



FARINGDON PEACE GROUP

**NEWSLETTER 21
FEBRUARY 2022**

NO TO WAR IN UKRAINE - STOP THE WAR STATEMENT

British politicians are playing with fire stoking up the tension around Ukraine. As the danger grows of a conflict breaking out between Russia and Ukraine following an apparent lack of progress in negotiations with the USA, Tories and Labour are outbidding each other in pointless bellicosity.

The government has sold fresh weaponry to Ukraine and Foreign Secretary Liz Truss has made a sabre-rattling speech in Australia. Shadow ministers David Lammy and John Healey have flown to Kiev to support Ukrainian resistance to Russia.

Britain should be advancing serious diplomatic proposals to defuse the tension and seek a solution to the crisis rather than ratcheting it up. This involves taking both Ukraine's integrity and Russian security concerns seriously.

Stop the War demands an end to the relentless expansion of NATO, which has only added to international tension, particularly as NATO has played a more aggressive role internationally in the Balkans, the Middle East and South Asia. We oppose the deployment of British forces to the borders of Russia as a pointless provocation.

We urge the reduction in nuclear weapons in Europe and the agreement of new arms control measures, including the withdrawal of all such weapons to the territory of the state that controls them.

We believe there needs to be a new all-inclusive security architecture in Europe, not under the hegemony of any one state. We demand that the British government and the Labour Party distance themselves from the policies and priorities of the USA and develop an independent foreign policy.

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MONTHLY MEETING COP26 - WHAT'S NEXT WEDNESDAY 2nd FEBRUARY

Our MP David Johnston

will take us through what's next regarding the CLIMATE CRISIS and COP26. ZOOM link opens 7.15pm for 7.30pm start. I'm sure you'll agree that there is no more important subject at the moment.

The Zoom link has been sent out, but if you have not received it, contact Sjoerd, or any other regular attendee at meetings, who can forward it to you.

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TALKS NOT BOMBS: GET BRITAIN TO THE NUCLEAR BAN CONFERENCE

CND supporters celebrated in 2021 when the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) entered into force. Now we're launching a campaign to get Britain involved with the Treaty, to take steps to join the global majority in support of a nuclear weapons-free world.

The states party to the TPNW will meet for the first time in Vienna in March. As a non-signatory, the UK can attend as an observer, but it is refusing to do so.

Help us put pressure on the Foreign Secretary to commit to attending, like other NATO states Norway and Germany.

Contact the Foreign Secretary

The Foreign Secretary is responsible for making decisions on international treaties and should be the UK government's representative at the conference. Use our tool to write to Liz Truss, the Foreign Secretary, to call on the government to attend the event in Vienna.

Visit the CND website to find out more about why the conference is taking place and how the UK government can participate. Plus you can download a poster and a fact sheet to help you get more involved.

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TEN RICHEST MEN DOUBLE THEIR FORTUNES IN PANDEMIC WHILE INCOMES OF 99 PERCENT OF HUMANITY FALL (Oxfam report, 17 Jan 2022)

New billionaire minted every 26 hours, as inequality contributes to the death of one person every four seconds

The world's ten richest men more than doubled their fortunes from \$700 billion to \$1.5 trillion — at a rate of \$15,000 per second or \$1.3 billion a day - during the first two years of a pandemic that has seen the incomes of 99 percent of humanity fall and over 160 million more people forced into poverty.

“If these ten men were to lose 99.999 percent of their wealth tomorrow, they would still be richer than 99 percent of all the people on this planet,” said Oxfam International’s Executive Director Gabriela Bucher. “They now have six times more wealth than the poorest 3.1 billion people.”

In a new briefing “*Inequality Kills*,” published today ahead of the World Economic Forum’s Davos Agenda, Oxfam says that inequality is contributing to the death of at least 21,000 people each day, or one person every four seconds. This is a conservative finding based on deaths globally from lack of access to healthcare, gender-based violence, hunger, and climate breakdown.

“It has never been so important to start righting the violent wrongs of this obscene inequality by clawing back elites’ power and extreme wealth including through taxation - getting that money back into the real economy and to save lives.

AND Just so that you know ..

The world’s ten richest men: Elon Musk, Jeff Bezos, Bernard Arnault & family, Bill Gates, Larry Ellison, Larry Page, Sergey Brin, Mark Zuckerberg, Steve Ballmer, Warren Buffet

Billionaires’ wealth has risen more since COVID-19 began than it has in the last 14 years. At \$5 trillion dollars, this is the biggest surge in billionaire wealth since records began. A one-off 99 percent tax on the ten richest men’s pandemic windfalls, for example, could pay:

- to make enough vaccines for the world;
- to provide universal healthcare and social protection, fund climate adaptation and reduce gender-based violence in over 80 countries;
- All this, while still leaving these men \$8 billion better off than they were before the pandemic.

“Billionaires have had a terrific pandemic. Central banks pumped trillions of dollars into financial markets to save the economy, yet much of that has ended up lining the pockets of billionaires riding a stock market boom. Vaccines were meant to end this pandemic, yet rich governments allowed pharma billionaires and monopolies to cut off the supply to billions of people. The result is that every kind of inequality imaginable risks rising. The predictability of it is sickening. The consequences of it kill,” said Bucher.

Extreme inequality is a form of economic violence, where policies and political decisions that perpetuate the wealth and power of a privileged few result in direct harm to the vast majority of ordinary people across the world and the planet itself.

PALESTINE OCCUPIED

At 3am one night recently, Israeli armed forces raided the Salhiya family house in Sheikh Jarrah, arresting and injuring multiple family members. After the family – who have lived in the house since 1956 – refused to be expelled, Israeli troops barricaded then stormed their home. By dawn, only the rubble remained.

Over 1500 Palestinians currently live under the threat of home demolitions in occupied Jerusalem. In May last year, Sheikh Jarrah was the flashpoint from which began the most significant period of protest in Palestine for a generation, now known as the Unity intifada.

Israel believes that now, whilst the world’s attention is turned away, it can expel the Sheikh Jarrah families one by one. But Palestinians are again coming together to resist this threat of ethnic cleansing,.

We must support Palestinian grassroots resistance by demanding our own Governments hold Israel accountable for its actions, that amount to the crime of apartheid. *Palestine Solidarity*

EFFECTS OF INEQUALITY DURING THE PANDEMIC *An Oxfam Report*

“The world’s response to the pandemic has unleashed economic violence particularly acutely across racialized, marginalized and gendered lines. As COVID-19 spikes this turns to surges of gender-based violence, as yet more unpaid care is heaped upon women and girls.

The pandemic has set gender parity back from 99 years to now 135 years. Women collectively lost \$800 billion in earnings in 2020, with 13 million fewer women in work now than there were in 2019. 252 men have more wealth than all 1 billion women and girls in Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean combined.

The pandemic has hit racialized groups hardest. During the second wave of the pandemic in England, people of Bangladeshi origin were five times more likely to die of COVID-19 than the White British population. Black people in Brazil are 1.5 times more likely to die from COVID-19 than White people. In the US, 3.4 million Black Americans would be alive today if their life expectancy was the same as White people —this is directly linked to historical racism and colonialism.

Inequality between countries is expected to rise for the first time in a generation. Developing countries, denied access to sufficient vaccines because of rich governments’ protection of pharmaceutical corporations’ monopolies, have been forced to slash social spending as their debt levels spiral and now face the prospect of austerity measures. The proportion of people with COVID-19 who die from the virus in developing countries is roughly double that in rich countries.

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed openly both the motive of greed, and the opportunity by political and economic means, by which extreme inequality has become an instrument of economic violence,” said Bucher. “After years now of researching and campaigning on the issue, this is the shocking but inevitable conclusion that Oxfam has had to reach today.

Despite the huge cost of fighting the pandemic, in the past two years rich country governments have failed to increase taxes on the wealth of the richest and continued to privatize public goods such as vaccine science. They have encouraged corporate monopolies to such a degree that in the pandemic period alone, the increase in market concentration threatens to be more in one year than in the past 15 years from 2000 to 2015.

Inequality goes to the heart of the climate crisis, as the richest 1 percent emit more than twice as much CO2 as the bottom 50 percent of the world, driving climate change throughout 2020 and 2021 that has contributed to wildfires, floods, tornadoes, crop failures and hunger.

Inequality at such pace and scale is happening by choice, not chance. Not only have our economic structures made us less safe against this pandemic, they are actively enabling those who are already extremely rich and powerful to exploit this crisis for their own profit.

The significance of the world’s two largest economies - the US and China - starting to consider policies that reduce inequality, including by passing higher tax rates on the rich and taking action against monopolies, provides us some measured hope for a new economic consensus to emerge.

Oxfam recommends that governments urgently:

i) Claw back the gains made by billionaires by taxing this huge new wealth made since the start of the pandemic through permanent wealth and capital taxes.

ii) Invest the trillions that could be raised by these taxes toward progressive spending on universal healthcare and social protection, climate change adaptation, and gender-based violence prevention and programming.

iii) Tackle sexist and racist laws that discriminate against women and racialized people and create new gender-equal laws to uproot violence and discrimination. All sectors of society must urgently define policies that will ensure women, racialized and other oppressed groups are represented in all decision-making spaces.

iv) End laws that undermine the rights of workers to unionize and strike, and set up stronger legal standards to protect them.

Rich governments must immediately waive intellectual property rules over COVID-19 vaccine technologies to allow more countries to produce safe and effective vaccines to usher in the end of the pandemic.

There is no shortage of money. That lie died when governments released \$16 trillion to respond to the pandemic; there is only a shortage of courage and imagination needed to break free from the failed, deadly straitjacket of extreme neoliberalism. Governments would be wise to listen to the movements.

Gabriella Bucher

- The EU, UK and US have received more doses in the last six weeks than African countries have received all year.
- Global rollout at speed of UK's booster programme could vaccinate the world by February.
- At current rates vaccine manufacturers will fail to deliver enough doses to fully vaccinate everyone in Africa by next Christmas.



Global Justice reports:

Between 11 Nov and 21 Dec 2021, the EU, UK and US have received 513 million doses of vaccines while countries in Africa received just 500 million throughout the whole of 2021.

The UK government, facing a rapid surge in Omicron variant, has a target of administering one million booster doses of Covid-19 vaccines a day in response, equivalent to vaccinating 1.46 percent of the population every day. If every country was able to vaccinate at the same rate as the UK target, it would take just 68 days to deliver a first dose to everyone who needs one, leaving no one unvaccinated by the end of February 2022.

Just 8.6 percent of people in Africa have been fully vaccinated to date and at the current rate of delivery by vaccine manufacturers, it won't be until April 2023 that everyone will receive their first dose. Recent research found that 78% of people in Africa are willing to get vaccinated, higher than in many rich countries. G7 countries will have 1.4 bn surplus doses by March 2022, even after giving all adults a booster but are failing to deliver on donation pledges. The US has delivered a quarter of the vaccines it promised, while the UK and Germany have delivered 15% and 14% respectively.

Rich countries are banking on boosters to keep them safe from Omicron and future variants of Covid-19. But boosters can never be more than a temporary firewall. Extinguishing the threat of variants and ending this pandemic requires vaccinating the world. And that means sharing vaccine recipes and letting developing countries manufacture jabs for themselves.

Experts have raised concerns that low vaccine coverage in the global south created conditions where a variant like Omicron was likely to emerge. Nine months ago, a survey of leading epidemiologists warned that persistent low vaccine coverage in parts of the world increased the risk of vaccine resistant variants emerging within a year or less.

“If we ever want to have a normal Christmas again, we need to vaccinate the world. But right now, the UK and EU are holding back international efforts to use and expand manufacturing and distribution capacity in low and middle-income countries. It's reckless and risks trapping us in an endless cycle of variants, boosters, restrictions and even lockdowns.”

In October 2020, India and South Africa proposed a waiver of intellectual property rules on Covid-19 vaccines, tests and treatments to allow low and middle-income countries to manufacture these life-saving tools. Despite most countries, including the United States, supporting a waiver, the UK, EU, and Switzerland have prevented progress.

Leaders in the global north have so far chosen the obscene profits of pharmaceutical companies over the lives of people in Africa. But the Omicron variant shows that vaccine inequality is a threat to everyone, everywhere. Boris Johnson, Olaf Scholz, and European leaders need to finally support an intellectual property waiver and let Africa and the global south unlock its capacity to manufacture and distribute vaccines. Otherwise, humanity will never beat the race against the next variant.”

Despite already making billions in profit, Pfizer and Moderna continue to refuse to share the new generation of vaccine technology with the WHO's mRNA hub in South Africa. WHO scientists are now attempting to reverse engineer Moderna's US-taxpayer-funded vaccine, a process that could take two years longer than if the company shared its vaccine recipe.

Every major vaccine provider has boycotted the WHO's Covid-19 technology access pool (C-TAP), a technology transfer programme established in May 2020 to share the recipe and knowhow needed to manufacture coronavirus vaccines, tests and treatments.

Please look at the Global Justice website

THE THATCHER LEGACY

With her dire prophetic warning that there is no such thing as society, Margaret Thatcher ruined Britain.

She said in an interview for *Woman's Own* in 1987 that 'we were living in a period when too many children and people have been given to understand ... 'I have a problem, it is the Government's job to cope with it. I am homeless, the Government must house me. And so, they are casting their problems on society and who is society? There is no such thing.'

PRIVATISATION

When Thatcher came to power in 1979, she popularised the right-wing concept of privatisation and oversaw the sale of major state-owned businesses including British Airways, British Telecom, British Steel, British Gas, British Rail, the water that fell from the sky and the most profitable chunks of the NHS. Today, 40% of the NHS budget is given straight to private companies. Assets owned by 'the people as a whole' and enriched by the men and women who fought fascism to bring peace to Europe were sold off at bargain prices. They were falsely told that we were entering a house-owning, share-owning age where – thanks to trickle-down economics – everyone would be rich.

The truth is more prosaic. Only a small minority of people had the spare cash to buy those shares and paid more for them than the corporations and foreign banks through a share option system favouring institutions. Many people able to buy their council houses cheap sold them off cheap to a new generation of landlords whose belief in profits at all costs resulted in ruined Britain having the biggest housing crisis in Europe.

Once the council-owned property was sold off, building new social housing ceased. The number of homeless people, as well as those living in unsafe rented accommodation, grew exponentially.

With these policies, Mrs Thatcher with her advisers and followers took a pair of shears and sliced through every thread of the precious fabric of society.

When there is no such thing as society, you do not provide children in state schools a daily bottle of milk. You save a few quid and snatch it away.

In 1979 when Thatcher came to power there were no food banks. In ruined Britain in 2021, there are more than 1,300 Trussell Trust food banks and 900 independent food banks.

Food banks, poverty, hungry kids, zero-hour contracts, broken streets, broken schools and flagrant lies have become so normalised people in ruined Britain; people have been programmed to believe is the best country in the world.

The government has been thrilled to announce that more people are choosing to volunteer at Covid booster clinics and at food banks.

Of course the government is pleased. They don't pay them. The Duchess of Cornwall on Radio 4 on Monday, 27 December, boasted how her Reading Room programme had encouraged 'hundreds' of volunteers to go into schools to help children slow in learning to read.

Why is it necessary?

Schools and colleges in the last ten Tory Years have suffered the worst spending cuts since the depths of the 1970s, according to a report by the Institute for Fiscal Studies.

Nine million adults in the UK are functionally illiterate, and one in four British five-year-olds struggles with basic vocabulary. Three-quarters of white working-class boys fail to achieve the government's benchmark at the age of 16.

That's three out of every four boys.

When a party wants to retain power at all costs, you make sure you have an uneducated population and maintain close alliance with the press. The Conservative Party, as a matter of policy, has starved our schools and our children of funds, food, equipment and building repairs. Teachers after years of further education start work with a salary of £25,714 and no chance of ever saving enough for a deposit on their own flat. (In 2010, an MP's annual salary was £65,738. By April 2021, it had risen to £81,932 per year)

Margaret Thatcher ruined Britain with her hard-right policies and the four Conservative prime ministers since her party knifed her in the back the Tory way have carelessly kicked over the remains. Each has been worse than the last in descending order – John Major, David Cameron, Theresa May and liar Boris Johnson. Who's next?

(A rather watered-down version of something seen on Facebook)

WHEN DESMOND TUTU STOOD UP FOR THE RIGHTS OF PALESTINIANS, HE COULD NOT BE IGNORED

Desmond Tutu, who died recently, was best known for his fight against apartheid in his native South Africa, but he also spoke out strongly for the rights of Palestinians. This article (abridged here) appeared in the Guardian following widespread condemnation from readers when their obituary failed to mention Palestine.

Even amid the torrent of praise for the revered former archbishop Desmond Tutu in the days since his death, the anti-apartheid champion is not being universally mourned. Alan Dershowitz, the renowned US constitutional lawyer and ardent defender of Israel, took a moment to brand Tutu as “evil” and “the most influential antisemite of our time”.

But Tutu’s real crime in the eyes of Israel’s most unrelenting supporters was to liken its rule over the Palestinians to apartheid and then refuse to back off in the face of an onslaught of abuse. On his visits to Israel and Palestine, Tutu would have recognised echoes of his homeland in the forced removals, the house demolitions, the humiliations of checkpoints and systems of control on movement, the confiscation of land for Jewish settlements, and the confining of Palestinians to blobs of territory, reminiscent of the Bantustan black homelands. Above all he saw one people controlling another who, like black South Africans until 1994, had little say in their governance.

Nearly two decades ago Tutu told a conference in Boston: “I’ve been very deeply distressed in my visit to the Holy Land; it reminded me so much of what happened to us black people in South Africa.”

A few years later he was even more direct. “I know first-hand that Israel has created an apartheid reality within its borders and through its occupation.

The parallels to my own beloved South Africa are painfully stark indeed,” he wrote in 2014 in a call for the Presbyterian general assembly in the US to back sanctions against Israel.

A figure of Tutu’s stature drawing parallels between a system constructed on racism and the reality of Israel’s domination of the Palestinians, and calling for boycotts to end it, alarmed the government in Israel. With the two-state solution moribund at best, Israel is faced with a growing movement that sees the conflict through the moral prism of civil rights and injustice – a framing that has historic resonance in the US in particular and has taken on additional significance in the age of Black Lives Matter.

While Tutu was critical of Palestinian attacks, his implicit likening of Israelis to white South Africans during apartheid challenged the Jewish state’s longstanding narrative to portray itself principally as a victim of Arab aggression and terrorism, and to exclude the part played by occupation and settlements in the conflict. Separately, Tutu warned that it was not possible to be a neutral bystander. “Those who turn a blind eye to injustice actually perpetuate injustice. If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor,” he said.

But ultimately Tutu’s intent was not to condemn. His calls for forgiveness fitted with his belief that it is an essential step toward justice and peace – a view central to his chairing of South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Tutu saw how everyone was liberated, white people included, when apartheid ended in South Africa. He wanted Israelis to liberate themselves from the burden of apartheid too.

VISIT BY AMERICAN NUCLEAR SUB

An American Virginia class nuclear submarine has visited HMNB Clyde at Faslane, near Glasgow. The US Navy say that port visits “strengthen cooperation between the United States and United Kingdom”, and “demonstrate US capability, flexibility, and continuing commitment to NATO allies.”

UK Defence Journal 17th Jan 2022

<https://ukdefencejournal.org.uk/american-nuclear-attack-sub-visits-scotland/>

SHARE YOUR NEWS!

Items for the next newsletter to
jennyridd@yahoo.co.uk
by 23th February please.

Please ensure that your contribution is ready to be taken directly from your email to the newsletter. Word is probably the best program to use.

GREENING FARINGDON

In April there will be another Plant Giveaway. Please start taking cuttings and planting up seedlings now. More details to follow



Here is a complete list of every single country in Europe that uses First Past the Post to elect its parliament:

- Belarus (a brutal dictatorship)
- The United Kingdom

That's not great company.

Help win equal votes:

<https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/level-up->

Enemies are always friends waiting to be made. Desmond Tutu

HOLOCAUST AND GENOCIDE

Sally Reynolds, reporting on Abingdon Peace Group's meeting, which you can watch on YouTube channel: https://youtu.be/bV3q_iANI0E

If you were not able to join us, you missed an amazing, moving pair of talks. Daniel spoke about his father's family's total elimination in the death camps, and his father's work for reconciliation between Poles and Jews, as well as his work to memorialise the camp at Auschwitz.

Rebecca, who founded the charity Network for Africa Mental Health Awareness for Communities, which provides psychotherapy support in post-conflict countries like Rwanda, gave us testimony from many genocide survivors and perpetrators who she has interviewed, as well as pointers to identify a potential genocide before it happens. (network4africa.org)

Daniel asked us to share the details of the Holocaust Memorial Day ceremony which will be streamed online on Thursday 27 January at 7pm. Register here:

[Holocaust Memorial Day Trust | UK Holocaust Memorial Day: 2022 Ceremony \(hmd.org.uk\)](https://www.hmd.org.uk/)

The theme for HMD 2022 is One Day that we put aside to come together to remember, to learn about the Holocaust, Nazi Persecution and the genocides that followed in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur, in the hope that there may be One Day in the future with no genocide. We learn more about the past, we empathise with others today, and we take action for a better future.

Daniel is also organising the "Path of MADness" again this year:

On 30th January 2022 (Sunday after Holocaust Memorial Day) The Path of MADness will take place starting at 11am, at the former cruise missile base at Greenham Common. If you are interested in attending, email Daniel Scharf at pause.forthought@gmail.com so that details can be confirmed before the day. He is proposing to be at the Control Tower at Greenham Common at 11.00 on Sunday 30th January. There will be the usual service (with singing), then a walk around the cruise missile area and the common. Free parking and inside space (inc a cafe) if the weather is unkind .

Also check out 'Waging Peace Home - Waging Peace' which Rebecca also founded, which focusses on Sudanese refugees from the conflict in Darfur.

Refugee population by country or territory of asylum, 2016 to 2020

