



FARINGDON

PEACE GROUP

APRIL 2021

Newsletter 13

MONTHLY MEETINGS

Wednesday 7th April at 7.30pm

Speaker: Fabian Hamilton,
Shadow Minister for Peace and Disarmament.
"How do we achieve Nuclear Disarmament?"
and

Wednesday 5th May at 7.30pm

Prof Richard Seaford from Exeter University.
'Palestine: from the Hebrew Bible to the Present'.
and

Wednesday 2nd June at 7.30pm

John Cooper, Director, Fellowship of
Reconciliation (FOR) 'Christmas Island,
nuclear tests and Britain's responsibility'.

Where? In the comfort of your own home.
Zoom links will be sent

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Tuesday 30th March, 6-7.30pm

'Indigenous Solidarity: Our Struggles United'.
Discussion webinar. Speakers from Indigenous
solidarity movements discuss the struggle
against settler colonialism.
Palestine Solidarity Campaign.

Tuesday 20 April at 8pm

Abingdon PG Monthly Meeting.
'Wellbeing of Future Generations.'
Speaker Priya Shivaram

Saturday 15th May

Levellers' Day Online. Details later.

Saturday 15th May

Peace in the Nuclear Era. Details later.

and the last weekend in June

Stop the War demo. Details later.

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

UNDERSTANDING ISRAELI APARTHEID

I attended an Israeli Apartheid Week (IAW) webinar on 16th March entitled 'Understanding Israeli Apartheid'. It was co-hosted by PSC and the Uni of Leicester Palestine Society with four excellent speakers, each presenting a different angle on the subject. It explored how Israel's treatment of Palestinians amounts to the crime of apartheid under international law. The speakers were all very well informed and articulate, making so many interesting points so quickly that I found it impossible to take notes and summarise! I strongly encourage you to watch it here - I'll certainly be watching it again! <https://youtu.be/ZvEfRf-oLcA>

Thanks to IAW, which was set up in 2004, Israel's apartheid policies of institutionalised racism and systematic oppression against the Palestinian people are increasingly difficult to hide and whitewash. IAW also provides an opportunity to network and strengthen the links between the Palestinian liberation struggle and other struggles against racism, oppression, and discrimination.

Karen

DIVEST YOUR COUNCIL

Across the UK, local authorities are investing around £10 billion in pension funds – the pensions of people like our social workers, our refuse collectors and our firefighters – in the fossil fuel industry. UK Divest are calling on all UK authorities to divest those funds from companies fuelling the climate crisis and reinvest them in socially and environmentally beneficial projects like wind farms and social housing. Local activists have now secured full divestment commitments from 6 local authorities. Can you call on your area's councillors to do the same? Take action!

WE'VE BANNED THE BOMB!

The putting into force of the long-awaited Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) was a cause for celebration at Faringdon Peace Group's March meeting. Kate Hudson, General Secretary of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) for over 10 years and old friend of Faringdon Peace Group (FPG), spoke to us about the background to the treaty, what it covers and what we can do to encourage the UK Government to support it. Kate explained that the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty of 1970 had now largely stalled with the nuclear weapons states failing to fulfil their obligations under it. In the mid-90s there was a call for a 'Nuclear Weapons Convention' similar to those for chemical and biological weapons, but this was never drawn up. The frustration of countries in the global south, many of which have declared themselves nuclear-free zones, alongside Obama putting nuclear weapons back on the agenda and the 2010 NNPT review which expressed 'deep concern' over the humanitarian and environmental consequences of nuclear conflict all combined to lead to a groundswell of support for a new treaty. The TPNW was adopted by the United Nations in 2017, achieved the 50 ratifications necessary 3 years later and passed into law on 22nd January 2021.

There was much rejoicing in the peace movement and among non-nuclear weapons states, but the 5 signatories of the original NNPT (US, Russia, UK, France and China) not only refused to ratify the treaty themselves, but also pressured smaller countries not to sign. The TPNW prohibits not only the use of nuclear weapons, but also their manufacture, stockpiling and testing. There is an obligation on states using these weapons to look after the victims, restore the environment and compensate people whose land has been contaminated by testing.

There is broad support for the treaty across civil society in this country, Trade Unions and councils, faith leaders including the Archbishop of York – and the Pope. There is a 'nuclear-ban communities initiative' across the world which councils here are signing up to, bypassing the Government. Mayors are encouraged to become 'Mayors for Peace'. There is support among opposition parties in the Commons for Early Day Motion 1072, which calls for the Government to ratify the treaty and put into practice its stated commitment to global nuclear disarmament. Kate urged us to lobby our MPs and to engage with our local communities, spreading the good news about what this treaty can do for the world and for us here in Faringdon.

If you would like to see a full recording of the meeting, please go to www.faringdonpeacegroup.org.uk

Karen Vogt

MORE NUKES AND BILLIONS FOR WAR? JOIN THE PPU AND BE PART OF THE RESISTANCE!

Last week Boris Johnson raised the limit on UK nuclear warheads by 44%. Ministers have committed themselves to the biggest percentage increase in UK military spending since the Korean War. And through their Police Bill, they want to stop us protesting about it.

There has never been a more important time to stand up to militarism. That's why we're encouraging you to sign the peace pledge and join the Peace Pledge Union today:

<https://www.ppu.org.uk/civicrm/contribute/transact?reset=1&id=2>

We need a strong and diverse nonviolent movement to resist the government's militarist onslaught. The PPU works in solidarity with many other groups. But we remain a union of people who have gone further and signed the peace pledge:

War is a crime against humanity. I renounce war, and am therefore determined not to support any kind of war. I am also determined to work for the removal of all causes of war.

We invite you to become a PPU member by signing the peace pledge and paying a small annual sum (related to income) to help fund our work. Members receive the magazine Peace Matters and a say in our decisions. More importantly, you will be part of a pacifist movement that stretches around the world – the PPU is the British section of War Resisters' International.

Now is the time to resist war and its causes, in solidarity with others, in whatever way is best for you in your own life and situation. Join Us!

BLACK LIVES MATTER

Of course but then, all lives matter, surely? What follows is a personal impression of the recent Black Lives Matter study sessions which may be of interest. Three sessions were held - one in September, and one in February with an intermediate workshop in November led by Liz.

I found the first session disappointing in that it seemed to me that the two facilitators had not appreciated that Faringdon is still a very rural area with a miniscule number of people of colour. When asked to state the objectives I would carry out as a result of the session I was rather non-plussed.

The intermediate session was more rewarding. I was introduced to the 'Harvard Implicit Bias Test' which indicated that I had a 'moderate automatic' preference for European Americans over African Americans which was fair enough. In addition we had the opportunity to study 'An Ethnicity Ally's Guide to Getting it Right'. This is a useful guide to the various technical terms like 'microaggression' and 'privilege'. As it tellingly says 'We don't see things as they are, we see them as we are.' It is also very worthwhile to consider the concept of 'ally'. You can gather that I found this session more useful.

The final session asked the members what they were intending to do in the future to counter racism. For myself I will embrace the idea of attempting to be an 'Ethnicity Ally' so I will no longer remark that 'Considering she is a black woman, Priti Patel speaks very well!!! A joke in bad taste of course, but an example perhaps of 'micro-aggression'. Seriously, I like to think I will go with the concept of allyship in that when I am involved in racial discrimination conversations I will try and diffuse the possible

tensions that arise with a better understanding of racism, as a result of the 3 sessions.

I must also recommend the excellent February 2021 edition of 'Peace News' entitled 'The White Issue'. The feature 'The invention of the White Race' by Milan Rai, was particularly interesting. Milan suggests that the idea of 'whiteness' was invented deliberately as a class weapon. It was made up to stop poor working class white people from realising that they had a common interest with people of colour i.e the usual strategy of divide and rule, set one against the other., 'A class weapon against poor white people'. To me it makes absolute sense. Milan goes on 'In other words, the reason whiteness was invented was to prevent a major challenge to the power and wealth of those who owned and governed society, those who ruled the British Empire.'

Let us hope it will not be long before we can legally assemble in Faringdon, or elsewhere to show that Black Lives Matter! That's if the recently introduced 'Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts' Bill does not succeed in preventing this democratic right to protest. In the meantime, our thanks to Trupti and Petra for opening our eyes to ways in which we can inadvertently commit 'micro aggressions', and the ways in which we can become ethnicity allies, and of course to Liz for setting up the workshops to help combat racism in Faringdon as well as London.

Phil

And Jennie adds I have heard that the book entitled 'The Race Conversations' by Eugene Ellis published by Confer Books this month gives an essential guide to creating life-changing dialogue. That is a commendable claim to make.

RESIST THE POLICE CRACKDOWN BILL

The new Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill has been described as the biggest threat to freedom to protest since the Second World War.

It has nothing to do with protection from Covid. It plans permanent changes to the law for after lockdown, giving the police power to impose start times, end times and noise limits on static protests as well as marches. It allows restrictions on demonstrations based on vague criteria such as "serious annoyance". The Peace Pledge Union is one of over 100 organisations to have signed a letter objecting to the bill. You can sign a petition against the bill at

<https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/579012?fbclid=IwAR1EyHtOC4jVbil-EbeNkz9X4K7z7RTWJAS-MOI5Jh3MAJKpchE5OL74Aak> and read more about it at <https://www.ppu.org.uk/news/police-bill-threatens-right-nonviolent-protest-say-pacifists>

POVERTY IN THE UK TODAY

Report from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation
John Harris in the Guardian (22 Feb)
summarises the latest report of the Joseph
Rowntree Foundation on poverty thus:

“Even before Covid, it explains – thanks partly to the benefits squeeze – incomes were falling, and falling fastest for those at the bottom of the ladder. In 2019, more than one in five of us was living in poverty, and 2.4 million people, including more than half a million children, were destitute at some point in the year, an increase of about 50% compared with 2017. The proportion of people in work who were classified as also living in poverty was 13%, and among certain social groups that number was much higher: people from Pakistani and Bangladeshi backgrounds, for instance, registered a figure of 34%.

Now, 5.8 million are experiencing the impossibility of life on universal credit, up from 3 million at the start of the pandemic. Rates of destitution have skyrocketed. Covid deaths and infections map tightly to patterns of disadvantage, and the government’s Biosecurity Centre traces severe outbreaks in poorer parts of the country to “unmet financial needs”. The pandemic’s disproportionate effect on black and Asian people, linked to the grimly enduring way in which race overlaps with material disadvantage, is obvious.” *John Cottis*

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“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.”
Dwight D. Eisenhower,
.....

THANK YOU

Thank You to those who have sent in their contributions for this edition.

Please send items for inclusion next time, to
jennyridd@yahoo.co.uk by 24th April
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‘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.
.....

CND’S ‘NO MORE NUKES: TIME TO SCRAP TRIDENT’ EMERGENCY RALLY

Some FPG members attended this inspiring rally on 17th March and others were turned away because it was full! This was a message the day after from from Kate Hudson, last month’s FPG speaker, who hosted the event.

This was an important event, showing the breadth of opposition to the government’s announcement that it will be increasing its nuclear warheads. If you didn’t manage to see it live, it’s now available to watch on CND’s website, see <https://cnduk.org/cnds-lockdown-seminars/>.< EM> Please share it widely too - tens of thousands have already watched! CND is now calling on all our supporters to write to the Prime Minister<<https://cnd.eaction.org.uk/timetoscraptridentnow>> to state your opposition to this announcement. We don’t want any more nuclear weapons. In fact, we don’t want any, full stop.

It’s important to build the anti-nuclear movement as the stronger we are, the louder our voice, and the more effective we will be. If you’re not already a member, why not join CND and be a part of that movement for a better world? Details here: <https://cnduk.org/support-us/>. If you are already a member - thank you for your support!

ENORMOUS PLANT SWAP 24/25 April

As you will see from the poster on the last page, Churches Together Earth & Faith Group is organising a gigantic plant swap. We hope this will go some way towards lifting spirits and making our town greener.

If you live in Faringdon or near, please take part if you can, by doing one or more of:

- 1 Print and display a poster (colour or b/w)
- 2 Take part and offer plants to give away. Please let Dave Headey know as he will produce a map nearer the time.
faringdonplants@btinternet.com
- 3 Go on the plant trail around Faringdon and help yourself to plants.
- 4 Add a few plants to any participating garden’s stall, such as mine at 19 Coxwell Road, either on the day, or leave on the front drive during the preceding week.

Please note this is not just a churchy thing, but an environmental one!
Jenny
.....

YEMEN CAN'T WAIT

It is now almost exactly six years since Saudi-led forces began bombing Yemen. Six years of homes being destroyed. Six years of lives being torn apart. Six years of world leaders turning their backs on the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

As you already know, the attacks on Yemen have been made possible by weapons supplied by the UK government and sustained by its ongoing military support.

Since the bombing of Yemen began in March 2015, the value of UK arms sales to the Saudi-led coalition amounts to at least £18 billion. A political solution is desperately needed to bring this horrific conflict to an end.

After six long years there is finally cause for hope. US President Joe Biden recently announced the US will freeze arms sales to Saudi Arabia and the UAE and end "all American support for offensive operations in the war in Yemen." This is a huge opportunity to pressure the UK to do the same.

It's time to take a stand against the war on Yemen and end UK arms sales that are prolonging this deadly conflict. If you agree, go to CAAT's website, and sign the open letter.

CAAT supporters and many others have been campaigning for an end to UK arms sales for use in the war on Yemen for years, but there's now momentum to push for change like never before.

CAAT and Mwatana for Human Rights have been nominated for the 2021 Nobel Peace Prize to draw attention to the suffering of the Yemeni people. The US and Italy are the latest countries to suspend arms sales for use in the war. The UK is growing increasingly isolated on the global stage.

There was an outcry earlier this month when the UK government announced plans to slash aid to Yemen despite warnings of the worst famine in decades. Boris Johnson was criticised by members of his own party when he mocked Labour leader Keir Starmer for raising the issue in the House of Commons.

The UK is on the wrong side of history and the government must play a role in ending this deadly conflict. In the lead up to the UK hosting the G7 summit in June, let's pile on the pressure and force Boris Johnson to act.

By the time you read this, some of us will have attended a zoom meeting hosted by 'Stop the War', so no doubt, more to follow ...

STOP THE WAR

hosted a Zoom meeting to mark the 6th Anniversary of the start of the war in Yemen. Speakers included Andrew Fernstein, Lindsey German, Kate Hudson and Jeremy Corbyn., to which some of us went.

After six years, the appalling statistics are:
22,762 air raids and 92,000 air strikes, (that's on average 10 a day for six years), leaving
Quarter of a million dead
1.71 million displaced children
80% needing help to survive
385,000 malnourished under 5s

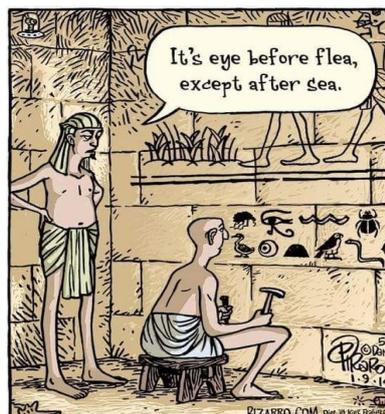
Essential services destroyed are:
86 medical facilities
290 schools
more than 1000 markets/food storage.

This is six years of British backed killing. Please look at the CAAT website, Stop the War website, and write to your MP.

A FREE SHOWING of 'OBJECTOR'

A documentary film about conscientious objection to serving in the Israeli army of occupation. It features a young female conscientious objector called Atalya Ben-Abba and others. An online discussion about education and conscription to the army follows the showing on 4th April between 5.30pm and 7.30pm. It is possible to view the film in the week before.

To register : <https://actionnetwork.org/events/objector-screening-and-discussion-on-joint-struggle-in-israelpalestine/>



And lastly

Sent by a Canadian friend. This has no peace connection, but I hope it might just make you smile!

ENORMOUS PLANT GIVEAWAY

**SATURDAY & SUNDAY
24th & 25th APRIL**

**Shrubs, trees, perennials,
bedding, seedlings**

Outside many houses in Faringdon
Just follow the trail. There'll be a map nearer the date

Everything is **FREE**

**HELP MAKE OUR
TOWN GREENER**

Organised by Earth & Faith Group