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KINGSTON PEACE NEWS

THE NEWSLETTER OF KINGSTON PEACE COUNCIL /
CAMPAIGN FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

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The Israel / Palestine conflict

At the time of writing, there has been a temporary pause in Israel's bombardment of Gaza, allowing the return of some of the hostages taken by Hamas in their deadly attacks of 7th October, in exchange for the release of Palestinian prisoners detained (many without trial) in Israeli jails.

In a parliamentary vote on the amendment put forward by the

SNP to the King's Speech, 56 Labour MPs defied Keir Starmer's order that they abstain, voting instead for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza. All 15 Liberal Democrat MPs, including local MPs Ed Davey, Sarah Olney and Munira Wilson, voted for the amendment, so maybe lobbying by KPC members was effective!

But the uncertainty of this temporary truce still looms over

all Palestinians, and the violence against them has continued, especially in the West Bank, where Israeli armed forces have launched deadly attacks on Palestinian communities. So we must continue to campaign against Israel's vengeful retaliation, and to call for a permanent ceasefire so that the root causes of this crisis may be addressed.

Seen at the Palestine demo, Saturday 25 November



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From the West Bank – further news

In the November issue of Kingston Peace News we published a report from Johnnie Byrne, who has been working at the University of Bethlehem. We circulated her second diary report to those of you on our email list. This is an edited version of her third report.

Sunday 12th November 2023

Firstly, I need to correct a mistake (*in the first report*). I said that the Palestine Museum of Natural History is housed in an old convent building. That is not true. The building is one that belongs to the University, itself founded by the French order of de la Salle Brothers. It is true that the adjacent convent is being refurbished to expand the Museum.

But what of the work of the Museum, and of the Institute for Biodiversity and Sustainability? The Museum is very small, just one room, yet displays an impressive collection of geological fossils, as well as examples of local fauna, some skeletal remains, some taxidermied, including a stuffed adult striped hyena and a magnificent eagle owl, and many other stuffed birds, preserved lizards and amphibians, and all manner of insects and other vertebrates and invertebrates. It contains models referencing different ecosystems and sustainable land use, as well as explaining climate degradation.

In normal times, the small team of researchers and volunteers here would comb the countryside for specimens of local flora and fauna (beetles and other insects). These abnormal times provide an opportunity to process the specimens, in order to provide a reference collection for the area. Other than feeding our hyena cubs, helping with the Herbarium has been my favourite task.

In the gardens, it's all about recycling. As might be expected, all organic waste goes to a series of compost bins, where much cardboard is also recycled. Plastic food containers are rarely thrown away, used for storing food, separating waste for the different categories of compost or taking organic waste to feed the various animals kept here: chickens, rabbits, a proud peacock which struts its stuff among the hens, and my favourite hyena cubs, soon to be re-located to Qalqilya Zoo, when circumstances permit.

Water for the extensive gardens is used sparingly, thanks to a network of pipes snaking through the terraces which provides drip irrigation to most of the site. Grey water is funnelled from the third

floor kitchen via a long hose to water another part of the gardens.

An abundance of fruit and vegetables, grown around the garden or in the Greenhouse provide for much of our needs. Old plastic drain pipes arranged round the inside edge of the Greenhouse have holes cut into them for plug plants; at the moment, they're growing lettuces. Outside, after the figs and the olives, lemons are just ripening, and one of the banana plants is showing two tiny, nascent fruits. Flowers are not neglected, the sweet smell of white jasmine is everywhere, along with all kinds of herbs. We have just finished collecting fennel seeds and the thyme has been dried and is being stripped from its twigs to make za'atar, the universal seasoning in these parts.

Driving is terrifying. But, despite the apparent daredevil driving style – always accompanied by vigorous use of the horn - drivers are very courteous, both to each other and to pedestrians. Pedestrian crossings don't seem to exist but, if a driver sees someone wanting to cross the road, they politely stop, even though it sometimes seems that to do so will cause a pile-up. It never does. In six weeks here I haven't heard of a single road traffic accident.

Seat belts are not generally worn in Bethlehem. So I was very surprised, on a drive from Bethlehem to Ramallah, where Mazin was to give a lecture to a class of Master's students, the University having decreed that face-to-face teaching should resume, to be told to "belt up". Apparently, we were passing through Area 'C', patrolled by Israeli Police, who are likely to fine those caught not wearing seat belts. Palestinian Police are rarely in evidence here, except at the Church of the Nativity, where the Tourist Police control the site and give tours.

So much for the peaceful life of the Museum. In the world outside, the death fleet keeps flying overhead and barbaric Zionist aggression continues. It makes me think of my parents and grandparents, and the fear they must have known during the London Blitz, at the beginning of World War II, when London was systematically bombed by the Luftwaffe for 56 days and nights in late 1940, and then into Spring 1941. So far, Gaza has had 36 days.

The past week has been very emotional. As Israel drags out its asymmetric "war" against Palestine, and more defenceless Palestinians are illegally evicted from their homes in the West Bank by

armed European settlers, often assisted by soldiers, nerves are strained, even here in Bethlehem. Those expressing sympathy for Gazans may find their phones blocked and similar comments on social media are likely to result in a call from the Army. For the first time, I have heard of religious tensions between Christians and Muslims. In Jerusalem, we hear that it's even more tense. Palestinians don't dare go into Jewish neighbourhoods and people avoid the gaze of others.

Throughout history, invaders and conquerors have sown division, on the tried and trusted tactics of divide and rule. If Britain and the USA can successfully foster religious division in this country, as they did in Ireland, as they foster the false narrative of the occupier's "right to defend itself" against the legitimate resistance of the occupied, bizarrely branded "terrorism", Israel may well have succeeded in its Zionist endeavours.

I had intended to go to the Ai'ida Camp, where I stayed last year, on Friday. I have been meaning to go since I arrived, wanting to renew acquaintance with people I met this time last year. The "situation" made me think twice, and this week, there was a particular concern. A 17-year-old boy was shot on Friday morning, in his own house, by a sniper firing from the watchtower on the apartheid wall that overlooks the Camp, or possibly from the roof of a neighbouring house, after the "Israeli Occupation Force" again invaded the camp and took over many homes. The Israelis would not allow a Palestinian ambulance to help the boy, bleeding profusely from a chest wound. They had taken him and he had died. They were to bring his body back and he was to be buried, as is the custom here, that morning. There were rumours that the Israelis would prevent anyone entering the Camp. The cemetery is right next to the Wall.

So I went yesterday, Saturday, Armistice Day, to the nearby Cultural Centre. A group of nursing students from Bethlehem University were helping with a children's activity. The children had been given plates of paint and were happily making hand prints on large sheets of paper, then just covering the sheets with paint in a colourful mess. After the children had left, the volunteers quickly cleared everything up, then took two visiting Mexican religious sisters and me to the roof of the Guesthouse, to see one of the best views of the city.

Later in the morning, I went to the Youth Centre, which I'd also visited last year. I was received by

a young man I hadn't previously met, who told me that he was from Jerusalem but had been born in the Camp and never allowed to visit the place he considered his native city. He had studied history, had been enthused by the European "Enlightenment" but had now thrown away his books, in the face of Western denial of enlightenment. He had taught children but now could no longer bear to look them in the eye. The effect, not just of the unspeakable brutality of the Israelis, which Palestinians are used to, but of the refusal of Western Governments to acknowledge the double standards and lack of any sense of proportion in the current situation, had robbed him of any hope for the future. Yet he remained a proud Palestinian.

This week, Israeli soldiers had come to his home at 4 o'clock in the morning, had turned the place upside down, had broken all the furniture, had hit family members – and then just left. No reason, just another humiliation. Because they can. Because the USA says they can.

It seems too that the Occupation Forces are rounding up people who have previously been in prison. A few days ago, soldiers surrounded a house near the centre of Bethlehem where an ex-prisoner lived, and a school next door for good measure, keeping the pupils, aged from 6-14, for four hours after they should have gone home. A man, described as "simple", was killed; the 51-year-old happened to be passing by the home that soldiers had surrounded, and they shot him. Israel and the West should be proud !

The Zionists' actions here are met with cold fury or rage. Decent, self-respecting Jews will have nothing to do with them. Rightly or wrongly, the Zionists are themselves stoking the fires of antisemitism. As are the incoherent double standards of Western leaders.

Why is it okay for Israel to murder thousands of Palestinians, and not okay for an occupied people to resist or defend themselves, a right supposedly given them by the Geneva Conventions? Has a single commentator, however well-disposed towards Palestine, apart perhaps from the heroic journalists of al-Jazeera, mentioned first Israeli terrorism, as described above, in the West Bank as well as in Gaza, before condemning Hamas for alleged massacres of civilians? - Allegations now unravelling, as people begin to see through the Israeli misinformation and lies. Why, before continuing to bomb hospitals, does Israel not accede to the pleas of hospital administrators and allow independent observers to check if they are harbouring any Hamas fighters?

ICAHD Calls for an End to Israeli Genocide Against the Palestinian People

The Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHD) has issued the following statement. They say that they realise that the accusation of genocide is an extremely serious one. On its own, the assault on Gaza is a war crime (as is Hamas's killing of innocent Israelis). But the destruction of Gaza and its people going on before our eyes - accompanied by the violent ethnic cleansing of Palestinians in the West Bank being carried out by Israeli settlers and soldiers, which is largely unreported - is just the latest, tragic chapter in Zionism's/Israel's drive to Judaize Palestine.

ICAHD statement 2 November 2023

The term “genocide” was formulated by the Jewish-Polish lawyer Raphael Lemkin against the backdrop of the Holocaust. It was codified as a crime under international law in the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (the Genocide Convention). The definition of genocide, as set out in Article 2 of the Convention, is simple and straightforward, its first three elements clearly reflecting Israeli policies and actions towards the Palestinian people since initiating its process of systematic genocide in 1947:

Genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part.

By itself the ongoing destruction of Gaza and its people is a war crime, far too disproportionate to qualify as mere retaliation for the Hamas attack on Israeli civilians, far too costly in civilian life and property to justify the scale of Israel’s militarily action against Hamas.

Genocide is often not a single event, but rather a series of deliberate events and processes over time whose ultimate intent is to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group. The Indian Wars in America lasted three centuries. If we step back from the war crime that is Israel’s current assault on Gaza to the concerted

effort since Israel’s establishment to erase the country of Palestine and its Arab heritage, the picture that emerges is one of genocide, cultural as well as physical. Zionism’s and later Israel’s necessarily violent project to displace the country’s Palestinian population, take its land and replace it with a Jewish one constitutes deliberate destruction of the Palestinian people in part or in whole.

Three events have prompted ICAHD’s call for urgent international action to end Israeli genocide against the Palestinian people: the indiscriminate bombing of the Jabalia refugee camp in Gaza on October 31, 2023, in which hundreds of innocent people – refugees from Israel’s campaign of expulsion in 1948 – were slaughtered in order to assassinate a single Hamas commander; the brutal attacks happening now against Palestinians in the West Bank in which Israeli settlers and soldiers are terrorizing families and emptying whole towns and villages – forced displacement, a crime under the Fourth Geneva Convention; and the statements of genocidal intent emanating from the highest Israeli government and military officials, whether towards the people of Gaza or directed at Palestinians (“the Arabs”) in general, statements that lead us to fear heightened colonization and further genocide if the international community allows Israel free reign to erase the Palestinian people politically, culturally and if need be physically.

The Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHD) calls on the international community – the UN, governments and peoples – to hold Israel accountable for its decades of genocidal colonization. Most urgently we call for isolating and sanctioning Israel until its destruction of Gaza and its people ends, and the violent displacement of Palestinians from their lands and communities by Israeli settlers and soldiers cease.

We call on the International Criminal Court to bring to trial for war crimes the responsible Israeli political and military leaders.

We call on the United Nations to enforce Article 3(e) of the Geneva Convention punishing for “complicity in genocide” the United States, Canada, Europe and other countries contributing to Israeli genocide.

The Elders' open letter on Israel and Palestine

On 16 November, The Elders (see signatures at the end) delivered an open letter to the President of the United States, Joe Biden, on Israel and Palestine:

Dear President Biden

You have a historic opportunity to help end the Israel-Palestine conflict - permanently. As polarisation increases, the world needs you to set out a vision for peace. That vision must give hope to those who reject extremism and want the violence to end. We urge you to do two things: set out a serious peace plan, and help build a new coalition for peace to deliver it.

We understand you want to help make Israelis safe. We share that objective, and have condemned the horrific Hamas attacks of 7 October. We share too your commitment to the Palestinian people's right to self-determination. Palestinian and Israeli lives are of equal worth.

Destroying Gaza and killing civilians are not making Israelis safe. These actions will breed more terrorism, across the region and beyond. There is no military solution to this conflict. The violence is already feeding antisemitism and islamophobia, including in the USA. It undermines your other objectives in the Middle East, Ukraine and elsewhere. US credibility and interests across the world are at stake.

Israeli policies of expanding illegal settlements in the West Bank, and normalising relations with Arab countries while bypassing the Palestinians, have not made Israelis safe. Successive US governments have been complicit in these failures. The only way to make Israelis and Palestinians safe is a lasting political solution. It must guarantee the security of Israel, whose people remain under threat. And it must meet Palestinians' legitimate aspirations for their own state. Long denied during 56 years of occupation, these hopes are fading fast, as innocent Palestinians die in the rubble of Gaza and the stolen lands of the West Bank.

For too long the world has spoken of a two-state solution while allowing Israel to build a one-state reality. This has suited extremists in Israel and Palestine who deny the other country's right to exist. It is time to end the empty rhetoric, and implement a serious peace plan that undermines extremists. This plan should answer who runs Gaza next, end Israel's accelerating annexation of

Palestinian land, and address Israel's legitimate security concerns. It must recognise the equal rights of Palestinians and Israelis, and be rooted in international law, including the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Israelis and Palestinians will not end this conflict on their own. The history is too complicated, the politics too polarised, the compromises required too difficult. But peace cannot be imposed from outside. It requires bold leaders with legitimacy and credibility among their peoples, and a commitment to two states living together peacefully. Those leaders are not currently in power in Palestine or Israel. The USA cannot bring peace to the Middle East on its own. You can help build a new coalition for peace, including countries from the region and Europe who want a just settlement. This coalition can restore a political horizon, and rebuild the trust needed for dialogue.

Progress will not be easy, or quick. Years of mistrust and violence have left the two peoples far from readiness to negotiate. A comprehensive agreement will take years. It will demand enormous political courage from all leaders, in the face of significant domestic opposition. Now is the time to start. A serious peace plan is not a distraction from resolving the current crisis; it is a prerequisite. There is a slender opportunity to build on yesterday's UN Security Council Resolution. But progress is more likely if that is seen as the first step towards a lasting peace, not just de-escalation. De-escalation is not enough. We cannot go back to managing the conflict. It will erupt again and again with more death and misery. The conflict must be resolved, permanently, through negotiation.

President Biden, you said last month that American leadership is what holds the world together. This conflict is tearing the world apart. We have spoken to Israelis whose families were murdered and taken hostage, and Gazans suffering a humanitarian catastrophe. We recognise their pain, anger and fear. We encourage you and Secretary Blinken to continue working to release Israeli hostages, and end the collective punishment of Palestinian civilians.

The Elders learned from our founder, Nelson Mandela, that the road from hatred to forgiveness can be long and difficult. Some will never walk it. But the majority of Palestinians and Israelis want

to live in peace, not endure yet more violence. Please help them find the path to peace. History will never forget your leadership if you do.

Signed by the Elders:

Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland and Chair of The Elders

Ban Ki-moon, former UN Secretary-General and Deputy Chair of The Elders

Graça Machel, Founder of the Graça Machel Trust, co-founder and Deputy Chair of The Elders

Gro Harlem Brundtland, former Prime Minister of Norway and former Director-General of the WHO

Helen Clark, former Prime Minister of New Zealand and former UN Development Programme Administrator

Elbegdorj Tsakhia, former President and Prime Minister of Mongolia

Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

Hina Jilani, Advocate of the Supreme Court of Pakistan and co-chair of the Taskforce on Justice

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, former President of Liberia and Nobel Peace Laureate

Ricardo Lagos, former President of Chile

Juan Manuel Santos, former President of Colombia and Nobel Peace Laureate

Ernesto Zedillo, former President of Mexico

CAAT statement on UK Arms

Exports to Israel

Israel is using UK arms exports in a genocide against the Palestinian people. The UK government is complicit in these crimes not just by supplying these weapons for decades, but by repeatedly inciting Israel to commit war crimes against Palestinian civilians with impunity, in retaliation for Hamas' horrific killings and abductions of Israelis including civilians.

The UK has consistently sold arms to Israel, in spite of its illegal occupation of the Palestinian West Bank, the Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem since 1967. Since Israel's blockade of the Gaza Strip in 2007 there have been five major military assaults on Gaza in 2008-09, 2012, 2014, and 2021 which killed almost 4,000 Palestinians. In the past 11 days alone at least 2,850 Palestinians, including 100 children, have been killed by Israeli bombardments supported by UK arms exports.

UK industry provides 15% of the components in the F35 stealth combat aircraft that are currently being used in the bombardment of Gaza. The contract for the components is estimated by Campaign Against Arms Trade to be worth £336m since 2016.

Between 2018 and 2022, the UK exported £146m in arms sales via Single Issue Export Licences. However, a large proportion of military equipment exported is via Open General Export Licences. These open licences, which include the F35 components, lack transparency and allow for unlimited quantities and value of exports of the specified equipment without further monitoring.

For more information, read CAAT's fact sheet <https://caat.org.uk/app/uploads/2023/11/>

RAF flies arms to Israel

MPs have been blocked from seeking answers to questions about the UK sending arms to support the Israeli government's murderous assault on Gaza.

Scottish MP Kenny MacAskill wanted to know what military support Britain was providing via RAF Akrotiri on Cyprus. This follows the revelation that since the start of the Israeli bombing campaign against Gaza more than 30 military transport flights have been made from the RAF base to Tel Aviv.

Website *Declassified UK* – which discovered the flight information – also reported that US military transport flights were taking place from Akrotiri which is just 40 minutes flying time from Tel Aviv.

MacAskill is an MP for the Alba party, a breakaway from the SNP. He was told that the British government has blocked members asking any questions about activity at the RAF base.

He commented: "This is totally unacceptable in a democracy. Genocide is being perpetrated in Gaza and we have a right to know what our government is doing about it." He added: "Any complicity raises issues of participating in war crimes."

No UK mainstream media have thus far reported on the involvement of RAF Akrotiri.

Season's Greetings

Wishing you a healthy New Year.
Too much to hope for peace?

Letter in *The Tablet*

KPC member Martin Birdseye had this letter printed in *The Tablet*:

Jennifer Lipman's column of 11 November graphically outlines situations of fear for the Jewish community, in which she includes the demonstrations calling for a ceasefire in Gaza. I have attended two of the many recent demonstrations without seeing antisemitic behaviour. On 4 November, among 100,000 people, I could not locate the Christians and I stayed for while with a Jewish contingent. I was not aware of any threat. People did indeed chant "From the river to the sea" along with the next line "Palestine shall be free". Is this a call for destruction of Israel? We have to hope that one day Israel/Palestine will be truly free for all its citizens regardless of race or religion.

Martin Birdseye, Hounslow, Greater London.

It's among others at this link:

<https://www.thetablet.co.uk/letters/8/23721/topic-of-the-week-gaza-a-just-war-is-no-answer>

Hilary Evans commented on Martin's letter:

My observations agree with yours. At the last big gathering outside Parliament there was lots of Jewish representation. I chatted to a young man from Jews for Justice who said he hadn't experienced any unpleasant behaviour at all except a little from other Jewish people who disagreed with his stance.

From the River to the Sea

On 9 November Dr Jeff Halper, an Israeli-American anthropologist living in Israel since 1973, who is Director of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHN), wrote an article explaining his view of the slogan "From the River to the Sea":

There seems to be a lot of controversy over the phrase "From the River to the Sea" regarding Palestine. "Pro-Israeli" supporters see it as a call to eliminate the state of Israel -- which it is in a way, but not in the genocidal way they intend. Historic Palestine in fact extended from the (Jordan) River to the (Mediterranean) Sea, as even ancient maps show. And for the peoples of Palestine -- Muslims, Christians, Jews, Arabs, Turks, Armenians, Circassians, Europeans and many more in what was always an ethnically and religiously diverse country -- "from the River to

the Sea" was merely stating a geographical fact; it had no political meaning.

That changed with the advent of Zionism. Now another foreign people, an invader, challenged the very right of the local population to live in (and on) its land. Zionists claimed that the Land of Israel, their equivalent to "From the River to the Sea" (although more so, since they also claimed the land on the eastern side of the Jordan River), "belonged" exclusively to them. That claim and the actions that followed up until today eliminated the Palestinians as a people with national rights to their homeland. Indeed, Britain and France forced the peoples of the Ottoman Empire, who had been living together peacefully for centuries, to adopt antagonistic "national" identities and fight each other AND the European colonial powers for the right to have what they always had: a peaceful, multicultural life in their own country.

The full text of the article can be seen at <https://icahd.org/2023/11/09>

The Nuclear Morality Flowchart,

<http://nuclearmorality.com/> invented by Kingston Peace Council's Martin Birdseye and Charles Wicksteed, is getting a new project leader to take it forward, to realise its potential as a tool for nuclear disarmament.

Introducing Jude

Jude Madubuike, professional engineer and spare-time advocate of justice and peace, is intending to investigate and take forward various possibilities for application of the flowchart. He needs people to assist him - people interested in promoting and/or developing one of the suggested applications.

These include:

1. a version optimised for mobile phone (prototype already written),
2. a simplified version for use with schools,
3. training for schools presenters,
4. a multi-session discussion course,
5. a way to get policy makers to be transparent about their moral position,
6. use of the various translations that we have,
7. raising awareness about the moral implications of nuclear weapons.

And you may have more ideas!

If you think you might be able to help, please contact Jude at info@nuclearmorality.com

How does the autumn statement affect military spending?

Dr Stuart Parkinson, Co-chair of the UK branch of the Global Campaign on Military Spending (GCOMS-UK) and Executive Director of Scientists for Global Responsibility (SGR) writes on <https://demilitarize.org.uk/>

In the Chancellor's Autumn Statement, he confirmed that there had been a major rise in the UK's core military spending last financial year. However, there are signs that the government's enthusiasm for further growth is on the wane.

The Autumn Statement (AS23) revealed that the UK's core military spending (spending by the Ministry of Defence under its 'resource' and 'capital' budgets, but excluding certain other military budget lines) reached £52.8 billion in the financial year 2022/23. This was a massive 15.0% rise from the previous year, but slightly lower than that predicted in the Spring Budget. 88% of the rise was due to increases in spending on new military equipment. Core military spending during the two financial years, 2023-25, is planned to be lower, but this is largely due to a change in accounting practices rather than an actual cut in spending.

The figures for core military spending do not include military support to Ukraine which totalled £4.6bn for the financial years 2022-24. The AS23 revealed that this was more than 13 times the value of humanitarian aid that the UK has so far pledged to the country – a huge and disturbing imbalance.

The core figures also do not include some other areas of military spending, for example, veterans' pensions.

In the Chancellor's Statement he confirmed that the government still intended to meet the NATO target to spend 2% of GDP on the military, but there was no mention of previous commitments to spend 2.25% by 2025 or 2.5% "in the longer term".

Comparing core military spending for 2022/23 with other civilian departmental budgets continues to be revealing, as follows:

- Spending was 5.7 times the budget for the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, which is responsible for the vast majority of the UK's foreign aid budget. It is especially notable that the government has decided to continue not meeting its target to

spend 0.7% of Gross National Income on foreign aid, while still being committed to its NATO military spending target.

- Spending was 8.8 times the budget of the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.
- Spending was 8.9 times the budget of the Department of Energy Security and Net Zero, which is responsible for government spending on climate action. However, recent government announcements to relax certain climate targets demonstrate that there remains a lack of commitment to action in this area, which is especially disturbing given the increasing severity of extreme weather around the world and the likelihood that the Paris climate targets will be missed.

The above spending ratios are expected to fall back this financial year (to 4.4, 7.0 and 6.6 respectively), although this is partly due to a change in accounting practices at the Ministry of Defence referred to above.

One further point, the government announced new funding of £4.5bn for British manufacturing from 2025 for five years. The industrial sectors that will benefit included two which have especially high proportions of military applications: aerospace and nuclear.

In conclusion, there are small signs that the government's fixation with increasing national military spending is on the wane, but this could change at any moment depending on the global geopolitical situation.

School visits

We mentioned in a previous newsletter that we were hoping to be able to reintroduce the practice of visiting local schools around the International Day of Peace in September, to give assemblies on the theme of peace.

Lovelace Primary in Chessington and St John's Primary in Kingston invited us, so Mary and Maggie visited them, angling their talk/story towards the environment. The story "The Last Tree" had many themes about caring for our world and each other so also fitted with a peace theme.

We intend to get in touch with other schools in the spring to see if they would like us to visit.

Paul Ingram from the Centre for the Study of Existential Risk at Cambridge University spoke recently at Kingston Quaker Centre.

Here are highlights from what he had to say:

This was, he said, a talk about nuclear risk reduction, the end of the world and how we do our best, wherever we are, to avoid it. He began by explaining that he'd been involved in the nuclear issue for 40 years, beginning in 1983 on a CND march. His thinking had developed over the years to the point where he wished to stress the importance of seeing the broader picture in the issue and avoiding group think. He said it was necessary to follow a spiritual and human relationship path as well as a political one, whether speaking to Russians, Americans or Iranians.

The Centre that he led considered risks in terms of probability, the consequences of the risk and the vulnerabilities of society. He said: "We've had numerous occasions over 78 years where we faced the risk of use of nuclear weapons and we have scraped through and analysts have looked and used words like 'chance', 'there but for the grace of God', and other ways of saying we are incredibly lucky to be sitting here". But, he added, "Just because we have had 78 years where the coin has been tossed and it has come up heads does not mean that we will have another year of that heads."

We were now in a situation where there is a war between Russia and Ukraine and where there is the possibility of nuclear use. And he added, controversially; "The reason why we are in this situation – and you won't hear this in a Quaker Meeting House very often – is because nuclear deterrence works. It works to threaten your adversary with annihilation because it does mean that they do pause. The trouble is that it doesn't always work and there is no room for failure. I think it's important for us to recognise that deterrence is something that happens. But the ways in which our leaderships are attached to nuclear deterrence and have thrown that coin up 78 times and it has come up heads does not mean that because it works it is a rational way forward."

He turned next to the issue of consequences. Following the bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and up to the early 1980s it was believed that most people in a nuclear war would die from the radiation. Not so, he said. In an academic study last year atmospheric scientists modelled the use of 100 small (Hiroshima sized) nuclear weapons

in a limited nuclear war between India and Pakistan. They predicted that 27 million people would lose their lives from blast and radiation but 225 million people would starve because enough dust would be thrown into the atmosphere and spread around the northern hemisphere so there would be ten percent less production in agricultural products.

"We call this nuclear winter but that would be nuclear autumn," he said. Nuclear winter would be if all nuclear warheads in the American and Russian arsenals were detonated. 400,000,000 would die from radiation, blast and firestorm, and 5 billion people would starve.

He warned: The consequences of the nuclear winter modelling have not yet been absorbed by the nuclear weapons states. In the US there was still a lot of denial about the nuclear winter. "They are in the middle of a study by the National Academy of Sciences that is starting to look at this phenomenon. There are now about 30 scientific teams around the world that are starting to look at nuclear winter. It's a relatively new phenomenon in terms of accurate prediction but I think it has quite a significant impact on the debate around nuclear deterrence."

Governments had a responsibility to drive more nuclear armament diplomacy. What did it mean for us? The most important message of all was that we needed to find new ways of cooperating. That meant getting away from the tendency that all of us had of thinking about 'us and them'. The essence of peacemaking was not to make judgements too quickly and it was particularly important when it was particularly difficult. "We have to overcome the divisions that we have," he said.

What was vital was listening to each other's perspective and building a relationship. "For common security, acknowledging that my security depends on you feeling secure", and promoting inclusion and diversity of opinion. It was the case that different perspectives brought wisdom. We needed to determine how to manage deterrence and disarmament in the short term with the objective of laying down our arms in the longer run.

Phillip Cooper

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Next issue (Feb/March):

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Disclaimer: The views
expressed in this edition are
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Kingston Peace Council/CND

Subs and newsletter

Is your membership subscription overdue? See the code at the top of the address label on this newsletter – the year followed by the month when your membership expires, eg 202307 means your sub was due at the end of July 2023. Or, if you pay by standing order, please check that you are paying the correct amount. See panel above for rates and Treasurer's address (cheques to Kingston Peace Council/CND). If you would like to receive your copy of Kingston Peace News by email, please contact Gill at gill@gillhurlle.plus.com

Dates for your Diary

Sats 2&16 Dec and 6&20 Jan 11am-2pm KPC stall in Kingston Market Place. If you are able to help, please contact Angie on 020 8399 5537 or angecooper47@hotmail.com

Thur 7 Dec 2.30-3.30pm Special Christmas Tea Party for Peace and Unity, All Saints Church, Kingston Marketplace, KT1 1JP. Organised by the Dialogue Society Kingston. RSVP: Kindly confirm your attendance by emailing kingston@dialoguesociety.org

Sat 9 Dec 4-6pm Jeremy Corbyn will be at Housmans Bookshop, signing copies of Poetry for the Many: An Anthology. To book your place and get your copy signed in person, you must order your copy in advance from <https://housmans.com/> If you are unable to attend on the day, a copy can be signed for you and posted to you afterwards.

Tues 12 Dec and 9 Jan 8pm KPC/CND meeting via Zoom. For joining instructions contact Gill, gill@gillhurlle.plus.com

EVENTS AT COP28 IN DUBAI:

Awareness of the connection between military activity and climate change is increasing. At COP26 in Glasgow the only meetings on this took place outside the fence, organised by a few peace/environment organisations coming together. This year there are six relevant meetings inside the official Blue Zone! Below are details of the Official Side Events which will be live-streamed on www.youtube.com/channel/UCJlvsGJAR8NsiyLzuBf_cQg, and also a live Zoom event. (Times given below are GMT. You may have to wait until the day to find the event.)

Mon 4 Dec 7.30 – 9am Win-win for climate and gender justice & peace: Acting on military spending and military emissions. Why is militarisation one of the key obstacles to mitigating the climate crisis? Official Side Event, speakers include Deborah Burton and Neta Crawford. Organisers: WILPF, Drexel University, Environmental Law Institute, TPNS.

Mon 4 Dec 2.30 – 4pm Climate Damage of Russia's war in Ukraine and the knowledge gap on conflict and military emissions. Official Side Event. Government of Ukraine - Government of Georgia - Initiative on GHG accounting of war. Organisers: Conflict and Environment Observatory - Ukrainian non-governmental organisations.

Tue 5 Dec 11am – 12.30 Grassroots Feminist Perspectives on Demilitarization for Climate Justice. Official Side Event. Grassroots Global Justice Alliance (GGJ) Climate Justice Alliance (CJA) Just Transition Alliance (JTA) National Farmers Union (NFU)

Fri 8 Dec 2pm via Zoom Some insights into COP 28: What is happening on the ground? An hour of informal conversation with activists on the ground at COP28. They will tell us about their efforts to move military issues up the climate agenda, and to foreground demilitarisation as a strategy for climate justice. Speakers will include Nesmah Mansoor Ali (Yemeni Peace Track Initiative and WILPF), Rula Asad (feminist researcher, journalist, co-founder of the Syrian Female Journalists Network) and Deborah Burton (Tipping Point North South). Register in advance for this meeting: <https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZUrdO-hpz8vG9zA-avEqbTqEO4FbQGb5wVp> After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

Sun 10 Dec 7.30 – 9am Shifting money and power: true transformational climate action as a peace and justice multiplier. Official Side Event. Exploring how money and power shifts in current economic, energy and military could help accelerate urgent transformational climate action for a more just and peaceful world. Speakers include Deborah Burton. Co-hosts: Quakers in Britain, Quaker Earthcare Witness, SGI-UK, Friends World Committee for Consultation/QUONO.