town centres, where information and promotional material could be distributed.

Ref: Scientists for Global Responsibility
www.sgr.org.uk

Sandra Cooper

WITH NO EXAGGERATION, LIVING IN PALESTINE THIS PAST YEAR HAS BEEN HEARTBREAKING

There seems to be no limit to the violence Israel wages on the Palestinian people. I live near the place where 10 days ago, Israeli soldiers shot and killed Fulla Malsameh, a Palestinian girl about to celebrate her 16th birthday. Whenever I drive past this spot, I am reminded of the countless lives the occupiers have taken this year. Last night in Nablus, 16-year-old Ahmed Shehadeh was shot with a bullet to the heart and died instantly. He is the 200th Palestinian and 55th child murdered by Israeli occupying forces in 2022.

Driving across the West Bank, I see the intensification of settler colonialism and occupation. More soldiers, more flying checkpoints, more harassment, and more settler attacks.

No Palestinian is untouched. We are losing our land, our homes, our children, our brothers and fathers, and quite frankly, our minds. There is no room for normalcy. In 1948 lands, the Israeli government used the U.S. playbook of planting drugs in Palestinian communities fuelling crime and corruption. In Gaza, the 15-year siege continues to deprive the lives of two million people. In Jerusalem, Palestinian families are under the daily threat of being forced to demolish or leave their homes. In the West Bank, we are confronted by gun-wielding settlers who want to see us dead and Israeli soldiers who do precisely that on command. And in the refugee camps in Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan – Palestinian refugee families are experiencing life-threatening poverty.

All this paints a bleak picture.

But we have not given up. Palestinians continue to resist. We are harvesting our olives, we are teaching our children, and we are building a strong community to weather the storm.

As Israeli violence intensifies, we need to intensify our work to resist and build toward a more hopeful future.

Izzy Mustafa

ANSWERS TO QUIZ. 1. Germany; 2. Four; 3. 364; 4. Three; 5. A coin; 6. Oslo; 7. Capricorn; 8. White Christmas; 9. Bells; 10. Christmas Day; 11. Orange or tangerine; 12. Jan 5th; 13. On a Sunday, 5 weeks before Christmas; 14. 50p piece; 15. Nordmann Fir; 16. Germany; 17. The Nutcracker; 18. 16th Century; 19. 1873; 20. Poinsettia;

Alongside this, we co-hosted the first of many international days of action for peace in Ukraine, with leading activists from peace and anti-imperialist movements around the globe.

Soon after the invasion, the right-wing of the Labour Party used the Russian invasion as a catalyst to attack Stop the War. This was not only an attempt to undermine democracy but also to gag the anti-war voices within the party and the wider left. Keir Starmer launched a silencing mission over our position on NATO by threatening to remove the whip from 11 MPs unless they withdraw their names from our statement 'on the crisis over Ukraine'. Starmer was using this crisis to prove his militaristic credentials and rid the party of any of the anti-war principles that Jeremy Corbyn had attempted to install.

Despite this, the anti-war movement has remained steadfast in its position for peace and has witnessed a significant increase in membership and activity. We've held over 100 events opposing the war including four days of action in local communities across the UK, including two successful meetings at the Labour Party Conference in Liverpool, one a packed fringe meeting and another event focusing on NATO at The World Transformed Festival.

In this, it was vital that we continued, as we have done for decades, to look at the role of NATO past and present. The conflict in Ukraine is partly the product of thirty years of failed policies, including the expansion of NATO and US hegemony. This was the case made in our pamphlet, NATO: A War Alliance. In July, we hosted an online launch of the pamphlet with two of its contributors, Stop the War Officers Andrew Murray and Jenny Clegg. They questioned whether NATO is fit for purpose and why, after multiple military failures from Afghanistan to Libya, it remains unchallenged in foreign policy circles.

Governments on all sides have spent the year piling on more threats, more militarisation and more actions that not only makes nuclear war a possibility, but an increasing probability. The year's campaigns have been dominated by the conflict in Ukraine and the mission to resolve the war peacefully based on a lasting negotiated settlement pushing for de-escalation. The British government has played a provocative role in the present crisis and continues to do so.

As the cost-of-living crisis deepened throughout Britain, our anti-war agenda became central to the economic debate. As the NHS deteriorates, schools crumble and kids go hungry, the government is spending record amounts on war.

This year we've made a coordinated effort to present an alternative vision working alongside the anti-austerity movement. In June we had a big presence at the TUC 'We Demand Better' march, we marched against the Tory Party conference in Birmingham in October and at the People's Assembly's 'Kick the Tories Out' demo we formed a large 'welfare not warfare' bloc.

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As well as the anti-austerity movement we have worked closely with our allies in the trade union movement. This year we have held stalls and interventions at every major union conference starting at the CWU conference in April and finishing with the Trade Union Congress in October. We also held successful fringe meetings at the NEU, FBU, UNISON and PCS conferences as well as joining a cracking Durham Miners Gala.

Controversially the TUC debated a motion which included calls for increased arms spending which was narrowly voted through. The vote marks a serious setback for the labour movement and aligns the TUC with the Tory Party in banging the drums of war.

It's never too late to reverse this, and it's an aim we take into 2023 as we host our first ever Trade Union Conference on January 21st. Besides all this we've continued to stand side-by-side with the Palestinian solidarity movement joining protests against the murder of Shireen Abu Akleh and the destruction of Sheikh Jarrah. We marked one year since the fall of Kabul with Tariq Ali in an online discussion, held a sold-out screening of The Coming War on China with John Pilger and we've proudly helped to organise events alongside the Don't Extradite Assange campaign, including the inspiring protest which surrounded parliament at the start of October. We will continue to fight for Julian's freedom until it becomes a reality.

As this year winds down, Adalah Justice Project is building relationships and a strategic vision for 2023 to bolster campaigns that will hold the Zionist regime, U.S. imperialism, and corporations accountable for their crimes against humanity.

We need your continued support and solidarity

Just in case you didn't see this when it came round as an email ...

A NUCLEAR CONVOY IN FARINGDON MARKET PLACE??!!

Were you in the Market Place in Faringdon on Thursday 17th November, sometime during the morning/early afternoon? If so, you may have witnessed part of a Special Nuclear Materials (SNM) convoy trying to turn round in order to get back to the A420.

The convoy left Aldermaston AWE (Atomic Weapons Establishment) earlier that day. It travelled on the A34 as far as Abingdon then somehow parts of it got separated from the other vehicles and lost their way!! The result was that two big blue police vans, meant to be escorting the main convoy, ended up in Faringdon Market Place! They caused quite a disturbance as they had to reverse before finding their way back to the A420.

RAF Brize Norton was the destination and there the convoy loaded from an RAF plane that had just flown in from the US.

It then travelled back to the Oxford area and made its way to the Rolls Royce factory at Raines Way, Derby, arriving at 5pm.

The SNM convoy is not quite the same as a nuclear weapons convoy which carries the warheads from Burghfield in Berkshire to Coulport, near Faslane nuclear submarine base, Scotland.

These convoys carrying deadly nuclear materials and bombs can be seen regularly on our roads, especially on the A34 round Oxford. They are tracked by the peace movement's 'Nukewatch'.

If you see a nuclear convoy on your travels please let Nukewatch know as soon as possible. They need to know what you saw, time and place, and the direction the convoy was travelling in. Please report any sightings

to 0345 4588 365 (North)

0345 4588 364 (South), or 07824 140058

Considering that Faringdon Town has recently agreed to support the TPNW (Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons) maybe we should be asking some questions about nuclear convoys going through Faringdon'.



*Hope for a
Happy Christmas
and Peaceful New Year*



Aiyan Maharasingam of Greenpeace writes:-

I CAN HARDLY BELIEVE I AM WRITING THIS

Rishi Sunak has just approved the UK's first deep coal mine in 30 years. New coal is a death sentence for the planet, so we have to fight this decision. Can you sign the urgent petition now to take a stand against new coal?

Bringing back coal is a backwards step for our country. Successive governments have all cut the UK's dependence on this dirty fuel to reduce carbon emissions and to meet our climate commitments. It's an outrage that Rishi Sunak is turning back the clock.

The coal won't even keep us warm. It's going to power steel production, not produce energy. And to make matters worse, British steel manufacturers don't even want the coal - 85% of it will be shipped abroad. So our government is ripping up the UK's climate commitments to fuel other countries' steel industries. I don't know about you, but this stinks to me.

Rishi Sunak cannot be allowed to get away with this unopposed. If your name is currently missing from our huge 200,000 strong petition - please can you add it now and take a stand against new coal.

The government says that the new mine will create much needed employment, but why do these jobs have to destroy the planet? Instead of sending people down coal mines again the government should take advantage of developing technology to create new jobs in fossil fuel-free green steel production.

There is no excuse for new coal mines in twenty first century Britain.

Please go to the Greenpeace website and sign our petition telling the government to keep climate wrecking coal in the ground.

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And finally, a quote from an early Quaker, whose pearls of wisdom could easily have been written yesterday, not over 300 years ago!

"It would go a long way to caution and direct people in their use of the world, that they better studied and knowing in the creation of it. For how could (they) find the confidence to abuse it, while they should see the great creator stare them in the face, in all and every part of it".

William Penn 1693

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