

FARINGDON PEACE GROUP NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2020

NEWSLETTER 3

GIFTS

Let us remember we've been here before,
In times of famine, earthquake,
plague and war.

Our present suffering never will destroy
Our gratitude for hope of all the joy
We find in Nature, Arts, a rested mind;
And joy that we may sometimes find
In others' company, the gift above
All other gifts, delight in mutual love.

Tim Eccles, April '20

.....
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.



So, back to normal then?
Convoy on the move

THE MUSTARD SEED FAIRTRADE STALL COMES TO YOUR DOOR!

As you probably know, the Mustard Seed had to close at the beginning of the lockdown, but that doesn't mean you have to miss out on all your fair-trade goodies! I have gradually started to take orders and deliver within Faringdon and am now opening up the service.

The order form is on the Mustard Seed website: http://www.mustardseed.org.uk/MS_CUSTOMER_ORDER_FORM_APRIL_2020.pdf

Although it is up to date, I can't guarantee that everything on the list will be in stock when you order.

I am delivering on Fridays, so email or phone me with your order before then and I'll arrange a time for delivery.

karen@vogt.org.uk or 01367-241707.

Payment can be by bank transfer (details at bottom of order form), cheque (payable to Mustard Seed) or the correct cash in an envelope.

In addition to what's on the list, I have stamps (not 1st class at the moment), food waste bags, and can even get greetings cards for you if you trust my choices!

The Mustard Seed has always been and will continue to be a beacon of faith, justice and hope in the Market Place, but it needs your support now more than ever! I look forward to hearing from you.

Karen

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Please send in interesting or cheering pieces for the next newsletter.

email: jennyridd@yahoo.co.uk

I prefer a Word or Publisher document; not a pdf or a newspaper article please.

.....

From Symon Hill

Campaigns Manager of the Peace Pledge Union

What is “essential work”? According to the government, the term “key workers” includes “those critical to the delivery of key defence and national security outputs”.

In other words, the arms industry has been allowed to keep functioning. There has been no lockdown for militarism. Arms dealers treat the safety of their own workers with contempt.

Some arms companies have diverted some resources to making ventilators. This is welcome, but involves only a tiny percentage of arms industry resources. Similarly, I'm grateful to people who deliver medical supplies – including soldiers. But the military establishment must be resisted when they use this for propaganda purposes. Their own figures make clear that 87% of UK armed forces personnel have not been involved at all in responding to Covid-19. While some UK troops have been building hospitals, others have continued to assist the Saudi forces who have been bombing hospitals in Yemen.

For years, “defence” and “security” have been euphemisms for war. The government's own security reviews in 2010, 2015 and 2018 identified pandemics as a major security threat. But “defence” money went into preparing for war. Covid-19 is a deadly reminder that weapons cannot make us safe. They cannot protect you from infection, pay the rent if you lose your job or support your mental health if you're struggling with isolation.

Amidst the horror of the pandemic, we need to reclaim “defence” and “security” for their rightful meanings. Nineteen organisations have signed an open letter calling for “defence” budgets to be spent on defending from real threats, such as pandemics, poverty and climate change. The Peace Pledge Union's ‘Healthcare not Warfare’ campaign has drawn support from nurses, doctors, and former soldiers amongst others, many of whom have not been involved in peace activism before.

We need to speak up: war is not only immoral but counter productive, making the world less safe and diverting our focus from things that really defend us. You can't nuke a virus.

for more info: www.ppu.org.uk/covid19

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE!

After a lock-down pause, the garden makeover in Faringdon's Southampton Street car park is back on track.

During the next 2-3 weeks, a band of volunteers will be digging in fertiliser and adding lots of plants.

Now that more outdoor exercise is allowed (with proper social distancing), you are invited to put on your gardening gloves and join in!

The idea of a garden makeover in the town centre car park was first inspired by Faringdon Churches Together Climate Change Study Course in 2018. The project has substantial funding from the Town Council and other local charities, with advice and planning from local landscape designer Jo Walsh, and plants from Goody's at Bampton Nurseries.

This is a community project for volunteer gardeners providing just what we need at the moment - exercise in the sunshine and a chance to look forward with hope.

Do join us! If you would like to help, please contact Pam de Wit: tel. 243331
pamandjohndw@btinternet.com

NUCLEAR WEAPONS CONTRACTORS TO MAKE 10,000 VENTILATORS

Defence firm Babcock will begin manufacturing 10,000 ventilators, it was announced recently. In a statement Babcock said it had ‘responded quickly to the UK Prime Minister's UK Ventilator Challenge’ and that the manufacturing of 10,000 Zephyr Plus ventilators would begin subject to regulatory approval. It is expected that staff who routinely work on defence contracts have been redeployed to work on the ventilator project. Babcock is also refurbishing parts of Britain's Trident nuclear weapons system and is part of an alliance which manages Coulport and Faslane. One of the objections to scrapping Trident is that highly skilled employees would be left without jobs. CND's defence diversification answer to this point over many decades has been that workers can and must be deployed to socially useful parts of the economy. However, whenever we have proposed this ‘defence diversification’, the usual retort is ‘that's impossible!’ The Babcock ventilator scheme shows us that it is possible after all.

From Oxford CND newsletter, sent in by Jennie

Conscience signs an open letter on military spending and the pandemic

Conscience has joined eighteen organisations in signing the following open letter. Many thanks to Symon Hill at the Peace Pledge Union for coordinating this open letter on military spending and the Covid 19 pandemic.

Covid 19 is a deadly reminder that armed force cannot make us safe. People around the world have the same needs and face many of the same threats. We urgently need to stop accepting “defence” and “security” as euphemisms for war and militarism.

Military personnel have taken part in building the Nightingale Hospital in London and the Dragon’s Heart Hospital in Cardiff. The arms company Babcock is diverting some resources to produce ventilators. These initiatives, which involve just a small percentage of the armed forces and arms industry, should be the first step in reallocating “defence” resources to defending us from the most serious threats to our security.

While NHS staff struggle with insufficient protective equipment, nuclear submarines patrol at a cost of billions, powerless to defend us from a pandemic. While some armed forces personnel are helpfully delivering medical supplies, others are increasing military tension by participating in NATO exercises – scaled back but not cancelled despite coronavirus. UK troops train Saudi forces who have attacked civilians in Yemen.

The UK government’s security reviews in 2010, 2015 and 2018 identified pandemics as a serious security threat. Despite this, they chose to increase spending on armed force, maintaining the seventh highest military expenditure in the world. Recent wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya demonstrate that deep-seated problems cannot be solved with bombs. War makes the whole world less safe.

Money diverted from military budgets could contribute towards NHS and social care costs, initiatives to assist those losing their jobs and support for people whose mental health is affected by isolation. Longer term, we need to re-orient the economy towards socially useful production and shift “defence” resources away from militaristic approaches and towards tackling serious threats to human security, including pandemics, poverty and climate change.

Yours ...

The following letter appeared after an article in the Guardian about macaques who hug each other. It ends with a touching anecdote about a broken-nosed old Barbary macaque being comforted by warm hugs from some younger ones. I’m not a macaque, (says the writer) and my nose is fine, but I am a primate, and I do so long for hugs from my young relatives.

Taken from the Guardian with permission

A LETTER FROM CONSCIENCE

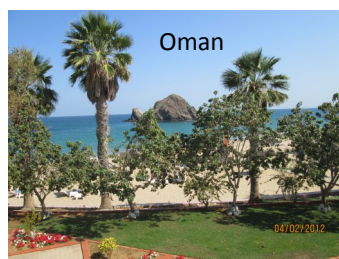
Why your support counts

The coronavirus crisis has made it clearer than ever that governments should focus on peacebuilding instead of funding more wars. This crisis is forcing governments around the world to urgently rethink their priorities. The UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres has urged everyone around the world to agree a global ceasefire in order to fight the pandemic crisis.

We must continue to find ways to campaign for a world where taxes are not used to pay for war. Therefore, since the beginning of the lockdown we have committed to a number of online actions, including International Conscientious Objector’s Day’s first ever online commemoration, a bi-monthly online newsletter email, an increased social media presence and much more.

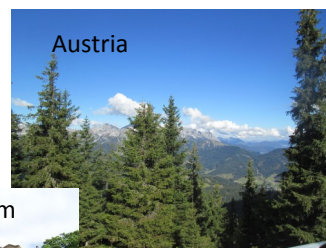
Your contribution will enable us to further adapt our plans in this uncertain climate caused by the coronavirus pandemic. This is why we depend on you.

Thanks to you, Conscience is campaigning for the legal right of those with a conscientious objection to war to have the entire military part of their taxes spent on peacebuilding.



Oman

Wish you were there?



Austria



Durham

VE DAY AND THE HOPE FOR PEACE

Marigold Bentley reflects on the beginning of the end of World War II and the work for peace that continues



Image: All countries need to be part of the United Nations for it to achieve its aims.

My mother described to me how she and her mother cried all day when Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain announced that Britain was again at war on 3 September 1939. World War I had been so terrible only 21 years earlier. The memory of that war and its impact for my grandmother, and more so my grandfather, was a continual trauma. They found it unbearable to think of having to endure yet more war. But, despite the many hardships, during those six years of 1939 to 1945 there emerged a determination to not repeat the mistakes of the past.

So the end of war in 1945 was a joy and delight. My mum, who had grown up during the war, threw herself into International Voluntary Service for Peace and Family Relief Units, getting involved in work camps and community efforts to build a new Europe. She was alongside many Quakers who were involved in delivering relief across Europe in the 1940s and 1950s. Theirs was the challenge of feeding, clothing and housing displaced people. For the Quakers involved, a fundamentally important part of what they did was to establish new relationships among the many displaced people. The aim was reconciliation and restoration of dignity.

This approach did not always go down well with the military who were required to treat the German people as the enemy, even after the war had ended. The principle of working to enable people to see one another as human and to be compassionate and tender has always been in direct contrast to the brutality of war. For Quakers, the understanding is that to prevent war, relationships have to be developed and common aims which benefit the many have to be the bedrock of new beginnings.

Confronting inhumanity

It is important to acknowledge the limited knowledge that ordinary people had about what was really going on in Germany in the 1930s and during the war. Whilst many Quakers and others were conscientious objectors and undertook various forms of alternative non-military service, some felt that fascism could only be defeated by joining the war effort. The situation clearly posed enormous

religious challenges and difficult choices which individual Friends had to take. It was a huge shock to the Quaker relief workers who entered Bergen-Belsen six days after the British military to see first-hand what had been done in the concentration camps. Even now, 75 years on it is hard to comprehend the cruelty inflicted when all the evidence and personal accounts are available for us to see. Cruelty of such extremes must always to be challenged but nonviolently in order for humanity to break out of the bloody cycle of war.

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The relief at the end of World War II in Europe, following decades of war and the threat of war, was enormous. It was tempered though, by the continuation of war in the Far East, which did not end until August 1945 after the dropping of nuclear bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Building a world without war

The end of World War II brought with it a renewed determination to build a world without war. The United Nations was founded with the support of every major world power on 24 October 1945, "determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war". Quakers have worked at the UN since that time, with offices in Geneva and New York. A large number of visionary organisations were created to pool resources and direct them to relief of suffering, including Christian Aid.

75 years on we remind ourselves of the lessons of the first half of the twentieth century. The need to disarm, the need to provide for need not greed and the collective requirement to organise so that people and planet flourish. Wherever we are, we continue to listen to the whisperings of hope, and act on the endless opportunities for peace.

Marigold Bentley is responsible for the oversight of peace work under Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee (QPSWCC), and for faith relations under the Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations

A LETTER FROM DAVID JOHNSTON, MP FOR WANTAGE

I hope you are all safe and well. It has been easier than I expected to adjust to 'virtual parliament', in which 50 MPs can be present in the House of Commons at any one time and up to 120 of us can join by video link. Back in March, I was not sure it would happen at all given the reservations some of my colleagues had, and yet here we are in May with it working pretty smoothly.

Having been concerned that it would feel strange to give speeches from my desk, I have now done so to speak in the Domestic Abuse, Agriculture and Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination Bill debates, alongside questioning several Cabinet ministers on behalf of constituents.

Virtual parliament has certain advantages, not least the fact that the day before debates, the Speaker publishes a call list which shows exactly who will be called and in what order. This is in contrast to how things you usually proceed in the House of Commons, when you can be in there for several hours bobbing up and down and not be called at all! You can also wear jeans on your bottom half as the camera can't see below your shoulders!

That said, like everyone else currently working we're all keen to be back around our colleagues. Whilst some people suggest that the current period will change how everyone works forever more, I'm not so sure. Having had friends move to other countries and being reasonably used to speaking to them by video, it's not the same as being in the same room and I think most people want the interactions that come face to face.

MPs were advised to remain in their constituencies for lockdown if they could, so my partner and I have been in our home in the Didcot area, which we got in February. It has been good to spend an extended period here rather than just the Friday-Sunday period each week and she and I consider ourselves very lucky to have a garden and to be able to take walks around the beautiful environment we now live in.

Where we can, we've been getting out to help the organisations in our community that have played such a vital role during this crisis – from Sofea to the Ray Collins Trust – and remain full of admiration for the many ways they've been helping people during this period. Do visit www.oxfordshireallin.org to find one near you.



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

1 Morocco	Rabat	19 Niger	Niamey
2 Cape Verde	Praia	20 Egypt	Cairo
3 Mauritania	Nouakchott	21 Chad	Ndjamena
4 Senegal	Dakar	22 Nigeria	Abuja
5 Gambia	Banjul	23 Cameroon	Yaounda
6 Guinea Bissau	Bissau	24 Central African Republic	Bangui
7 Guinea	Conakry	25 Sudan	Khartoum
8 Sierra Leone	Freetown	26 Eritrea	Asmara
9 Liberia	Monrovia	27 Ethiopia	Addis Ababa
10 Ivory Coast	Yamoussoukro	28 South Sudan	Juba
11 Ghana	Accra	29 Somalia	Mogadishu
12 Togo	Lome	30 Djibouti	Djibouti
13 Benin	Porto-Novo	31 Uganda	Kampala
14 Burkina Faso	Ouagadougou	32 Equatorial Guinea	Malabo
15 Mali	Bamako	33 Sao Tome and Principe	Principe
16 Algeria	Algiers	34 Republic of Congo	Brazzaville
17 Tunisia	Tunis	35 Western Sahara	Laayoune
18 Libya	Tripoli		"administered "by Morocco

Do not reach out your hands

Reach out your heart

KEEP CALM



People may need to be physically distant at the moment, but we are united. We are still connected. Together, we will get through this.

TIP: Help limit the spread of misinformation by only sharing advice from experts and reliable sources.

The best news I have had for a long time

There must be rejoicing in heaven and Yemen

'The end of an era': oil price collapse may force Saudis to rein in arms spending



Saudi Hawks from the Saudi air force performing at the international aerospace and defence exhibition in Tunisia in March. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty

Saudi Arabia may be forced to forego new weapons contracts and delay already-agreed weapons purchases as a financial crisis grips the kingdom, experts predict.

The expected delay of new weapons deals could have long-term political repercussions for the country under the rule of Mohammed bin Salman, the crown prince and de facto ruler who has waged a bloody war with neighbouring Yemen.



Saudi Arabia is facing an unprecedented budget crunch because of the collapse of the oil markets and the global economic turmoil caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, which has reduced oil demand for the foreseeable future. "I have no doubt, this is the end of an era. The era of the Persian Gulf having all this money is over," said Bruce Riedel, a senior fellow at Brookings in Washington and 30-year veteran of the Central Intelligence Agency, who has served as an adviser on Middle East issues to several US administrations.

Saudi Arabia spent about \$62bn (£51bn) in arms last year, making it the fifth largest spender on weapons globally. Although that figure was less than in 2018, it still represents about 8% of Saudi's GDP, meaning that the country spent a larger portion of its wealth on weapons than the US (3.4%), China (1.9%), Russia (3.9%), or India (2.4%), according to research by the Stockholm International Peace Institute.

Britain sells more arms to Saudi Arabia than to any other country – more than £4.7bn since the kingdom began a bombing campaign against Yemen in March 2015 – and Boris Johnson has faced criticism for allowing sales to continue despite concerns that the UK has risked being in breach of international humanitarian law by aiding the Saudi campaign.

Andrew Smith, at the Campaign Against Arms Trade, said: "I expect that they may in the short term put off committing to some larger purchases, like a new set of fighter jets, for example, which Britain has been negotiating for quite some time."

Another expert, Gerald Feierstein, a former US ambassador to Yemen, said it would be easy for the Saudis to delay or cancel new weapons contracts, but that the Saudi government would likely have to continue maintenance contracts to keep its current force operable. Feierstein said Saudi Arabia has in the past sought to renegotiate payment schedules for weapons, stretching out payments over long periods of time.

Meanwhile, Riedel said that among the companies likely to be hardest hit is Britain's [BAE Systems](#), given the company's exposure to Saudi Arabia.

Copied from the Guardian with permission

Officially, the new strategy is "personal responsibility" and "good, solid British common sense", as our prime minister colourfully describes it; unofficially, operation blame the public is well under way.

The real message behind 'stay alert': it'll be your fault if coronavirus spreads. writes Owen Jones, a *Guardian* columnist.

This meaningless phrase allows the government to shift blame to the public for failing to be sufficiently responsible.

WAR
CAUSES CLIMATE CHANGE
CLIMATE CHANGE CAUSES
WAR

Taken from Romanian Facebook

Someone writes that while Romanians are fed up with being holed up in their flats, unable to harvest or export their own crops, at the same time some people are being allowed to travel to other countries, where they will become 'cheap labour'.

This appeared on the same day that our papers had pictures of a planeload of young Romanians arriving to help with our harvest. Romanians are said to dislike the term cheap, unskilled labour. Underpaid almost certainly, but unskilled?

My only experience of Romanian fruit pickers was the two children of a friend of mine, who came here many years ago to pick apples, in order to earn enough to put themselves through university, since which they have obtained degrees in Economics and Law respectively.

..... **MONICA SUGGESTS:-** **that car drivers may like this information.**

It is not good for cars to be left stationary for long periods of time. Please make sure you start your car once a week for about 5 minutes, taking the handbrake off and moving a short distance backwards and forwards on your drive or where it is parked. This will stop the battery going flat and the brakes rusting on. Then after you have put your handbrake on to park again, put the car in gear, if on a slope the opposite way to the slope and leave in gear taking handbrake off. If you feel uncomfortable with just leaving it in gear, put a brick under back wheels.

Monica is an Advanced Driver

A POEM

by Donna Ashworth, taken from Oxford CND newsletter and submitted by Jennie

History will remember when the world stopped
And the flights stayed on the ground
And the cars parked in the street.
And the trains didn't run

History will remember when the schools closed
And the children stayed indoors
And the medical staff walked towards the fire
And they didn't run

History will remember when the people sang
On their balconies, in isolation
But so very much together
In courage and song.

History will remember when the people fought
For their old and weak
Protected the vulnerable
By doing nothing at all.

History will remember when the virus left
And the houses opened
And the people came out and kissed
And started again

Kinder than before

.....
Health: There's a very big risk a global pandemic will overwhelm our health system and crash the economy. Please can we have some money to maybe stop it? A few million maybe?

Treasury: Have other countries spent money on that?

Health: Well yes, quite a lot have

Treasury: Not a chance! Austerity you know. There's no magic money tree.

Defence: There's a very tiny risk someone may threaten to drop a nuclear bomb on us. Please can we have some money so we can threaten them back?

Treasury: Have other countries spent money on that?

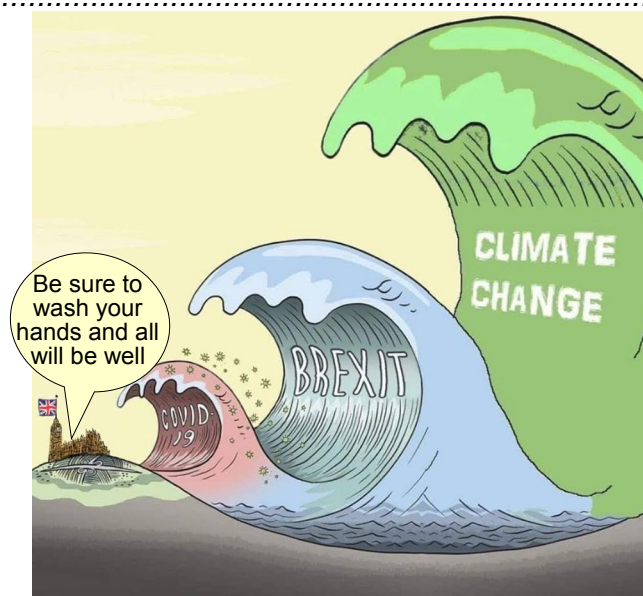
Defence: Well not, not many

Treasury: Will £100 billion cover it? Or would you like more?

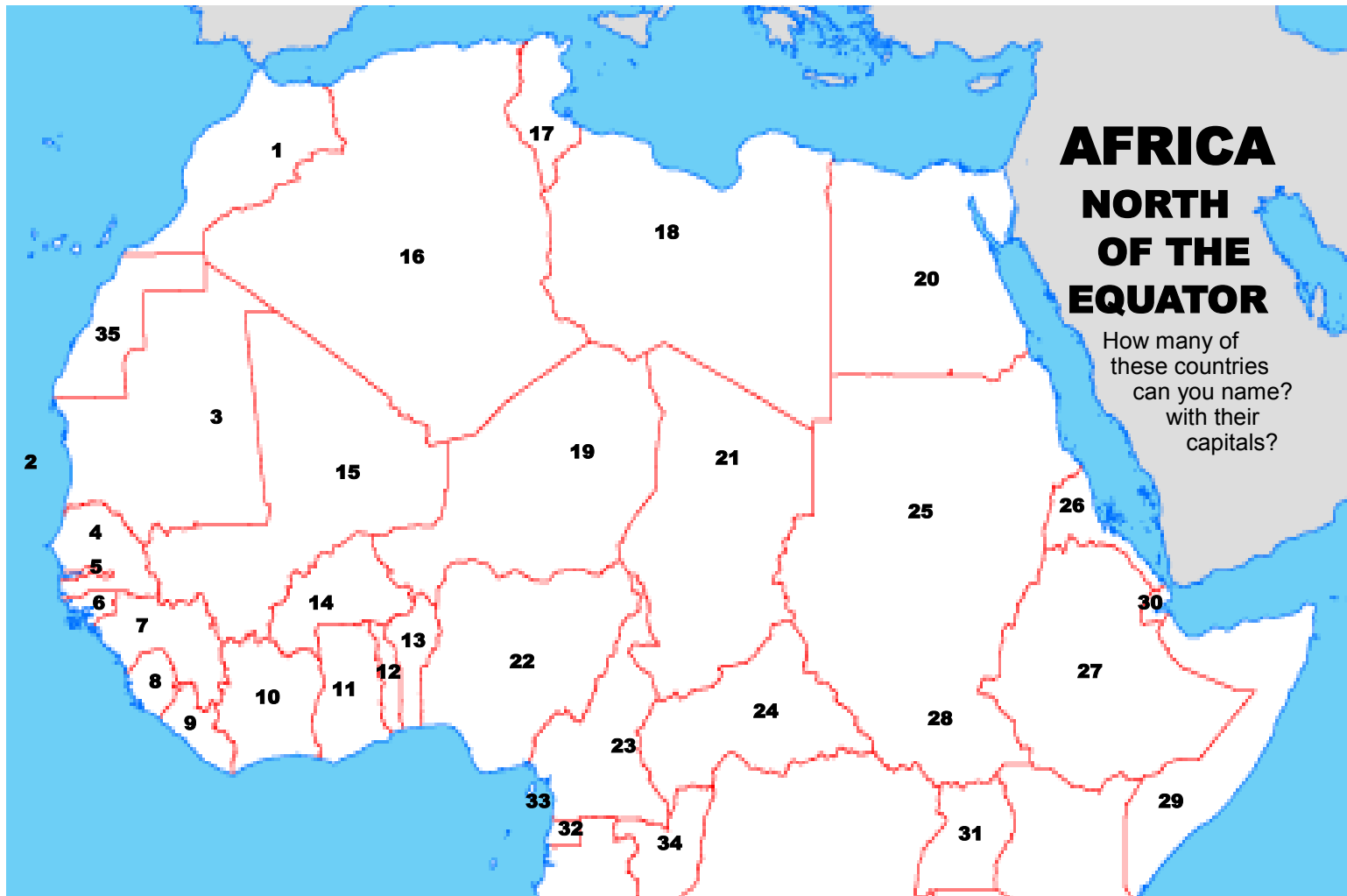
Submitted by Dave

..... **No comment!**

I saw this on an
Italian Facebook
page



HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW OUR WORLD?



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35 This region is not an independent country. What is it?