



# FARINGDON PEACE GROUP NEWSLETTER

from Palestine Solidary Campaign

## **FREE CHILD PRISONERS**

Ill-treatment in the Israeli military detention system remains “widespread, systematic, and institutionalised throughout the process”.

These were the conclusions of the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) report ‘Children in Israeli Military Detention Observations and Recommendations’.

Palestinian children as young as 12 are routinely:

Taken from their homes at gunpoint in night-time raids by soldiers.

Blindfolded, bound and shackled.

Interrogated without a lawyer or relative being present and with no audio-visual recording.

Put into solitary confinement.

Forced to sign confessions (often in Hebrew – a language they do not understand).

**JOIN US IN CALLING FOR THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN TO BE PROTECTED**

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The Quaker meeting house, where we hold our meetings is closed for business, including for the Quaker Sunday meeting. Each Sunday the Quakers circulate a reading to use as a basis for thoughts when they ‘meet’ on Sunday mornings, albeit in their own homes. You might like this:-

This is a marvellous world, full of beauty and splendour; it is also an unrelenting and savage world, and we are not the only living things prone to dominance if given the chance. In our fumbling, chaotic way, we do also make gardens, irrigate the desert, fly to the moon, and compose symphonies. Some of us are trying to save species other than ourselves ...

We have no reason to be either arrogant or complacent: one look at the stars or through a microscope is sufficient to quell such notions. But we have to accept our position in the world with as much grace, responsibility and fortitude as we can muster, and try to grow up to our mission of love in this tangle of prospects and torments.

Pamela Umbina 1992 *Quaker Faith & Practice*

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## **HOPEFUL**

by Howard Zinn

To be hopeful in bad times is not just foolishly romantic. It is based on the fact that human history is a history not only of cruelty, but also of compassion, sacrifice, courage, kindness. What we choose to emphasise in this complex history will determine our lives.

If we see only the worst, it destroys our capacity to do something.

If we remember those times and places - and there are so many - where people have behaved magnificently, this gives us the energy to act, and at least the possibility of sending this spinning top of a world in a different direction.

And if we do act, in however small a way, we don’t have to wait for some grand utopian future. The future is an infinite succession of presents, and to live now as we think human beings should live, in defiance of all that is bad around us, is itself a marvellous victory.

from Jennie via Oxford CND & Salisbury CND.

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Thank you for your contributions so far. Please continue to send in interesting or cheering-up pieces, I would prefer not to receive a chunk from a newspaper in its entirety, but would appreciate shortened versions if poss.

email: [jennyridd@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:jennyridd@yahoo.co.uk)

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## **THE RAINBOW**

Jill Cecil, a long time member of Faringdon Peace Group, and one of her friends, have started a ‘non-technological’ space for ‘quiet time’. A space held in Love and Hope; for connection, meditation, and prayer for all humanity, the world, and our own personal concerns at this time of crisis and transition.

Every Friday, between 12 midday and 1pm.  
You’re welcome to set some time aside during the hour.

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# SAFETY AND SECURITY

## What is Covid 19 showing us?

We are in the midst of a true pandemic the like of which most of us have not known in our lifetime. Could we have been better prepared? Has it really come quite out of the blue? On the contrary, Symon Hill of the Peace Pledge Union shows how this situation was foreseen by the governments of the day, going back at least ten years or more, probably further. The government's Risk Register of Civil Emergencies has been listing epidemics and pandemics as major possibilities since 2008.

In 2010, the coalition government's Strategic Defence and Security Review identified threats to Britain and the world as being possible pandemics and climate change.

In 2015 the same body again identified pandemics as a realistic threat, but this was ignored in favour of following the usual militaristic line.

2017 - There was a 'high probability' of a major epidemic, likely to be a new strain of flu. They thought there was a high probability of 'up to 50 percent of the population experiencing symptoms, potentially leading to between 20,000 and 750,000 fatalities, and high levels of absence from work'.

In 2018, government researchers were even more aware of real threats of fatal disease, as focused on by the Daily Telegraph in its report of the National Capability Review.

Why have all these warnings been ignored? Symon Hill suggests there is a mindset so focused on violence that a threat that does not involve military force cannot be imagined.

This attitude and way of thinking, coupled with the years of 'austerity' and dismantling of the structures that underpin any sane society, has left us totally unprepared by a threat that was discussed as a possibility all those years ago, and now potentially thousands of people will die, including some of the people who work so hard to keep the rest of us safe.

We could have been facing this crisis with a resilient, well-staffed National Health Service, with care workers, cleaners, delivery drivers, bin men (and women) and countless others ready to do battle with corona virus. Instead, says Ceri Dare of the P.P.U. "we are armed only with useless weapons of war". This is not to underestimate the value of military →

personnel being used to help deliver medical and other supplies to help with tackling the crisis, but we should also note that at the same time 'our' nuclear submarines continue their patrol, useless hunks of metal when it comes to dealing with a really dangerous threat. Furthermore, British troops will be taking part in NATO exercises, stoking up tension.

The PPU calls for a civil emergency service to deal with situations such as that caused by covid-19, without military hierarchies, so that we are prepared for real threats to our security rather than the waste and destruction of war. Money could be diverted from military budgets to help with the NHS and supporting people who are currently losing their jobs.

In future, let us address the real dangers. Militarism cannot defeat the coronavirus. We need values of co-operation and mutual support between people who treat each other as equals. As Ceri Dare puts it "The lies of 'defence' ring hollow now. We need what we have always needed, to love and care for one another as neighbours, as communities, as nations, and we need that more than we ever have before". It's time for a change!

With acknowledgement to Symon Hill and the 'Morning Star'. *Sent in by Jennie Chesterton*

## Work to do

I'm a pacifist

If you're a pacifist too

You know that as soon as you say

I'm a pacifist -

A political person smiles and says:

Of course, I respect your position, but -

Well, I say, I don't want your respect -

How about your help? We've got work to do

And the political person smiles and asks

The same stupid question time after time

Wouldn't you have fought World War Two to stop Hitler?

And I say, No - and here's the reason why

Because I wouldn't have fought World War One

- So Hitler wouldn't have some to power

Don't you understand? After all these centuries

That war gives birth to war?

That's how the murder plague grows

Unless we stop it.

Yes, we've got work to do.

Part of a 'prose in *rhythm*' by Adrian Mitchell 2003  
*following the demo against attacking Iraq*

# AFRICA SOUTH OF THE EQUATOR



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i) Equator runs through  
Southern Uganda  
ii) Ans on p.6

From

## **CAMPAIGN AGAINST ARMS TRADE**

The COVID-19 pandemic affects us all, but communities facing conflict and repression are even less able to prepare for and cope with the virus. Yet the UK continues to prioritise arms company profits over human life.

The UK continues weapons sales to Saudi Arabia for use in attacks on Yemen. Five years of bombing has already destroyed Yemen's healthcare system; now COVID-19 has been found in the country too.

The UK continues to license weapons sales to India, in spite of government-backed murder and oppression of its Muslim population, when that money could be spent on vital healthcare in the fight against COVID-19. It continues to sell arms to the Philippines, where President Duterte has ordered police to shoot dead anyone causing 'trouble' during the lockdown. Meanwhile the UK continues to waste billions of pounds on aircraft carriers, fighter jets and nuclear weapons, money which could be spent on life-saving protective equipment and ventilators.

The UK must end the sale of arms which fuel conflict.

The UN Secretary General has called for an historic global ceasefire, to allow war-torn countries the chance to focus on the threat of COVID-19. It would provide access for humanitarian aid, allow health workers the chance to prepare for the crisis, and offer a crucial window to build lasting political solutions.

**UK Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab has backed the call for a global ceasefire. Now he must turn these words into action.**

The Foreign Secretary must take a lead at the UN Security Council in building a unified backing for a global ceasefire; and the UK Government must also end arms sales, which only fuel tensions and divert spending away from critical human needs.

Tell Dominic Raab to pressure the UN Security Council to call for a global ceasefire, and back up his call for peace by ending UK arms sales.

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I asked Steve for a contribution to the newsletter, and this is what I got!

Did you hear the one about the farmer who won the Nobel Peace Prize?

He was outstanding in his field.

## **WE HAVE BEEN HAVING A CLEAROUT**

and not before time, and I came across an old poster from Global Justice about migration. Some of the key points made, which I think are worth repeating, are:

**This is not a migrant crisis.** why we need to stop blaming the victims for crises they didn't cause

**It's a crisis of inequality.** We live in an unfair economic system that lets a few people at the top become extremely wealthy while pushing others into poverty. Global inequality is growing rapidly, forcing many people in poorer countries to leave their homes and seek a better quality of life elsewhere

**It's a crisis of war.** Powerful countries including the UK, have played a direct role in wars from Libya to Iraq and UK companies are making money from selling weapons used in conflicts around the world.

**It's a climate crisis.** Climate change is hitting poorer countries hardest, even though they've done the least to cause the problem. Increasing droughts, floods, and natural disasters destroy homes and livelihoods forcing many to move.

**It's a crisis of exploitation.** Rich countries and corporations have gained much of their wealth from exploiting poorer countries. Multinational companies extract resources and leave behind a trail of destruction and displacement. Unfair trade deals between rich countries like the UK and countries in the global south worsen the poverty that forces people to leave their homes.

**Time to Move On?** Migration should be a right for everyone, not just the privileged few.



**CORONAVIRUS LETTER TO HUMANITY**    Written by: Vivienne R Reich

The earth whispered but you did not hear.  
The earth spoke but you did not listen  
The earth screamed but you turned her off.  
And so I was born...

*as seen on Facebook and copied with the  
permission of the person who posted it*

I was not born to punish you.. I was born to awaken you..  
The earth cried out for help...  
Massive flooding. But you didn't listen.  
Burning fires. But you didn't listen.  
Strong hurricanes. But you didn't listen.  
Terrifying tornadoes. But you didn't listen.  
You still don't listen to the earth when  
Ocean animals are dying due to pollutants in the waters.  
Glaciers melting at an alarming rate.  
Severe drought.

You didn't listen to how much negativity the earth is receiving.  
Non-stop wars. Non-stop greed. You just kept going on with your life..  
No matter how much hate there was.. No matter how many killings daily..  
It was more important to get that latest iPhone than worry about what the earth was trying to tell you.

But now I am here.  
And I've made the world stop on its tracks.  
I've made YOU finally listen.  
I've made you take refuge.  
I've made you stop thinking about materialistic things..  
Now you are like the earth...  
You are only worried about YOUR survival. How does that feel?  
I give you fever.. as the fires burn on earth.  
I give you respiratory issues.. has pollution fill the earth air.  
I give you weakness as the earth weakens every day.  
I took away your comforts..  
Your outings.  
The things you would use to forget about the planet and its pain.

And I made the world stop...  
And now...

China has better air quality.. Skies are clear blue because factories are not spewing pollution into the earth's air.  
The water in Venice is clean because the gondola boats that pollute the water are not being used.  
The earth's Ozone layer is healing due to the pause of movement our planet has taken.  
There is less noise pollution in big cities.  
Oceans are quieter because there's less ships sailing through.  
There is an abundance of fish and food like never before since more restaurants are closed.

And..... YOU are having to take time to reflect on what is important in your life.

Again I am not here to punish you.. I am here to Awaken you..  
When all this is over and I am gone... Please remember these moments..  
Listen to the earth.  
Listen to your soul.  
Stop Polluting the earth.  
Stop Fighting among each other.  
Stop caring about materialistic things.  
And start loving your neighbours.  
Start caring about the earth and all its creatures.  
Start believing in a Creator. Because next time I may come back even stronger....

Signed, *Coronavirus*

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This extract from the Morning star, with their permission, sent in by Phil

**THIS PANDEMIC IS ONLY A SMALL TASTE OF NUCLEAR ANNIHILATION**

In order to ensure our future, we need to beat the virus, the build a common security through nuclear disarmament, writes Bill Kidd

On January 23 this year the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists set the Doomsday Clock to “100 Seconds to Midnight.” That is the closest to planetary disaster our world has ever been and it’s due to the dual threats of climate change and nuclear weapons — policies that are way out of control.

Honestly, if you think that the Covid-19 pandemic has had life-altering impacts on you, your community and the world in general then I have to quote Al Jolson and say: “You aint seen nothing yet.”

The infrastructure of our civilisation still stands around us — and although it’s the truth and one that shouldn’t be understated, that the virus is a real danger — the madness of impending nuclear disaster would take all of our civilisation away.

Further, the cost of these weapons of mass-murder stands, at today’s estimate, at \$1 trillion world-wide — think of the achievements that could be made towards the UN’s 23 Sustainable Development Goals, or indeed fighting the coronavirus.

The established route to disarmament would have seen all UN member states, disarmament experts, parliamentarians and civil-society experts meeting at the UN for the 50th Anniversary Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference in April-May 2020 — this has now of course been postponed due to Covid-19 until next year.

Remember the “100 Seconds to Midnight” and potential planetary disaster? Well maybe, just maybe, the nuclear weapons states can hold off on Armageddon for a wee bit longer.

In July 2017 the UN adopted the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which it called on all states to adhere to as complementary to the NPT as an effective measure as foreseen in Article V1.

This has been opposed by the nuclear-weapons states and their lieutenant states who would rather waste vast sums of money and other resources on maintaining and developing even larger arsenals as well as on an advance of artificial intelligence and cyber-weapons operations.

Covid-19 is a killer virus stalking our communities and I believe it’s been seen that most of us are pulling together to face it down – we need to do the same to face down the existential threat of nuclear weapons already in our midst.

*Bill Kidd is constituency MSP for Glasgow Anniesland and co-president of Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament.*

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Answers to Quiz. How well do you know our world?

|                           |                                |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. South Africa, Pretoria | 15. Madagascar, Antananarivo   |
| 2. Lesotho, Masuru        | 16. Mauritius, St. Louis       |
| 3. Es Watini, Mbabane     | 17. Comoros, Maroni            |
| 4. Mozambique, Maputo     | 18. Kenya, Nairobi             |
| 5. Zimbabwe, Harare       | 19. Uganda, Kampala            |
| 6. Botswana, Gaborone     | 20. DRC, Kinshasa              |
| 7. Namibia, Windhoek      | 21. Rep. of Congo, Brazzaville |
| 8. Angola, Luanda         | 22. Gabon, Libreville          |
| 9. Zambia, Lusaka         | 23. Equatorial Guinea, Malabo  |
| 10. Malawi, Lilongwe      |                                |
| 11. Tanzania, Daddoma     | <i>and your tiebreaker</i>     |
| 12. Burundi, Gitega       | What was the former name of    |
| 13. Rwanda, Kigali        | Es Watini?                     |
| 14. Seychelles, Victoria  | Swaziland                      |

*Wash  
your  
hands  
of  
Trident*