



# FARINGDON PEACE GROUP DECEMBER 2020

## **CAMPAIGN AGAINST ARMS TRADE** *reports:*

### **500 new arms export licences to Saudi Arabia**

This week we learned that the Government has issued more than 500 new export licences for arms sales to Saudi Arabia since July. The government had been forced to stop issuing new licences following CAAT's legal action to stop the sales last year.

It is disgraceful that the government has pushed through so many new arms sales, which will only prolong the Saudi-led bombing of Yemen and exacerbate the humanitarian crisis. CAAT's new legal action challenges this: we must stop the sales once and for all.

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### **PAYING FOR THE PANDEMIC**

The COVID-19 pandemic has radically shifted our understanding of how fast we can make changes to public spending when the political will is there. New research from the Transnational Institute, makes ten proposals on how to pay for the costs of the pandemic and achieve a just transition to a better world.

TNI's research has found that reclaiming 10% of global military spending could raise \$191.7 billion a year globally. Choosing welfare over warfare is a critical part of finding the funds to tackle climate breakdown and global injustice.

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and more from CAAT

### **END SARS AND UK SUPPORT FOR NIGERIAN SECURITY FORCES**

Following the End SARS protests to disband the controversial Special Anti-Robbery Squad in Nigeria, CAAT research revealed the training and support provided by the UK to Nigerian security forces. The government initially denied the links but was later forced to admit that some of this training had been provided to SARS.

## **PALESTINIAN CHILDREN NEED YOUR SUPPORT THIS WINTER**

Whether they are living under the threat of annexation in the West Bank, deprived of adequate healthcare in unliveable Gaza or struggling in overcrowded, unsanitary camps in Lebanon, the added threat of COVID-19 and its consequences is making the lives of young and vulnerable Palestinians even harder.

For the first time ever, MAP is responding to overwhelming medical needs affecting all three areas of operation simultaneously.

In densely populated Gaza, cases of community transmission of the virus is on the rise. In Lebanon, following the explosion in Beirut, there has been a staggering 180% increase in cases. And, in the West Bank, fractured communities are dealing with a further 25,000 cases. As well as immediate threat to life, this dramatic upscale is having a knock-on effect on medical provision in areas where the healthcare system was already collapsing.

Too often, it is Palestinian children who suffer the most when conditions get worse. With an added strain on resources and a healthcare system struggling to cope, many are in pain and distress.

*Help us:*

- Resupply an out-of-stock, life-saving medicine like surfactant to a neonatal unit.
- Provide marginalised Palestinian communities with healthcare and medicines for chronic illnesses, through our mobile health clinic.
- Get vital supplements, like iron and vitamin D, to prevent and treat illnesses like anaemia and rickets in children.

Please make a donation to Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP)

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## SHOP FOR LIFE

When we're allowed to go out shopping again, if you're thinking of Christmas cards and gifts, do remember the Mustard Seed where you will find Advent calendars and candles, Christmas cards (and stamps!), festive foods and Fairtrade gifts from all around the world.

But you don't have to wait till December! We are offering an order and delivery (mostly 2 wheeled) service to Faringdon and surrounding villages. Just go to the Mustard Seed website <http://www.mustardseed.org.uk/> and look at the order forms to see what foods are available. Unfortunately we cannot show our wide range of gifts online, but if you see anything you want in the window or inside the shop, please phone or email me and I will do my best to help.

The deadline for ordering Fairtrade Christmas Hampers has passed, but you can always choose what you want and make them up yourself!

Karen  
01367-241707  
[karen@vogt.org.uk](mailto:karen@vogt.org.uk)

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## REMEMBRANCE

There was of course no Remembrance Service as such this year. One or two members of FPG did place a wreath at the War Memorial, during the afternoon, and here you see it taking centre stage.



## A quick update following the elections held in Burma, from the Burma Campaign

### Election results

As expected, Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy has won a landslide election victory. A welcome development was that the pro-military Union Solidarity Development Party lost several seats, even in areas with many military bases.

The election was not free and fair and was an apartheid election with Rohingya banned from voting.

Human rights activists in the country are not optimistic that human rights will improve during Aung San Suu Kyi's second term in power. During the first term, human rights declined under Aung San Suu Kyi's government. Activists and minorities in the country will still need our support.

### Political prisoners

At the time of Burma's election on 8 November Aung San Suu Kyi was keeping 229 political prisoners in jail.

The number of activists either in jail or awaiting trial was just 14 fewer than before the 2015 election when the military still ruled the country. ie 598 v 584

These figures are based on information from the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners Burma and do not include more than 100,000 Rohingya which Aung San Suu Kyi keeps imprisoned in internment camps in Rakhine State.

### British support for Burma's Apartheid election – a campaign success?

Burma's Apartheid election was held with the support of the international community. British aid money was spent helping the Union Election Commission, the government body which blocked Rohingya candidates from standing and censored election statements by opposition parties. We have been lobbying the British government not to provide support for the holding of elections while the Burmese government bans people from voting because of their ethnicity and religion.

Now at last the British government has said it will "watch and assess" support to the Union Election Commission on the basis of principles of inclusion and impartiality. There is no way the British government can keep providing support if it applies these principles, and we will be watching to ensure they keep their word.

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## MAW ANNUAL REMEMBRANCE DAY LECTURE

On Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> November, Karen, Phil and Jennie 'attended' the Movement for the Abolition of War (MAW) annual lecture with Fabian Hamilton MP talking about 'Peacebuilding in the Post Covid World'. This would normally be held in the Imperial War Museum in London, but the armchair zoom session made travel arrangements much easier! Bruce Kent, founder and President Emeritus of MAW introduced the talk.

Fabian has been a CND member since his teens and continues to be uncompromising in his stand against nuclear weapons, including Trident. He was very hopeful that the new Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, due to come into force on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2021, would change the climate of disarmament talks and make it more difficult for the nuclear armed states to argue for their continued possession.

Fabian was a very impressive speaker, very experienced and knowledgeable on many issues as became obvious in the Q and As. It is well worth listening to the whole lecture and discussion afterwards via links on the MAW website <http://www.abolishwar.org.uk/>  
*Karen*

When Jeremy Corbyn was Leader of the Labour Party, he appointed Fabian as his Shadow Minister for Peace and Disarmament. It is interesting that he continues in the post with Sir Keir Starmer now the Leader. He is the MP for Leeds East.

In 2019 Oxfordshire Peace Campaign was thinking of speakers for their annual rally at USAF Croughton, and it was agreed we should invite Fabian. I can report that he gave an excellent speech, and of course is wholeheartedly anti-Trident, as Karen says. Maybe we should invite him to talk to our Peace Group. I am sure he will be well-worth listening to. *Jennie*

Seen on a French Facebook page, I liked it!



Certaines  
personnes  
veulent des choses  
matérielles. Moi,  
je veux la paix,  
des moments  
heureux et des  
personnes qui  
m'aiment.

**NEXT COPYDATE 19th DECEMBER  
ABSOLUTE LATEST!  
[jennyridd@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:jennyridd@yahoo.co.uk)**

### EUROPE QUIZ

1. How many members are there in each of the following?
  - a) European Union
  - b) Council of Europe
  - c) Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
2. Which of the above includes the Convention on Human Rights
3. Which is the oldest of these organisations?
4. Which 6 countries are in the EU but not part of NATO?
5. Do any of the above organisations include a dictatorship?

### ANSWERS

- 1) a) 27  
b) 47  
c) 57
- 2) Council of Europe
- 3) Council of Europe (started after the holocaust, predates EU by quite a lot)
- 4) Austria, Cyprus, Finland, Ireland, Malta and Sweden
- 5) Belarus (Europe's only dictatorship) is within the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe

## from **GLOBAL JUSTICE NOW**

An important upcoming vote in the House of Commons could have a big impact on the future of UK aid and what Boris Johnson's government spends it on. We need your help to ensure that MPs back plans to maintain strong parliamentary scrutiny of UK aid spending so that it continues to tackle global poverty.

*"This is exactly the moment when we must mobilise every one of our national assets including our aid budget and expertise, to safeguard British interests and values overseas."*

This is how Boris Johnson described his vision for the future of UK aid when he abolished the Department for International Development (DfID) in June. What this means in practice is more development funds being redirected towards the private sector, funding unaffordable private hospitals, dirty fossil fuel projects and luxury corporate hotels. UK aid is increasingly being spent to support private profit, and is not going to where it is needed most.

You will have heard before about our campaign against this corporate hijack of UK aid. The abolition of DfID has accelerated this further as the government tries to increase the economic power of "Global Britain" over the global south - a project known to some civil servants as "Empire 2.0".

Now, parliament's crucial International Development Committee, which conducts important inquiries into UK aid spending, could be abolished too. Up until now, we have been able to fight back and work with MPs to expose the worst examples of aid misuse in parliament. But without a committee of dedicated MPs with the power to summon ministers to testify, this could become much harder.

At a key upcoming vote, potentially as soon as this week, there will be a chance for MPs to vote in favour of a new dedicated aid committee to continue scrutinising aid spending decisions across all areas of parliament.

### **Email your MP now**

This year, we have continued to hold the government to account for some of the damaging investments it has made via the UK development bank, its use of aid to fund dirty fossil fuel projects, and its attempts to rebuild the UK's neocolonial power in the global south.

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## **A LIGHT-BULB MOMENT**

I was idly thinking about responding to Jenny's plea for an item for the Newsletter, when I started trying to remember what it was convinced me of the need to try and do something about nuclear war, or rather its prevention.

Thinking back, it must have been when I saw the film of 'On the Beach', Christmas 1959. This is a film based on Neville Shute's book of the same name. Personally I think the book is better than the film, but that's by the by. However, in case you don't know, the story is set in 1964. An atomic war wipes out humanity in the northern hemisphere. One American submarine finds temporary shelter in Australia. . . . . I'll leave it there. Suffice to say, that that film was my light bulb moment.

If you never see another motion picture in your life, you must see 'On the Beach'. You can view at least the trailers on You Tube. Years later, talking to Bruce Kent, I realised that he had had the same Damascene moment as a result of seeing it, so I am in good company, but please don't watch the film if you feel depressed. It's rather akin to Thomas Hardy's 'Jude the Obscure'.

I wonder what has persuaded other people to work for peace. What convinced you? Did the realisation dawn gradually? Or did you too have a Damascene moment? Phil

### **MAW piles on the pressure over nuclear weapons and climate link**

Many thanks to those MAW members who responded to requests to help us put pressure on MPs over the Climate & Ecological Emergency Bill which has started its journey through Parliament. This is good news, except there is no mention in it of military related greenhouse gas emissions. MAW is on the case. Of the three MP replies on this matter forwarded to us by members, two were identical Liberal Democrat responses with the third being from a Conservative who believes the new Bill unnecessary. None mentioned the specific concern we raised. Elsewhere, MAW Executive member David Collins is pursuing our application for accreditation to COP26 in November 2021. If successful, we will have a greater chance of airing our demand that such emissions be acknowledged and counted.

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## NEXT MONTHLY MEETING

WEDNESDAY 2nd DECEMBER, 7.30pm

### "THE CARBON FOOTPRINT OF THE MILITARY"

We're very fortunate to have as our Speaker :

Gillian Smith MA MSc PhD CEng

Dr Gillian Smith has a background in the physical sciences, materials engineering and renewable energy systems, working mainly in the power industry. In particular, she spent 18 years working in wind energy consultancy. Throughout her career, she has sought to avoid military work and follow a more positive direction.

(This is more by way of a reminder -  
Sjoerd has already sent the Zoom link)

And another reminder .....

#### **The MAW AGM (via Zoom)**

will take place next

Saturday, 28th November, 10.45 for 11am

Because there was a considerable delay in many members receiving their copies of 'Abolish War' we have extended the date for nominations for the committee until Wednesday 25th November. If you would like to nominate someone (must be a MAW member) for the committee, or if you yourself are willing to be considered for nomination, or if there are any other matters that you would like to be discussed.

please email [hilarymevans@btinternet.com](mailto:hilarymevans@btinternet.com)

The AGM notice on is on the website home page, <http://www.abolishwar.org.uk/>

Please reply to me [gill@gillhurle.plus.com](mailto:gill@gillhurle.plus.com) if you plan to attend. I shall then send you the Zoom link and the relevant papers.

### **TREATY ON THE PROHIBITION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS**

This has now been ratified by the 50<sup>th</sup> UN state and will enter into legal force in January 2021. It provides 2 legal pathways for states to eliminate their arsenals of nuclear weapons.

Jennie

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

organised by Faringdon Peace Group as well as by other groups. For further information please contact Jennie Tel: 01367 710308 or [castle@myphone.coop](mailto:castle@myphone.coop)

**Recorded on Armistice Day this year: War What is it Good For?** Margaret Macmillan is always interesting to listen to. <https://www.talkingpoliticspodcast.com/>

**Tues 1st Dec** TBC. The usual Black Lives Matter Vigil. Usually 10-11am on the first Tues, but 1<sup>st</sup> Dec is still in the current lockdown.

**Wed 2nd Dec** Monthly meeting -

**Tues 8th Dec** If possible - Women In Black Silent Vigil for Bethlehem. Faringdon Market Place. Details TBC.

**Fri 11th Dec 7-8.30pm**

Stop the War fundraising event.

Artists Against War. Including Mark Rylance, Lowkey, Alexei Sayle and others.

Prices from £5 (unwaged) to £25.

More details from Jennie

**2021 Happy New Year, may it be more peaceful than 2020.**

**Wed 6th Jan** Monthly Meeting - ?

**Wed 3rd Feb** Monthly Meeting, via Zoom. Speaker Cmdr. Robert Forsyth (retd.) talking about his time as second-in-command of a Polaris nuclear submarine, and why he now spends his time challenging the government's policy on nuclear weapons. 7.30pm.

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**If** you were not able to join Abingdon Peace Group for Rebecca Johnson's talk on the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons 'The Nuclear Ban Treaty', or TPNW), you missed a tour-de-force! If you'd like to watch them, here are the links to both Rebecca's talk, and the Q&A after it, which was equally rich.

[The TPNW - What Next? Rebecca Johnson talks to Abingdon Peace Group - YouTube](#) and the [Q&A on the TPNW - What Next? You Tube](#)

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*And finally*

Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed. This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children ... Under the cloud of threatening war, it is humanity hanging from a cross of iron.

*US President Dwight D Eisenhower*